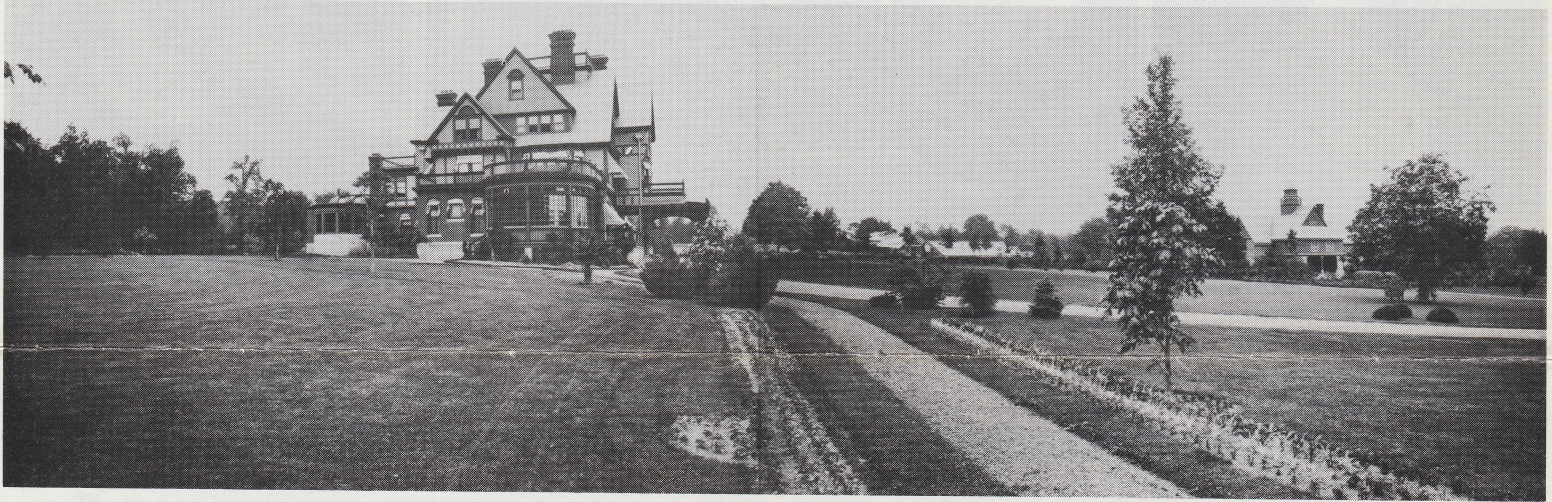


Glenmont

Edison National Historic Site
National Park Service
US Department of the Interior



The Glenmont Estate. Circa 1890.

The Edison Family Estate

"Country Homes for City People." This slogan promoted Llewellyn Park, founded in 1857 as America's first private romantically landscaped residential area. The message must have appealed to Henry C. Pedder. In 1880 he hired architect Henry Hudson Holly to design his estate. Glenmont, which includes the home and grounds, may take its name from its location atop a hill and near a glen. It was close enough to New York that Pedder could commute to his work with the department store Arnold, Constable and Company.

Four years later, Pedder moved out. He had apparently embezzled from his company to build Glenmont. In January 1886 the company sold the furnished house and 13.5 acres of land to a new owner. Thomas Alva Edison paid \$125,000 for the entire property. Like Henry Pedder, Edison's fiancée also preferred to live in the country.

stables. A new greenhouse and gardener's cottage, also made of cement, was completed by 1909. Today, the barn stands behind the current greenhouse and next to the outline of the swimming pool.

Glenmont's natural setting offers a stark contrast to the industrial landscape of the laboratories. The grounds include both native and exotic trees: yellow wood, weeping hemlock, Cornelia cherry and copper beech. Mina Edison selected flowers and plants which the gardening staff tended for the estate.

At Glenmont the Edisons entertained many distinguished guests. These included the King of Siam, President Herbert Hoover, Helen Keller and Orville Wright. Personal friends, such as Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone, and family members visited as well.

