



The Lab Notebook

Edison Day 2014



A street fair along Main and Alden Streets was filled with over 75 artists, crafters, and vendors providing shopping, refreshments, and a Beer Garden.

For this year’s combination Edison Day—Street Fair—Town Picnic, the Park joined with several organizations, the town of West Orange, and a host of vendors to provide an exciting experience for over 3,500 visitors. Here are some of the memorable images.



Members of the North Jersey Section of the American Chemical Society—here for the Friday presentation of a plaque honoring Thomas Edison the chemist—stayed to host a variety of chemical demonstrations. Their table was a BIG hit with both kids and parents.



The 1927 Isotta Fraschini Tipo 8A Roadster, owned by Joseph and Margie Cassini, added a touch of class to the courtyard and served as a preview of the 2015 Concours d’Élégance to be held at Glenmont.



Pleasant Valley Productions sponsored a portable stage on the “back 40.” Musical acts entertained picnickers throughout the day.



Judging from the smiles, the day seems to be going smoothly for Chief of Visitor Services Karen Sloat-Olsen, Superintendent Tom Ross, Assistant Superintendent Terri Jung, and Supervisory Museum Curator Michelle Ortwein.

...And Even More Edison Day Memories



A parade of electric vehicles set off down Main St. toward Glenmont at 11am. Owners of Tesla, Nissan, Ford, Toyota, and Honda electrics met with visitors on the gravel driveways.



One of our partners was NJ 350, coordinating the celebration of 350 years of New Jersey history.



At the Kids' activity tent at Glenmont young visitors could paint with watercolors, play Victorian games like Parcheesi, and dress up to have their pictures taken in the mini-Model T.

Building 11 was filled with the tunes of the always popular wax recording sessions.



The New Jersey Hall of Fame rolled into Alden Street for the day.



Students from New Jersey, Indiana, Kansas, and New York have submitted their artwork on the themes of imagination and invention. Their colorful work is hanging in the elevator tower throughout the summer.



Above, Glenmont visitors enjoy a grounds tour. At right, others explore the Greenhouse, its variety of flowers and plants carefully tended by members of the Garden Club of the Oranges.



...See you next year!

Message from the Superintendent

As we approach the end of the Park's fiscal year it is an appropriate time to reflect on the year that was. We started on a bit of a down note with the government-wide shut down the first couple of weeks in October 2013, but we sure did rebound to have a banner year. This edition of *The Lab Notebook* really captures some (but not all) of the great moments and successes we had this year and especially this summer.

Certainly a highlight of the year was the launch of Lenny DeGraaf's book *Thomas Edison And the Rise of Innovation*, which not only put a member of our talented staff out in the community presenting book talks near and far, it also formed the basis of our Park programming this year, with the chapters of the book serving as program themes for each month. What a great success it has been!

Of course our Edison Day 2014 was a memorable one with clear skies and new community partnerships building on our typical activities, including a street fair along Main Street and the annual West Orange Town Picnic. More than 3,500 visitors came out for the event as we also celebrated New Jersey's 350th. Some long time staff believe it was the single largest visitation day in memory and perhaps the history of the Park!

This summer we also celebrated the Park's dedication as a National Historic Chemical Landmark, along with the Edison Winter home and laboratory in Fort Myers, Florida, and The Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan, to commemorate the role of chemistry in Edison's work.

As we enter the fall we are pleased and excited about our latest community partnership with the Valley Arts District and Firehouse Gallery. Through the NPS's Witness Tree partnership with the Rhode Island School of Design, we have reclaimed trees downed by Superstorm Sandy which have now been turned into Edison-inspired works of art by RISD students participating in a unique multi-disciplinary class that bridges history, art, and the National Park Service. We are truly excited to have the show on exhibit at the Firehouse Gallery through October 5 and encourage all to experience it.

I look forward to new and creative ways to expand our audiences and partnerships in the new year! I do hope to see you around the Park!

Sincerely,

Tom Ross

Thomas Edison National Historical Park was established to preserve and protect Thomas Alva Edison's West Orange Laboratory, home, and collections for the education and inspiration of people worldwide.

