



The Lab Notebook

“The Origins of Sound” Brings International Visitors to Edison

On April 29 the Park played host to over 80 guests who attended a symposium titled “The Origins of Sound Recording” that saluted experiments in sound recording that predated Edison’s. The phonautograph, invented in 1857 by Edouard-Léon Scott de Martinville, recorded the human voice graphically by tracing sound waves in lamp-black on paper.

Superintendent Tom Ross and Stephanie Toothman, NPS Associate Director for Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science, welcomed the guests, who enjoyed a full

afternoon of presentations. Historians Patrick Feaster and David Giovannoni presented their latest research to an audience of scholars, teachers, students, writers, and documentarians. Included among the attendees were French government officials and dignitaries from the scientific establishment, and representatives of both Scott's and Edison's families.

A new web presentation features video recordings of the full program. You can find it at <https://www.nps.gov/edis/learn/historyculture/origins-of-sound-recording.htm>



Far left, top: Laurent Scott de Martinville, left, and David Edison Sloane, right, the great-grandsons of inventors Edouard-Léon Scott de Martinville and Thomas Edison, cut the ribbon opening a related exhibit on view in Building 5. A replica 1859 phonautograph is on the table behind them. Far left, bottom: Historian David Giovannoni demonstrates a replica 1857 “flat-bed” phonautograph. Near left, top: Catherine Bréchnac, French Ambassador for Science, Technology and Innovation, addresses the participants. Near left, bottom: the symposium guests gather at the front of the tent to watch the making of musical and spoken-word recordings on both a replica Scott phonautograph and an Edison tinfoil phonograph.

Message from the Superintendent

Summer is in full swing and visitation to the site has continued to ride the wave of the NPS Centennial and a renewed interest in America's greatest jewels, its National Parks! We came into the summer season on a multitude of park projects, especially at Glenmont, and a number of incredible and memorable special events that had national and even international buzz and impact.

The "Origins of Sound Recording" Symposium was an amazing program which brought together scholars, researchers, and sound recording enthusiasts from across the country and around the globe to learn about the Phonograph, invented in 1857 by Edouard-Léon Scott de Martinville, whose recording of sound (retrieved in 2009) predated Thomas Edison's phonograph by some 20 years. What better way to honor this historical fact than by hosting a symposium at the Laboratory with the inventors' great grandsons as speakers and guests of honor. It was truly a magical event.

The installation of four level II Electric Vehicle charging stations donated by BMW through the National Park Foundation was another highlight of the "lead in" to our summer season. The historical connection between Thomas Edison's research on storage batteries and his interest and ownership of electric vehicles made the park a perfect location to serve as the national kick-off for this new program which will ultimately result in the donation and installation of 100 electric vehicle charging stations in national parks across the country.

The Glenmont rehabilitation and restoration work has been in full swing from early spring through today. Driveway and pathway paving and chip seal work are providing a historically sensitive surface as well as universal accessibility in many parts of the site. New historic metal pane roofs have been installed on the Glenmont home, replacing worn and leaky roofs from an earlier era—a big step in the long-term preservation of the house. Interior work on several rooms by the NPS Historic Architecture, Conservation and Engineering (HACE) branch to repair deteriorating plaster and return the rooms to the appropriate period and color schemes is moving along nicely. Finally, thanks to the assistance and labor of the Mather High School students, we were able to continue our rehabilitation of the Glenmont landscape with the planting of new trees and the pruning of existing ones.

Our special events and programming continue to draw audiences old and new, and our project work ensures that we are serving our current visitors and preserving the Park for future ones so they can continue to learn from, and be inspired by, the work and genius of Thomas A. Edison. I do hope to see you around the park!

Thomas Ross

The historic paths behind the house have been re-established.



The New "Path" to Glenmont

Contractors have been busy upgrading driveways, paths, and borders at the Glenmont estate. This work was funded by a Centennial Challenge Grant and matching funds from the Edison Innovation Foundation.

Take a look at the results.



Contractors installed asphalt on the driveways and later applied a chip seal on top to create a "gravel" look.



A new ramp path will provide increased accessibility to the Greenhouse.



Park Installs EV Charging Station (An Idea Edison Had A Century Ago)



Guests at the dedication share the courtyard with a BMW i3 all-electric vehicle. The speakers at the ceremony included, from left, Joshua Laird, Acting N.E. Regional Director of NPS, Will Shafroth, President, National Park Foundation, Mark Smith, Director, National Clean Cities/Clean Fleets Partnership, Tom Ross, Superintendent, Thomas Edison NHP, and Richard Steinberg, Manager of Product Planning and Strategy for BMW of North America.

The National Park Service along with its partners, the National Park Foundation and BMW of North America, is joining the Department of Energy in installing 100 electric vehicle (EV) charging stations around the country. The first station was dedicated this spring here at the Park. Located in the Visitor parking lot adjacent to the Maintenance Garage, the station is free to users for its first six months (a fee will be levied thereafter).