Thomas and Mina Miller Edison moved into Glenmont in 1886 after their honeymoon in Florida. Their home, built of wood, brick and stone, typified the eclectic Queen Anne style popular in the 1880s and 1890s. Edison had never before lived in such fashion. "When I entered this," he confessed, "I was paralyzed . . . It is a great deal too nice for me, but it isn't half nice enough for my little wife here."

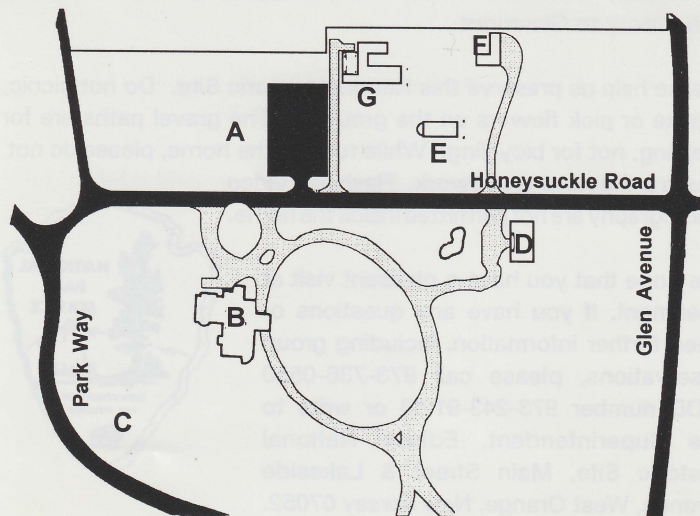
Over the years Mina Edison approved several changes to the house, having rooms repainted and refurbished. She hired interior decorators and had certain rooms expanded, such as the second floor living room. The house has been painted many different colors over the years, including gray, salmon and its final off-red shade.

The outbuildings changed more profoundly. Originally the grounds included a barn and stables, greenhouse and pumphouse. Most of these outbuildings are shown in the photograph above, taken in the 1890s. In 1908 a two-story cement garage replaced the old barn and

Maintaining the estate required an average staff of ten, although this number varied through the years. Some of the maids, cooks, groundskeepers and butlers hired by Mina Edison lived at Glenmont. As Mina once wrote, "There are often changes." Briget Laughlin, from Ireland, served as chamber maid in 1905. Julia Everson, a parlor maid, immigrated from Norway. Queenie Adams, an African-American, cooked for Mrs. Edison in the 1930s. Madeleine Edison Sloane, the Edisons' daughter, called the house a "league of nations."

In 1946 Mina Edison sold the estate to Thomas A. Edison, Inc., provided that "Glenmont and its contents . . . be preserved as a memorial to my dear husband and his work." Since 1959 the National Park Service has owned and maintained Glenmont, now part of Edison National Historic Site.

Map of the Glenmont Grounds



- A. Visitor Parking Lot
- B. Edison Home
- C. Edison Gravesite
(Gravesite surrounded by low growing hedge)
- D. Garage
- E. Swimming Pool *(Filled In)*
- F. Barn
- G. Greenhouse, Potting Shed & Gardener's Cottage



Mina Miller Edison holds daughter Madeleine in the Conservatory. Circa 1889.



Lucy Bogue, the Edisons' piano teacher, watches while Theodore plays the piano in the Den. Circa 1907.



Charles, Thomas and Madeleine Edison in the Den. Circa 1894.

The Edison Family

At age 39, Thomas Edison came to Glenmont to start a second family. He and his first wife, Mary Stilwell Edison, had three children before Mary died in 1884. These children--Marion, Thomas, Jr., and William--spent little time at Glenmont.

In 1885 mutual friends introduced the "Wizard of Menlo Park" to 20-year-old Mina Miller. Her father, Lewis Miller, had co-founded a religious educational retreat on Lake Chautauqua in New York state. Unlike Edison's first wife, Mina had attended finishing school and felt at ease in formal society. The wedding took place February 24, 1886, in Mina's hometown of Akron, Ohio. After a honeymoon in Florida, the couple moved into Glenmont. Once Edison built the Main Street laboratory in 1887, however, the new Mrs. Edison saw little of her husband.

