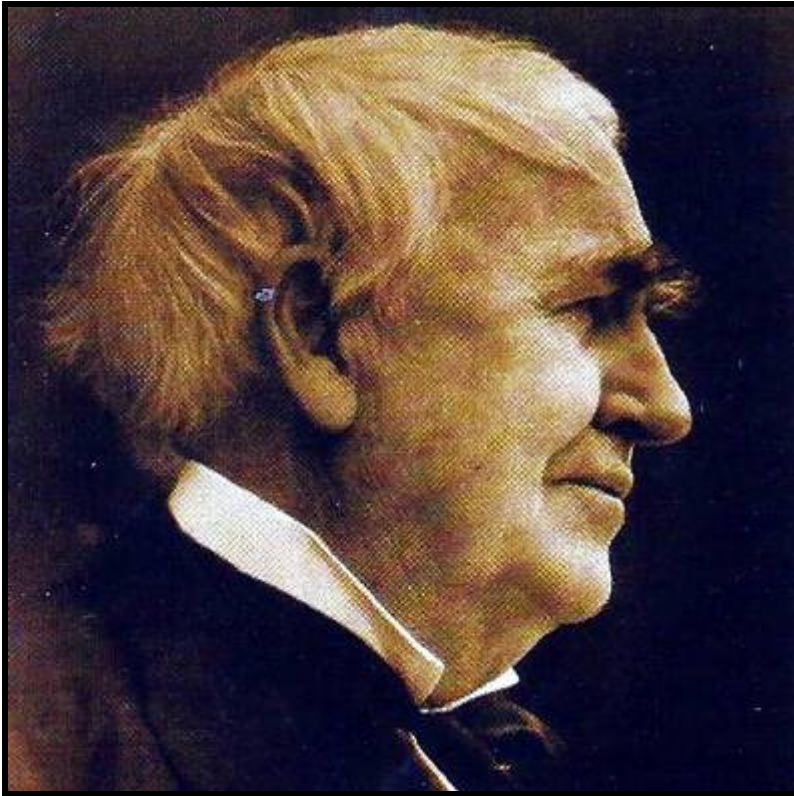


THOMAS ALVA EDISON and THE INCANDESCENT LAMP

by Brian Roberts, CIBSE Heritage Group



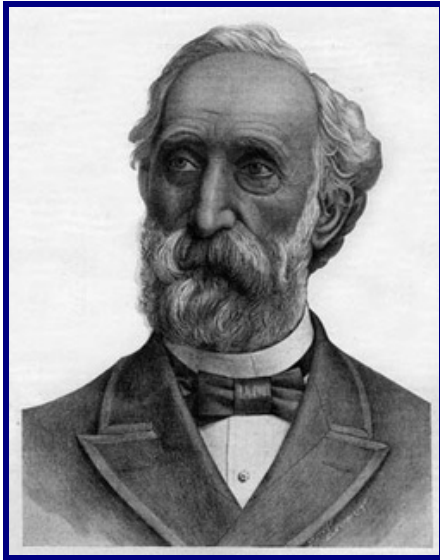
Thomas Alva Edison 1847-1931

Thomas Alva Edison was born in Milan, Ohio and grew up in Michigan, spending only three months at school, being taught at home by his schoolteacher mother and being essentially self-educated. At the age of 12 he started work by selling newspapers. In 1862, he trained as a telegraphist, rapidly becoming an expert operator and a repairer of machines. In 1868, he settled in Boston working for Western Union and inspired by the work of Faraday spent his free time carrying out experiments in electricity. In 1869, he invented an improved ticker-tape machine for the stock market and began manufacturing high speed printing machines in Newark, New Jersey. With the monies now earned, in 1876, he set up an industrial research laboratory at Menlo Park, New Jersey, moving to West Orange, NJ, in 1887.

With his research team, he invented the photograph and a dictating machine and improved on the telephone of Alexander Graham Bell. In 1879, he patented the first *successful* incandescent light-bulb using a carbon filament in a vacuum. Perhaps his most significant contribution, in 1882, was the establishment of a complete electrical generating and direct current distribution system for lighting a district of New York. This included generators, cabling, switches, plugs, meters and light bulbs