Guests took a ride up to the Glenmont Garage to examine the 1914 Detroit Electric.



Edison's own vehicle charging station in the Glenmont Garage.



The new charging stations can accommodate four vehicles at once.



Superintendent Tom Ross introduces the speakers at the dedication.

Edison Day 2017



WELCOME! Park Administrative Officer Sheila Hamilton greets visitors at the Main Street Gate.



Members of the Northern New Jersey chapter of the American Chemical Society brought just the right ingredients to draw kids into the pleasures of science.



Above, The Eternal Frontier, a steampunk duo, and right, the New Orleans Jazz Arrowhead Band (based at New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park) provided lively musical entertainment.



Volunteer Les Williams shows off Edison's Music Room and demonstrates several disc and cylinder phonographs.



The Park patrol vehicle proved to be a strong attraction especially for young visitors who learned a bit about safety and enjoyed sounding the siren throughout the day.

Mather High School Students Work at Edison

Students of Stephen T. Mather Building Arts Craftsmanship High School, located in mid-town Manhattan, paid another visit to the Park to hone their gardening and woodworking skills. They were busy at both Glenmont and the Lab complex.



Working on the flower beds.



Replacing a fallen tree on the grounds.



Repairing the Black Maria turntable.

Roof Repairs at Glenmont

Ladders and cranes have risen around the Edison home as part of an extensive program of roof repairs.



Contractors used a lift to gain access to the highest parts of the roof.



Over three hundred pieces of slate are broken or missing. These will be replaced during the project.



Workers replace rotted wood as they find it.



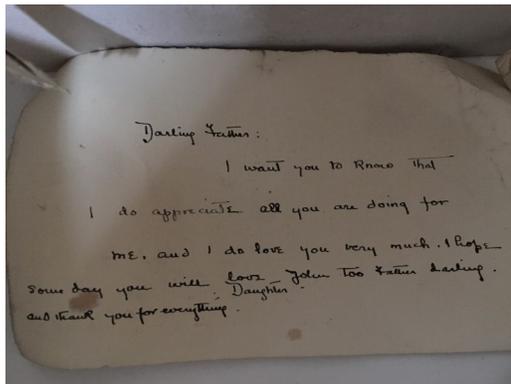
A temporary canopy protects the exposed roof from rain while work proceeds outside the Edisons' bedroom.

Long-Lost Treasures Discovered at Glenmont

While repairing woodwork in Thomas and Mina Edison's bedroom, an NPS Preservation Specialist discovered a secret storage space near the floor that revealed a few keepsakes. We think Mina might have put these things there after her daughter Madeleine's wedding in 1914.

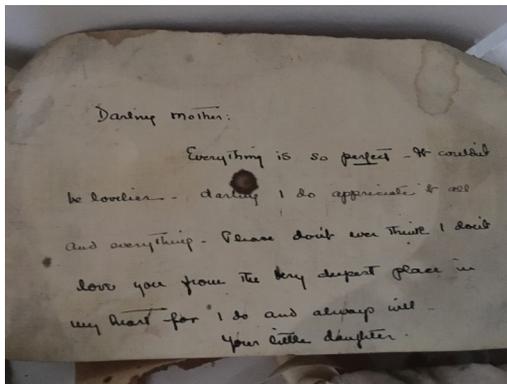


The wedding of Madeleine Edison and John Eyre Sloane, June 17, 1914, on the Glenmont grounds.



A note from Madeleine:
 "Darling Father, I want you to know that I appreciate all you are doing for me, and I do love you very much. I hope some day you will love John too Father darling, and thank you for everything. Daughter."

A second note:
 "Darling Mother, Everything is so perfect—it couldn't be lovelier. Darling I do appreciate it all and everything. Please don't ever think I don't love you from the very deepest place in my heart for I do and always will. Your little daughter."



Bride and Groom. From the wedding cake?



The hiding place in the Edisons' bedroom.

A Cleaned-Up Detroit Electric Returns

The 1911 Detroit Electric returned to the Glenmont Garage after being gone for more than a year. Conservators cleaned and consolidated flaking paint, filled in missing areas on the all-leather fenders, applied protective coating to painted iron elements, repaired a damaged headlight, and preserved the historic tires. This extensive work was made possible by a generous donation from the Edison Innovation Foundation.



A Brighter Pedder Library

NPS Conservator Karen Fix cleaned, structurally stabilized, and applied a protective wax to the chandelier in the Pedder Library. Your fee dollars at work!





National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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

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.

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Our Museum Shop is excited to offer some new items for 2017. When you visit the Park, take a look at our new (made in USA) Edison Water Bottles, as well as a selection of Find Your Park products including mugs, magnets, keychains and tote bags. You'll also find a generous selection of books, games, T-shirts, and baseball caps.