

# Thomas alva edison essay



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Thomas Alva Edison was the most famous and prolific inventor of all time. During his life, over 1100 patents were issued to him or his associates; he was known as the wizard of Menlo Park, the town in New Jersey where he set up his first invention factory. Yet he was not really a scientist, having no theory or mathematics, and most of his success came from perfecting the ideas of others or already existing inventions by trial and error. He learned telegraphy on the railway, and his services as a telegrapher were in demand during the Civil War, when he traveled all over the country, incidentally studying electricity. In 1868 came his first invention: a machine to record votes in Congress. But Congress turned it down, because they were not interested in speeding up matters. Edison then resolved to work only on inventions that were commercially viable. His first such invention was an improvement on the ticker machine which transmitted stock market prices. At this particular time in U. S. history, when Wall Street and big business were more powerful than the government and an enormous economic expansion was under way, this invention was so successful that Edison set up a small manufacturing plant to build ticker-tape machines, which he later sold at a profit. This was the first instance of Edison's ability to see what needed to be invented before inventing it. Next he made improvements to the telegraph, culminating in a system that allowed four messages to be sent on one wire. He also made improvements to the typewriter. By 1876 Edison quit manufacturing and set up his first invention factory, with employees to help him develop ideas. Their first inventions were improvements to the telephone, including a microphone. At this moment Edison had invented the concept of commercial inventing, which has dominated twentieth-century technology. In 1877 Edison produced his most celebrated invention, certainly

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his own favorite: the phonograph. Edison's device used a tinfoil-covered drum which was hand-cranked while a stylus traced a groove on it. The first recording ever made was of Edison's own voice reciting Mary Had a Little Lamb. Typically, Edison had written out a list of ten uses for a sound-recording machine before he built it.

He saw it as a useful office machine, and did not foresee the multimillion-dollar record industry of today, which has survived competition from radio, TV, and Edison's own motion pictures. In 1878 Edison, using the trial-and-error method, began research toward the development of an incandescent light bulb. He made thousands of experiments before achieving success with a charred cotton thread, sealed in a vacuum so that it would glow without being consumed. His team then worked out the principles of the generating and distributing system that made electric lights for every home practicable. In 1882 the first generating plant was opened at Pearl Street in New York City.

Edison used a direct-current system; a former associate of his, the U. S. scientist of Croatian origin, Nikola Tesla, developed an alternating-current system for the rival Westinghouse company, which eventually prevailed. The Edison Electric Light Company, however, grew by mergers to become the General Electric Company. While working on the light bulb, Edison made his only real scientific discovery, the principle of the vacuum tube. At the time, however, there seemed to be no use for its properties; not until 1900 did the British electrical engineer, John A. Fleming, discover and

develop its potential for radio. In 1887, Edison moved to a larger laboratory in West Orange, New Jersey.

In 1889 he built a movie camera and later set up a small studio for making short movies for peep-show machines. "Once again, however, the entertainment aspect of his invention did not really appeal to him, and it was finally left to others to develop the movie industry." "Electricity illuminates parts of New York beginning September 4, 1882, as Thomas Edison throws a switch in the offices of financier J. P. Morgan to light the offices and inaugurate commercial transmission of electric power from the Morgan-financed Edison Illuminating Co.

power plant on Pearl Street. The company will soon supply current to all of Manhattan and it will develop into the Consolidated Edison Co., prototype of all central-station U. S. power companies. "This day marks one of the most gigantic leaps of technology as no longer would we have to depend on sunlight and or candles to work. This means our productivity time was doubled! Without the invention of the lightbulb, our lives would be incredibly different. Even in the most rural of places electricity is a must and is still depended on. It is something we use every day and its utility boosts Edison up to the 4th position in my mind. Also his invention of the phonograph revolutionized the music industry as is made listening to music at home possible for the first time. Also his invention of the vacuum tube helped not only the radio invention but it was one of the key instruments in the first computer, another invention which I cannot possibly imagine life without. Such an inventor should not go unnoticed in time and that's why I ranked him 4th.

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