



The Lab Notebook

Looking Back, Looking Forward

During its first full year of operation, Thomas Edison National Historical Park welcomed almost 71,000 visitors. Rangers presented over 3,000 programs, and more than 500 Junior Rangers received their badges. Recently the staff took some time to meet and compare their thoughts on the last twelve months. We wanted to see what worked well for both staff and visitors and what improvements are needed for the future.

Staff members agreed—along with visitors—that the newly opened spaces and exhibits on the second and third floors of Building 5 are a hit. Building 11, a new space for school and public programs was also a plus, as were audio tours, improved space for the Edison Archives, and the lush additions to

the Glenmont greenhouse and grounds.

But we are by no means finished. Visitors need improved accessibility at Glenmont, the Black Maria, and the Pattern Shop. Better signage is also needed. We are exploring ways of operating (at least occasionally) the machines in the Heavy Machine Shop, improving visitor flow throughout Building 5, presenting more public programs (and concerts!), and carving out just a bit more exhibition space to feature changing exhibitions chosen from the huge artifact and archival collections.

We are also completing a Strategic Plan and a Marketing and a Communication Plan for the Park. (Check the Superintendent's Message on page 2 for more on those.)

Do you have any comments or suggestions for us after our first year of operation? Please let us know.

Our e-mail address is:
edis_superintendent@nps.gov

Need a gift for the person who has everything?



Come visit the Eastern National stores in the Park. They are located at both the Laboratory Complex and Glenmont. For kids on your list, pick up an electricity kit or Build-Your-Own-Kinetoscope kit. How about a Junior Gardener Set complete with gloves, watering can, and tools? For adults, choose a coffee table book such as *Historic Photos of Thomas Edison* or a CD of early Edison recordings, or for the whole family, *Passport to America's National Parks* or a DVD on Edison's life and inventions. You can even get an Agave plant grown in our greenhouse. There are lots of stocking stuffers too, from pressed flower magnets to Thomas Edison finger puppets. The stores are open when the park is open. Stop by and see what we've got.



Christmas at Glenmont



"Christmas at Glenmont" will be on view from November 26 through January 2, 2011. Come see the house decorated as it was when the Edisons were at home.

In addition, a pair of special programs is scheduled during the holidays. Make reservations by calling the Park at (973) 736-0550, extension 89.

Edison's Talking Doll will take place on Saturday December 11, 2010 at 11:30am and 2:30pm in the Glenmont Conservatory. Ranger Victoria Martinez will present a children's program on one of Edison's most unusual pro-

jects—a doll that spoke (with the help of a tiny Edison phonograph). The program includes a hands-on activity for the children.

Fine Dining with the Edisons is scheduled for Saturday, December 17 and Sunday, December 18 at 12:30pm and 2:30pm in the Glenmont Dining Room, of course. Did Mina Edison serve brain food or just good old fashioned home-cooking? Ranger Nicholas Johnson will explore the logistics of both large Edison dinner parties and smaller family get-togethers.

Message from the Superintendent

We celebrated the first anniversary of the grand re-opening of the Laboratory Complex last month, and we had cake, too!

As part of our first year anniversary, we hosted a number of discussions with our staff and volunteers to assess how we did over the past year, hosting more than 70,000 visitors. The discussions focused on what we need to do to achieve new levels of excellence at both Glenmont and the Laboratory Complex. As you might imagine, some of the “fixes” are easy, others are more complicated.

Planning is a primary agenda item for the Park staff this winter.

The Curatorial Division is working on finalizing the “Cultural Landscape Report” for the Glenmont Estate and a “Collection Management Plan” for the entire Park. We are also making progress on the comprehensive “Park Emergency Operations Plan.”

Thanks to our extraordinary volunteer Claire Shields, we have completed a “Marketing and Communications Plan” for the Park. Claire did a fantastic job with the plan, researching important background information and providing a “situational analysis.” The Plan addresses Park “branding,” enunciates a positioning statement, identifies target audiences and our marketing message, and outlines an implementation section.

We have begun to hold conversations with the Park staff to develop a Strategic Plan for the Park. Our Strategic Plan will resonate with national and regional National Park Service planning. The National Parks’ Second Century Commission produced a report entitled *Advancing the National Park Idea*. The National Park Service Northeast Region is completing its own plan which will reflect the Director’s priorities of Education, Relevance, Workforce, and Stewardship/Sustainability. All of this “vision” and planning is aimed at the 100th anniversary of the National Park system in 2016.

We will share further information on our park Strategic Plan with our volunteers and partners in the future.

Happy Holidays to all, and by the way, the new public restroom in the Potting Shed at Glenmont is now open. Yay!

Greg Marshall

Friends Get a Chunk of Edison History. You Can, Too.

Yankee Stadium, the “house that Ruth built,” was also “Edison built,” constructed partly with Edison Portland cement—a harder, more durable cement that was the result of many Edison experiments and manufacturing improvements that dramatically increased production capability. Edison Portland cement was a successful product but is usually overshadowed by Edison’s many more well-known inventions.

