



The Lab Notebook

Edison Day Snapshots



About 860 visitors came through the Main Street gate on Edison Day, June 5th. Here are some memories, clockwise from top left: Jerry Fabris supervises a wax cylinder recording session featuring Grandpa Musselman & His Syncopators; “actors” rehearse a dance from an Edison film during “Moviemaking in the Black Maria”; volunteer Bern Wallerstein conducts a grounds tour of Glenmont; volunteer Maryann Brand points out some original Edison letters on display in the Archives; rangers and volunteers prepare for the day’s visitors at Glenmont; ham radio operators are set up for business; Archivist Lenny DeGraaf presents a talk on Edison’s controversial involvement in the electric chair debate of the 1890s; the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra closes the day’s festivities with a concert on the lawn in front of the Edison home.



Message from the Superintendent

The first anniversary of the reopening of the Laboratory Complex is not far away—October 9th. After nearly one full year, we celebrate our accomplishments, but still look ahead to the future.

Thanks to our superb Division Chiefs, park staff, park partners and volunteers; their work gives us a firm foundation to build on.

The Curatorial Division is busy with several projects: conservators are rehabilitating the family living room at Glenmont; museum techs and archives techs are busy with our backlog cataloging; and a completed Cultural Landscape Report for Glenmont will arrive this fall.

Our safety program is always a high priority. Over 60 park staff and volunteers received safety training in the past few months.

The Administrative Division does exceptional work day in and day out, from preparing the seemingly endless reports and processing to providing computer support. They are helping us execute our responsibilities as effectively as possible.

The Interpretive and Education staff has done a magnificent job responding to the significant increase in visitation. The idea of “Come back and see us again for the first time” has certainly resonated with our visitors. We have grown from 100 visitors a day to 200 and sometimes 300, and an increase not only in the number of groups but a greater diversity of groups from more widespread communities. Visitors are staying longer, and about forty percent of Laboratory visitors are also stopping by the Edison home at Glenmont. Our “Teacher/Ranger/Teacher” program with the Newark school system is sure to increase our visitation and enhance our volunteer program.

We greatly appreciate the continued support of the Edison Innovation Foundation, the Friends of Thomas Edison National Historical Park, and our other partners. Together we look forward to a bright future for the Park.

A final note—the Facility Management Division is overseeing another very important project that I am looking forward to completing this fall—the installation of the new restroom in the Glenmont potting shed. I can’t wait to get rid of that portable toilet.

Greg Marshall

Edison Recording Studio Gets an Upgrade

In March the Friends of Thomas Edison National Historical Park purchased equipment and consultant services to modernize the Park’s audio preservation transfer workstation. The John Stratton Trust (Stephen R. Clark, executor), David Giovannoni, and Whole Foods Market donated \$14,283 to the upgrade. The new equipment includes a Mac Pro computer with RAID-1 hard drive redundancy, an LTO-4 external tape drive for data storage, associated software, and a workbench. The Park can now create and store high-resolution digital audio files in Broadcast Wave format at 96 kHz sample rate and 24 bit depth, bringing the Park in line with current preservation standards.



Museum Curator Jerry Fabris (left), Ward Marston (center), and Scott Kessler (right), at work digitizing phonograph recordings in the updated audio transfer workstation.

Museum Curator Jerry Fabris is now digitizing the park’s “brown wax” phonograph records. In July and August, audio transfer engineer Ward Marston and his colleague Scott Kessler volunteered to help digitize the Park’s 12-inch wax master disc phonograph records. Marston plans to issue selections from these recordings on Volume 2 of Marston Records’ compact disc series titled *The Edison Legacy: Hidden Treasures of the Edison Archive*.

Better Storage—More for Visitors to See

The open storage area on the third floor of Building 5 has a new look. This year the Park received funds for new cabinets and storage shelves to maximize museum storage space. The new equipment also allowed us to reorganize the area so that we can move interesting objects to more visible locations. New glass-fronted storage cabinets line the public aisle and place previously hidden artifacts within easy view. These include Edison Fire Company helmets, Edicraft appliances,



Wide-span storage shelving reduces clutter and makes objects easier to view and maintain.



Attractive Edicraft kitchen appliances are now easier to see.

Ediphones, office equipment from the laboratory complex, electrical equipment, wooden patterns, and a variety of primary and storage batteries. A collection of Edison busts now greets visitors as they enter open storage from the phonograph gallery. This new arrangement also provides easier access to curatorial staff for ongoing cleaning and maintenance of the collections. The project will continue this winter, as staff continues to reconfigure the space.

With a Little Help From Your Friends...