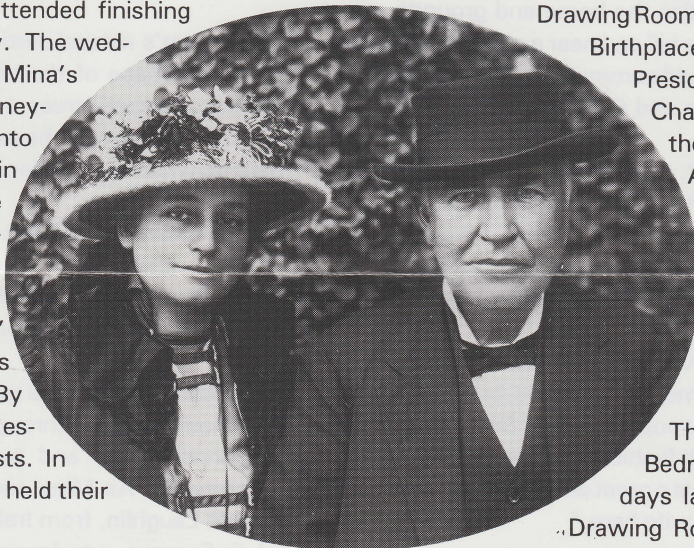
Calling herself the "home executive," Mina ran Glenmont. She hired servants and groundskeepers and paid the bills. By the early 1890s Mina even owned the estate. She also entertained her own guests. In 1891 the Federation of Women's Clubs held their banquet in the Den and Dining Room.

Thomas and Mina Edison's three children were born in the upstairs bedroom: Madeleine in 1888, Charles in 1890 and Theodore in 1898. Generally the children attended boarding schools, but spent summers at home. On Sundays Edison might pack the family into one of the automobiles and one of the boys would drive them through the back roads of New Jersey.

The entire family enjoyed the estate, especially the grounds. Mina Edison sometimes held parties and concerts there. A member of the National Audubon Society, she watched for birds from the Conservatory. On the Fourth of July, Edison's favorite holiday, Charles or Theodore might supervise a fireworks display.

All three of Mina and Thomas Edison's children took an interest in public affairs. Madeleine, who married John Eyre Sloane in the Drawing Room of Glenmont, directed the Edison Birthplace Association in Milan, Ohio. President Franklin Roosevelt selected Charles as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Later, Charles served as Acting Secretary before New Jersey voters elected him Governor in 1940. Theodore worked with environmental and social causes. He maintained a home and laboratory in West Orange until his death in 1992.

Thomas Edison died in the Master Bedroom on October 18, 1931. Three days later his funeral was held in the Drawing Room. Mina Edison remarried in 1935, but continued to live at Glenmont until her own death in 1947. Originally interred in Rosedale Cemetery in Orange, the Edisons were buried here in 1963 at the request of their children.



To the Visitor



To tour the home, visitors must first pick up tickets at the Visitor Center on Main Street and Lakeside Avenue in West Orange. **Tickets are available Wednesday through Sunday on a first come, first served basis.** House tours are not accessible to persons with walking impairments. **Tours begin promptly, and latecomers cannot be added.** Feel free to enjoy the grounds of the estate before or after the house tour, but please note: **there are no restrooms or drinking fountains at Glenmont.**

Photo: Madeleine, Charles, and Theodore Edison on the porch at Glenmont with their father. Circa 1902.

Glenmont is located within Llewellyn Park, a private community. Please respect the privacy of our neighbors by driving directly to the home. Follow speed limits, while watching crossroads and uneven or slippery surfaces. Allow fifteen minutes to drive from the Laboratory to Glenmont.

Please help us preserve this National Historic Site. Do not picnic, smoke or pick flowers on the grounds. The gravel paths are for walking, not for bicycling. While touring the home, please do not touch artifacts or woodwork. Flash and video photography are not permitted inside the home.

We hope that you have a pleasant visit at Glenmont. If you have any questions or need further information, including group reservations, please call 973-736-0550 (TDD number 973-243-9122) or write to the Superintendent, Edison National Historic Site, Main Street & Lakeside Avenue, West Orange, New Jersey 07052.