When the stadium closed at the end of the 2008 baseball season, the Friends of Thomas Edison National Historical Park secured several pieces of the original concrete structure from the city of New York for display at the Park.

The Friends are now making available a limited amount of Yankee Stadium cement as mementos suitable for collectors for a donation to the Friends that will support preservation projects at the Park. Details can be obtained by contacting the Friends of Thomas Edison National Historical Park at (973) 736-2916 or by e-mail at FOE00@verizon.net.



Charlie Hummel (right), former chair of the Friends of Thomas Edison National Historical Park, and Acting Chair Ken Mandel (left), present a piece of Yankee Stadium to Superintendent Greg Marshall. Some pieces of the cement are being turned into collectible souvenirs and may become part of an auction next February around Edison’s birthday. The auction will support Park preservation activities. You can own a bit of Edison (and Yankee) history.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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
973-324-9973
Fax: 973-736-8496

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

Edison Joins Nationwide Response to Oil Spill in Gulf

Following the Deepwater Horizon Mississippi Canyon 252 oil spill disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis called on all parks to contribute staff to the clean-up effort. Park Ranger Brigid Jennings volunteered to assist the public information office at Gulf Islands National Seashore, Gulf Breeze, Florida. She departed on July 7 for what turned out to be a month-long assignment.



Crews working at Santa Rosa Beach sift weathered oil while preserving seagrass which is an important food source for many of the nesting shorebirds at Gulf Islands National Seashore.

Brigid spent much of each 12-hour day on the beach working with public health officials who monitored exposure levels and air quality. Brigid also escorted photographers and reporters into the clean-up areas, spoke with visitors about their concerns and gave them up-to-date information, and helped to ensure that BP crews adhered to various environmental and OSHA regulations. Despite the tar balls, tar patties, and oil sheens, the national seashore never closed during the clean-up operations. Working conditions were oppressive—temperatures soared above 130 degrees and tropical storms were a constant problem—but crews managed to remove thousands of pounds of weathered oil from the beaches every day. Overall, Brigid reports that her experience in the Gulf of Mexico was “a testament to the power of collaboration and teamwork.”

Superintendent Greg Marshall added, “We are very proud of Brigid’s contributions.”

VIPs: Volunteers in Parks, 2010



Superintendent Greg Marshall addresses a VIP appreciation event in Building 11.

During the fiscal year just ended (October 2009 through September 2010), the number of volunteers at Thomas Edison NHP increased 64% over the previous year and volunteer hours increased by 60%! With the Grand Opening of the Laboratory Complex in FY10, our volunteer ranks increased dramatically. Widespread publicity about the park generated greater interest in volunteering.

Needless to say, the biggest jump was in the Interpretation and Education Division. Volunteer hours soared from 457 hours to 3,669 hours during the year. The park started to offer “Edison Gems,” short programs presented on a specific park-related topic. Originally presented by Park Rangers, many volunteers researched, developed, and now present these programs. Volunteers also offer phonograph demonstrations and give tours of the Chemistry Laboratory, Glenmont, and its grounds.

Total VIP hours: 7,211 (FY2009: 4,409 hours)
Total number of VIPs: 85 (FY2009: 52 volunteers)

Our high-achievers this year were:

Robert Sprecher, 449 hours	Arthur Gordon, 195 hours
Gaye Olin, 406 hours	Sean Coakley, 189 hours
Garden Club of the Oranges, 364 hours	Odell Perry-Pittman, 143 hours
Bryan “BJ” Johnson, 326 hours	Claire Shields, 139 hours
Tom Hilmer, 308 hours	Eddie Grimes, 130 hours
Maryann Brand, 265 hours	Yvan Beausoleil, 123 hours
Valerie Shoffner, 261 hours	Master Gardeners of Essex County, 123 hours
Chip LeMar, 260 hours	Nancy Farley, 114 hours
Evelyn Gurland, 231 hours	Sam Luft, 111 hours
Sara Rodgers, 228 hours	Harry Roman, 100 hours

Special thanks to everyone who volunteered at Edison during the year!

In November, the Master Gardeners of Essex County completed year two of extensive work in restoring the canna bed at the rear of the Edison home Glenmont. This ongoing project is part of the volunteer effort to enhance Glenmont’s landscape by restoring the historical appearance around the mansion.





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

www.nps.gov/edis Click on "Support the National Park Service"

"The Lab Notebook" is a quarterly publication of Thomas Edison National Historical Park.

Printed on recycled paper. 

Editor
Edward Wirth

Contributors
Brigid Jennings
llewellynphotos
Greg Marshall
Ken Mandel
John O'Reilly
Michelle Ortwein
Karen Sloat-Olsen
Edward Wirth

Comments? Write to:
Greg Marshall, Superintendent
Thomas Edison National Historical Park
211 Main Street
West Orange, NJ 07052



On October 24 Llewellyn Park hosted its First Annual 5K Run/Walk, and staff and volunteers from Thomas Edison NHP were invited to participate. Here's the Edison group happy and smiling (because the race hadn't started yet). Many thanks to the event organizers for the generous invitation. We look forward to the challenge again next year.