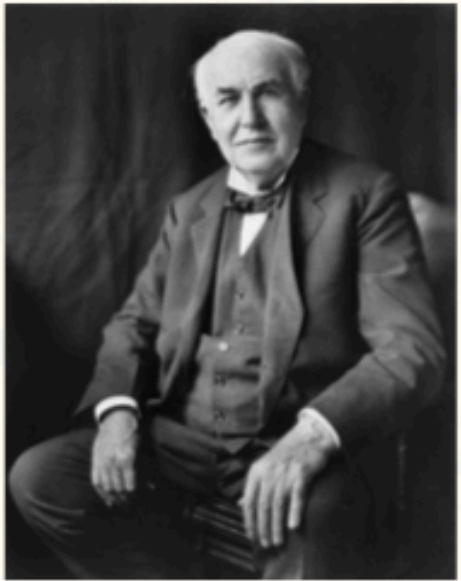


Thomas Edison:

the man who invented the future!



More than 150 years ago, inventors began working on a bright idea that would have a dramatic effect on how we use energy in our homes and offices. This invention changed the way we design buildings and infrastructure; improved productivity by increasing the length of the average workday; and jumpstarted new businesses, which relied on this invention. One of these inventors – the most influential of his time – was Thomas Edison. Born in the USA in 1847, Edison invented many things that have influenced how we live our lives today. These included the light bulb, the phonograph (the

forerunner of the record player), the microphone and the telephone receiver.

Thomas Alva Edison's schooling surprisingly ended when he was just eight years old. His teacher, who had failed to see Edison's potential, told his mother that the boy's brain was "addled" (meaning confused and stupid). His mother (Nancy Edison), who was furious at what she had heard, took him out of school immediately and resolved to educate him herself. Although he seems to have briefly attended two more schools, nearly all his childhood learning took place at home. However, would you believe that this worked in his favour? Nancy Edison devoted all her time to educating and nurturing her son, allowing him to follow his curiosity. He not only had the opportunity to plunge into great books written by famous authors, such as Shakespeare and Dickens, he also performed chemistry experiments in his self-built laboratory in his cellar. Nancy Edison's teachings allowed Thomas to grow as a scientist, as Edison himself had put it: "My mother was the making of me. She understood me; she let me follow my bent."

Many years later in 1876, Edison set up an invention factory at Menlo Park (New Jersey, USA). This was a research laboratory where Edison and his employees worked on several different inventions at any given time. It was there that Thomas Edison invented

the phonograph - his first commercially successful invention - and the microphone which both lead, along with his camera, to the creation of the first talking picture. It was after this that Edison invented the most famous of his devices. Other inventors had laboured hard to make an electric light that people could use; however, they had little success and were met with disappointment. If it were not for Edison's persistence and resilience in the face of repeated failure, he would have never succeeded in inventing a bulb that burnt brightly for 600 hours: a device we still use in our homes today. Alongside this, he also created other equipment, which made his bulb a practical invention- generators, fuses and conduits.

By the time of his death in 1931, he was responsible for nearly 1300 inventions! Edison believed that the secret of success was hard work and perseverance, famously quoting, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." It was this attitude and outlook that made him such an eminent scientist. On the eve of his death, all of the lights in the houses were turned off for a minute in his honour. In 1960, the USA recognised his amazing achievements by choosing him to be a member of the Hall of Fame for Great Americans. Thomas Edison will forever be remembered as one of the most excellent and inspirational minds of past generations.

Fun Facts!

Edison, who was fascinated with the subject of sound, was partially deaf.

Edison improved devices that already existed, like the telephone.

Edison married his first wife on Christmas Day, 1871.

Edison was titled 'The man who invented the future' and the 'Wizard of Menlo Park'.

Edison built his first laboratory at the age of 10 in his basement.

Edison proposed to Mary Stillwell through Morse Code.