Thomas Edison National Historical Park
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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service
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Edison Witness Trees on Display at ValleyArts Firehouse Gallery



Remember the trees that came down at Glenmont during Hurricane Sandy? They have returned as art. The "Witness Trees" have been re-fashioned by students at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) into works of art. They're on display at the **ValleyArts Firehouse Gallery** August 28 through October 5, in the exhibition "**Transformed: Looking at the Age of Edison Through the Witness Trees of Glenmont.**"

Richard T. Bryant, executive director of ValleyArts said, "Thomas Edison's estate and laboratories, integral parts of our local history, are less than two miles away from the gallery, and this is our own National Historical Park."

The gallery is open Thursdays 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sundays 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., and by appointment. Admission is free. All works are for sale.

For additional information on opening festivities and gallery talks, please contact: Richard T. Bryant, ValleyArts, 862-252-7035



These planters have come back to life after many, many years. Located in the back and side yards at Glenmont, they were recently replanted in a Victorian style by Lynda Meehan, one of the new volunteers with the Rutgers Extension Master Gardeners of Essex County.

New Reports on Early Edison Recordings



NEDCC Director of Imaging Services Tom Rieger and Audio Preservation Specialist Mason Vander Lugt offer guidance as Edison Curator Jerry Fabris places a wax cylinder onto the 3D-IRENE system's mandrel. Photograph courtesy of NEDCC.

Earlier this year, the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) in Andover, Massachusetts, became the first organization in the world to offer “3D-IRENE” technology for audio preservation. Developed during 2007-2009, 3D-IRENE is a three-dimensional optical scanning system that creates a digital model of a phonograph record’s groove surface. Once scanned, digital image analysis is used to reproduce the audio. In April, NEDCC published “A Visit from Edison: Early Edison Cylinders Imaged at NEDCC’S IRENE Lab” in their “IRENE Seeing Sound Blog.” This article describes Edison Curator Jerry Fabris’s recent trip to NEDCC to scan six of TENHP’s earliest and most significant wax cylinders. The NEDCC blog can be found online at <http://www.nedcc.org/audio-preservation/irene-blog/2014/01>.

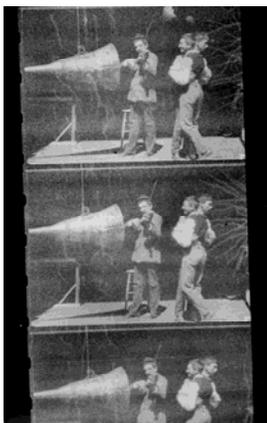


This broken “brown wax” cylinder is the world’s earliest surviving motion picture soundtrack, made by W.K.L. Dickson in the *Black Maria*, ca. 1894-1895. The original container is at rear, and the identification slip reads “Violin by W.K.L.Dixon [sic] with Kinetograph.” Photograph by Michael Devecka.

DesigningSound.org is an online resource dedicated to the art and technique of sound design. In May, DesigningSound.org published a well-researched article about the 1998-2000 restoration of the circa 1894-1895 “Dickson Experimental Sound Film”, the world’s earliest motion picture with a soundtrack. The article features new, never-before-published photographs of the soundtrack artifact, a “brown wax” phonograph cylinder preserved at TENHP.

Written by author Cormac Donnelly, the article includes contributions from Ken Weissman, supervisor of the film preservation lab at the Library of Congress, TENHP Curator Fabris, and film historian Paul Spehr. It can be found online at <http://designingsound.org/2014/05/the-dickson-experimental-sound-film/>.

At right are a few frames from the experimental sound film W.K.L. Dickson (playing the violin) made for the Kinetophone, Edison’s hoped-for combination of sound and image.



New Exhibits Highlight Year of Innovation



Visitors to the open storage area on the third floor of Building 5 will see new additions to the exhibit cases that tie in with the Park’s Year of Innovation celebration. One features a display of Edicraft, the kitchen products that kept the Edison factories up and running—for a while, anyway—after the termination of phonograph manufacturing. Assembled by summer intern Eric Faeder, a student at Rider University, the shelves resemble a high-end appliance store with coffeemakers, waffle- and

sandwich-makers, irons, and toasters, along with advertising drawn from the archives as well as *The New Yorker*.