The Friends of Thomas Edison NHP is a longstanding supporter of the Park, having been in existence for over 26 years. The group is dedicated to helping the park in whatever way it can, whether through fundraising, supporting educational programs, or promoting greater awareness of the Park—the Friends' members are eager to help out.

Earlier this year, with the Laboratory Complex having reopened, the Friends decided it was time to take stock and plan for the future. With the help of graduate student Claire Shields, the group set about preparing a Strategic Plan to direct their activities and set priorities for the future. Claire guided the group through the various stages of the strategic planning process, including facilitating a Board member planning session.

The result was a document which assesses where the Friends are today and what their priorities should be in the coming years. Some of the recommendations have already been implemented – committees are now up and running and the Friends are looking forward to being an even more active partner to the Park in the coming years.

Some of its immediate plans include the continuation and expansion of the “Adopt a Phonograph” program. Each of these artifacts needs special care, cleaning, and general conservation by experts who perform these unique services under the supervision of Park curatorial staff. Adopting an artifact helps to support this important work. The Friends will also support next summer's Camp Edison which will allow the Park to expand the program to more children.

The Friends are always looking for new members to become involved. For more information on becoming a Friend of Thomas Edison National Historical Park please go to: www.foe.org or contact John O'Reilly: Tel: 973 736 2916. And you can also “friend” the Friends on Facebook!

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

211 Main Street
West Orange, NJ 07052
Web site: www.nps.gov/edis
Email: edis_superintendent@nps.gov

Visitor Information

973-736-0550 x11
Fax: 973-243-7172

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



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Edison for Congress

Is Thomas Edison headed for the U.S. Capitol?

The state of Ohio is seeking a new addition to the National Statuary Collection, which is displayed throughout the Capitol. In a recent poll of residents conducted by a group of state historical organizations, Thomas Edison (born in Milan) received 30% of the vote, narrowly beating the Wright brothers, who received 28%. The National Statuary Collection Study Committee considers the public vote to be the greatest single factor in making its final recommendation.

Ohio will replace the statue of Governor William Allen, which will be returned to the state. Each state has two representatives; the other Ohioan is President James A. Garfield (who, like Edison, died in New Jersey). The New Jersey members of the Collection are Richard Stockton (1730-1781), a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and Brigadier General Philip Kearny (1814-1862), who died during the Civil War at the battle of Chantilly.

The final selection has not been made, and partisans of the Wright brothers are demanding a recount. Even if Edison wins the coveted spot, funds for the statue must still be raised privately. Stay tuned.



Busts of Edison on display in our open storage area. A full-length effigy of the inventor may join the National Statuary Collection in Washington, D.C.



The family living room at Glenmont

Uncovering Glenmont's Secrets

Since June, conservators have been cleaning and preserving the historic wall covering and woodwork in the second floor Family Living Room at Glenmont. Upon removing part of the canvas wall covering, they discovered evidence of a stenciled frieze consistent with the original decoration elsewhere in the house. The pattern of stylized flowers is similar to the stenciling in the formal first-floor Library reputedly done by the firm of Pottier & Stymus. The frieze appears on only the three walls that are original to the house (the room doubled in size in 1905 when it was extended over the porte-cochere), so it is likely that this decoration dates to the 1880 construction of the house by Henry Pedder. Since few examples of the firm's decorative work are now in existence, this is a rare and important find. Most people associate Pottier & Stymus with furniture (which we also have in our collection).

To preserve this discovery for future research, we decided to leave one panel of the frieze exposed by cutting away a section of the historic wall covering. The conservators cleaned surface dirt from the exposed area and protected it with a varnish; they will trace the pattern as part of the documentation. The cut-away is located to the right side of the hall door and is hidden from visitors when the door is open.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

**Volunteers-In-Parks Coordinator
Thomas Edison National Historical
Park**

Michelle Ortwein
973-736-0550 x31 phone
michelle_ortwein@nps.gov

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Editor

Edward Wirth

Contributors

Jerry Fabris
Theresa Jung
Greg Marshall
John O'Reilly
Michelle Ortwein
Claire Shields
Karen Sloat-Olsen
Edward Wirth

Comments? Write to:

Greg Marshall, Superintendent
Thomas Edison National Historical
Park
211 Main Street
West Orange, NJ 07052



A BIG CHECK FROM WHOLE FOODS

Earlier this year Whole Foods Market of West Orange offered to donate 5% of one day's net proceeds to the Friends of Thomas Edison NHP as part of the market's ongoing program of supporting non-profit volunteer organizations. On May 20, Denise Dagnino of Whole Foods presented the Friends with a check for \$3,287.70. Members of the Friends receiving the check include Kip Rowan and Charley Hummel (standing at the left), Ken Mandel (right), and John O'Reilly (standing to the left of Denise).

Our thanks to Whole Foods for their generous support.