Another case displays artifacts from Edison’s World War I activity. Brendan Perkinson, our summer intern from Binghamton University, selected artillery shells, a hydrogen detector that identifies unsafe levels of the gas aboard submarines, and machine gun parts and ammunition. Perhaps Edison’s greatest contribution to the war effort was the suggestion that the government pursue research and development systematically by establishing a Naval Research Laboratory.

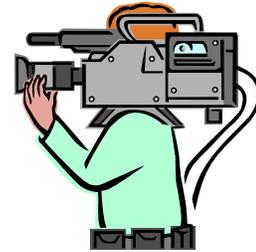


American Chemical Society Honors Edison

Ned Heindel, Past President of American Chemical Society, presents the Society’s plaque to Edison Superintendent Tom Ross at a ceremony in the courtyard on June 6. The text attests to Edison’s youthful interest in chemistry, his application of chemical research here at the West Orange Laboratory, and the role of chemistry in producing materials for phonograph recordings, storage batteries, and Portland cement. Paul Israel, Director of the Edison Papers, explored this theme in the address he presented at the ceremony, “Chemical Solutions: The Role of Chemistry in Thomas Edison’s Inventive Work.”



Bringing *Glenmont* to the Screen



Late last fall, Volunteer Arthur Gordan sat down to interview Kip Rowan about his project: *Glenmont: A Historical Tour*. Arthur currently presents a program using Kip's video to give visitors a chance to see the majestic home. Kip Rowan is a multi-media producer/director, and has been an adjunct professor in the Humanities Department at New Jersey Institute of Technology. Kip is a graduate of Rutgers University, Phi Beta Kappa, with a degree in Theater Arts and a Master of Arts in English Literature. Kip also sits on the board of the Friends of Thomas Edison NHP and the New Jersey Arts Incubator.

tea and wake him from one of his customary naps. The young Edison employee was told, "Never wake Mr. Edison from his nap!" That was the connection for me to the Thomas Edison National Historical Park. Fast forward to John Columbus who is on the board of Friends of Edison, and I thought that due to my interest in history, it would be a perfect fit by joining the Friends and supporting the Park. The Friends of Edison help fund restoration projects and sponsor events

both at the Park and with other organizations offsite. This past year we showed the movie *Frankenstein* at Hat City Kitchen and we showed *The Great Train Robbery* this past December.



Volunteer Arthur Gordan conducted the interview. Here he is greeting visitors in the third floor Music Room.



Videographer Kip Rowan.

Q: I'd like to get started by asking you about the Friends of Edison organization. What are the programs and goals of this group with regard to the Thomas Edison National Historical Park, and what role you play in it?

A: Well, I became involved because of John Columbus, who is on the board. I have known John for many years both here in West Orange and through friends in television and cable broadcasting. I have always been interested in history, and in the late '70's I interviewed a former Edison employee who worked with Mr. Edison and created a short video that tied into the dedication of the Bulb Memorial at Town Hall. He related how he would bring Mr. Edison

Q: I know that you are a long term resident of West Orange and currently work at NJIT in multi-media, but I'd like to learn more about you and the other projects you've created.

A: My background is in television, studio production and documentaries. In addition, I've been involved in all phases of video production including being the studio director at VH-1. Television kind of gets you everywhere. In addition, while working at NJIT, I had the opportunity to pursue a Masters in English Literature at Rutgers in order to broaden my liberal arts background, which led me to the field of history.

Q: Is that what motivated you to make this particular film?

A: When I was on the board of the Friends, Assistant Superintendent Terri Jung and Chief of Visitor Services Karen Sloat-Olsen knew about my background in video, and they thought it would be a great idea if we could shoot a virtual video tour of Glenmont. Terri and Karen ended up writing a script that morphed into a historical piece.

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Q: How did you prepare for this documentary?

A: Following the script it became pretty straightforward because it was a film style, single camera shoot, which means you have to set up your moves, your wide, medium and tight shots, to be completely covered for the edit. The lighting style was basically environmental, in other words natural, diffused lighting. I was the only one doing the recording and I remember bringing the equipment in my car up there on cold winter nights.



Q: That's interesting. I would have thought you had several people assisting you.

A: Since this was a "pro bono" project you tend not to have any assistants.

Glenmont entry hall.

Q: When you were alone in the house on those cold winter nights, did you meet any ghosts?

A: Perhaps a few in the cellar where I kept my equipment sometimes, but I'm not sure.

Q: Did you find any challenges that were unique at Glenmont?

A: In a way it was easier than many other shoots. When you're by yourself you decide what you want to do. What that afforded me was to get more intimate with the house. I could take my time in each room and, almost by osmosis, get the feeling of what daily life was like at Glenmont, which helped me later with the edit.



The Edisons in the "Home Laboratory," 1903.

Q: Did you find out anything about Mina and Thomas Edison and their family that surprised you?

A: It was mostly just learning a lot more about them and their kids' lives on the estate. When the kids would be in the family living room Mr. Edison would ask them to help with research projects in his home library.



The Madeleine Edison-John Sloane wedding on Glenmont lawn, June 17, 1914.

Q: People asked, since he typically worked 80-100 hours a week, did he have any family life?

A: We know from the many pictures in the archives that he always found time to be involved with the children. The family really used the house and the land for outdoor games and picnics as well as daughter Madeleine's

wedding. A lot of visitors ask "was he very wealthy?" Well, he had substantial money, not as wealthy as the Rockefellers, Astors, or Morgans, but Glenmont, while a grand mansion, is still a warm and livable home.

Q: What was the message you hoped to convey to the viewing audience about Glenmont and the Edison family?

A: I think the warmth at Glenmont through archival pictures along with the video, of course, was sort of how you make that happen. I think visitors get that message when they visit Glenmont. I also hoped that after viewing this documentary they come away with a better understanding of Thomas Edison as a family man, and that he wasn't fancy about himself or his appearance necessarily, just being neat enough to pass muster. And for four decades up at Glenmont, you can see from the pictures when he is standing there with all these famous people, it's sort of like, okay, let's get this shot over and I want to go back to my lab. When he did that "Mary had a Little lamb" speech at a commemoration ceremony, he just threw up his hands and said "That's enough." The feeling you get is that he's a real person.



Edison with Charles and Madeleine.

Q: With the benefit of hindsight now, is there anything you might have done differently with the production of Glenmont?

A: No, not really, because I got enough pictures with the help of Archivist Leonard DeGraaf, and also Curator Jerry Fabris, who was a great assist in providing the historically relevant instrumental pieces for the background music tracks. I would also like to thank Tynia Thomassie, a West Orange teacher, who did the delightful voice overs. The toughest thing was figuring out the music. I wanted to showcase the music and have a full flavor of the time. I'm pleased with the finished product and knowing that many visitors are now able to take a virtual tour of Glenmont during the week, when Glenmont is not open to visitors.

For more information on the Friends of Thomas Edison National Historical Park, visit foe00@foedison.org.



National Park Service
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Thomas Edison National Historical Park
211 Main Street
West Orange, NJ 07052



Thomas Edison Wins the Guinness Galway Hurdle



We couldn't miss this. As reported by the *Irish Independent*, Thomas Edison, with jockey Tony McCoy aboard, won the Guinness Galway Hurdle, "the most valuable jumps race in the land" on July 31. The seven-year-old "cruised through between horses on the turn for home en route to a three-length victory."

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Volunteers-In-Parks Coordinator Thomas Edison National Historical Park

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Our deepest thanks to the Charles Edison Fund for nineteen years of support for the Park's partnership with Seton Hall Preparatory School. The program brings us interns each summer who work in all divisions. Above, John Keegan, Chairman and President of the Charles Edison Fund, stops by for a visit with this year's interns, from left, Bakur Abdus-Sabur, James Connor, Daniel Corragio, and Ikem Eguh. Absent is our fifth intern, Donald O'Connor.