LAMP PIONEERS: DE MOLEYNS, STAITE & SWAN

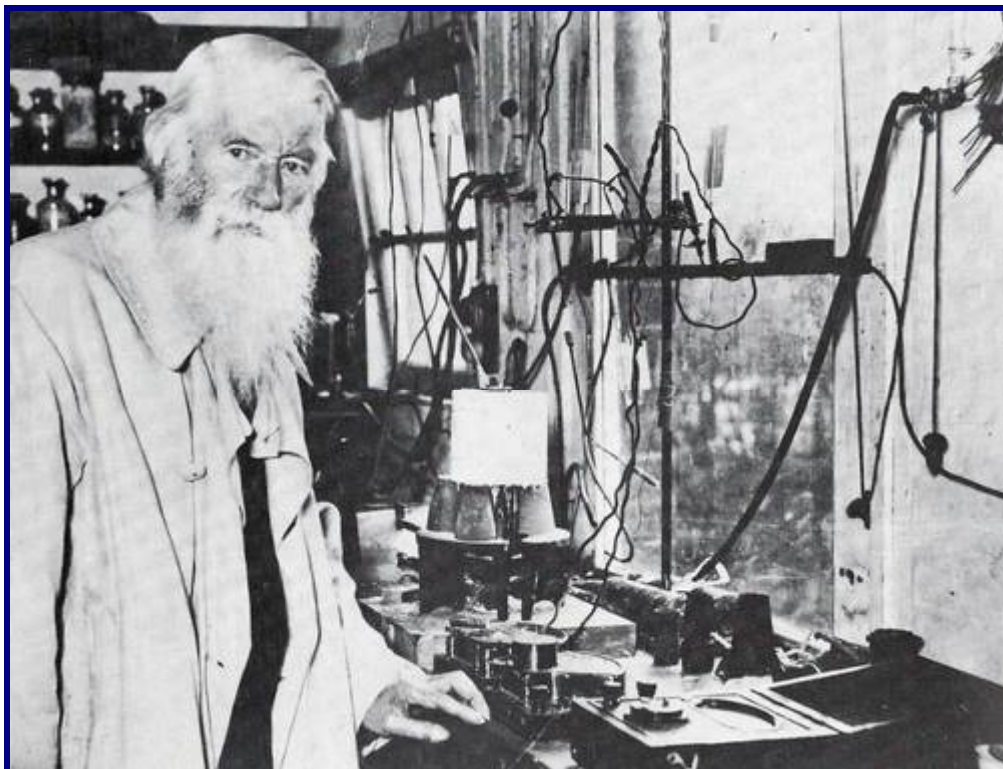
Edison was not the first researcher to see the possibilities of using an electric incandescent lamp for lighting. In 1841, before Edison was born, the Englishman, Frederick De Moleyns secured a British Patent for an incandescent lamp and in 1848 Wilson Edwards Staite of Bristol also developed an incandescent lamp. Both used platinum as the filament, but this was too expensive for commercial use and only electricity from batteries was then available. Other lamp pioneers include De La Rue (1820), Groves (1840), Starr (1845) and Roberts (1852). However, it was in Gateshead that Joseph Wilson Swan experimented with filament lamps from 1848 to 1860 and was partially successful in 1878 and 1880. Though his lamps lit up, the filaments rapidly burnt out.



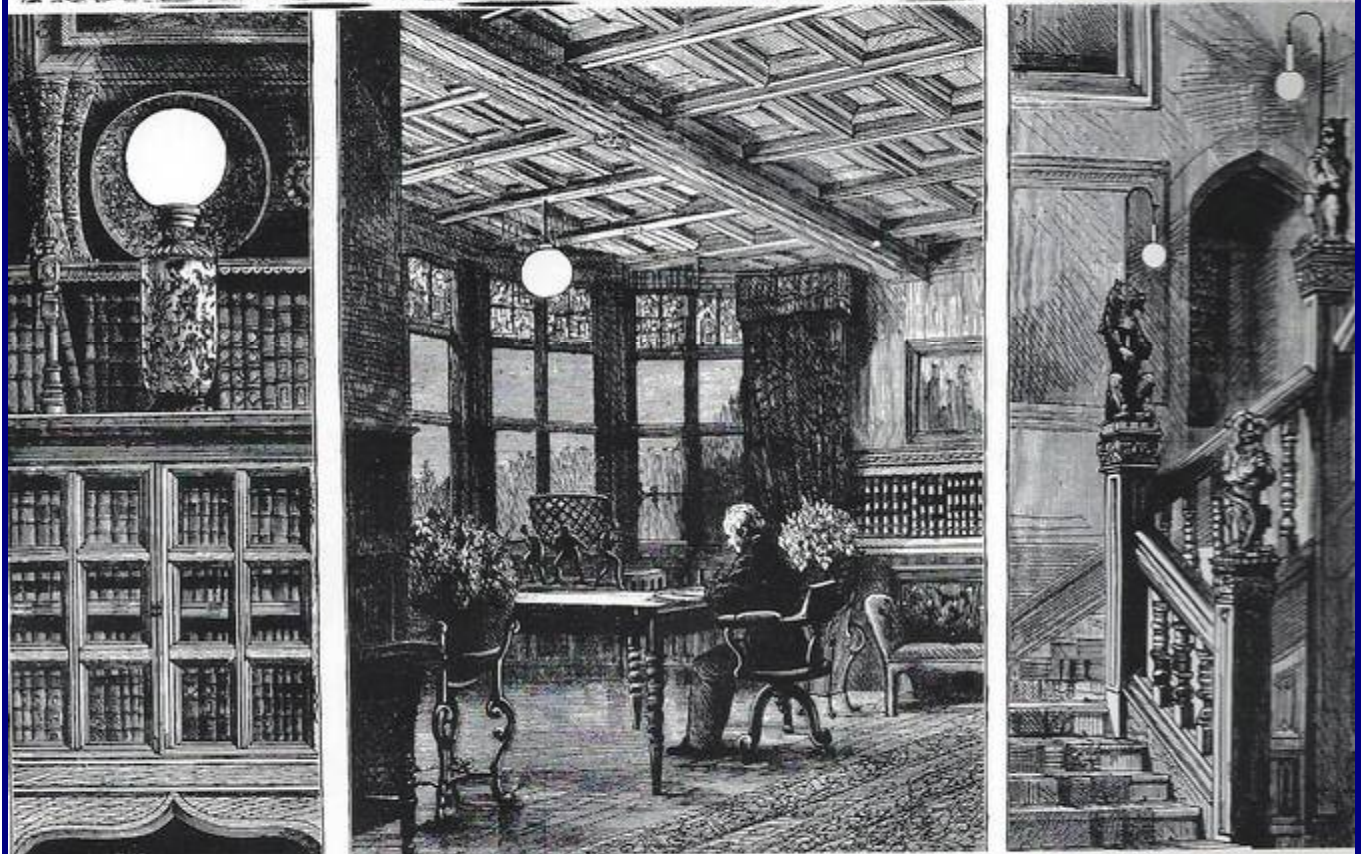
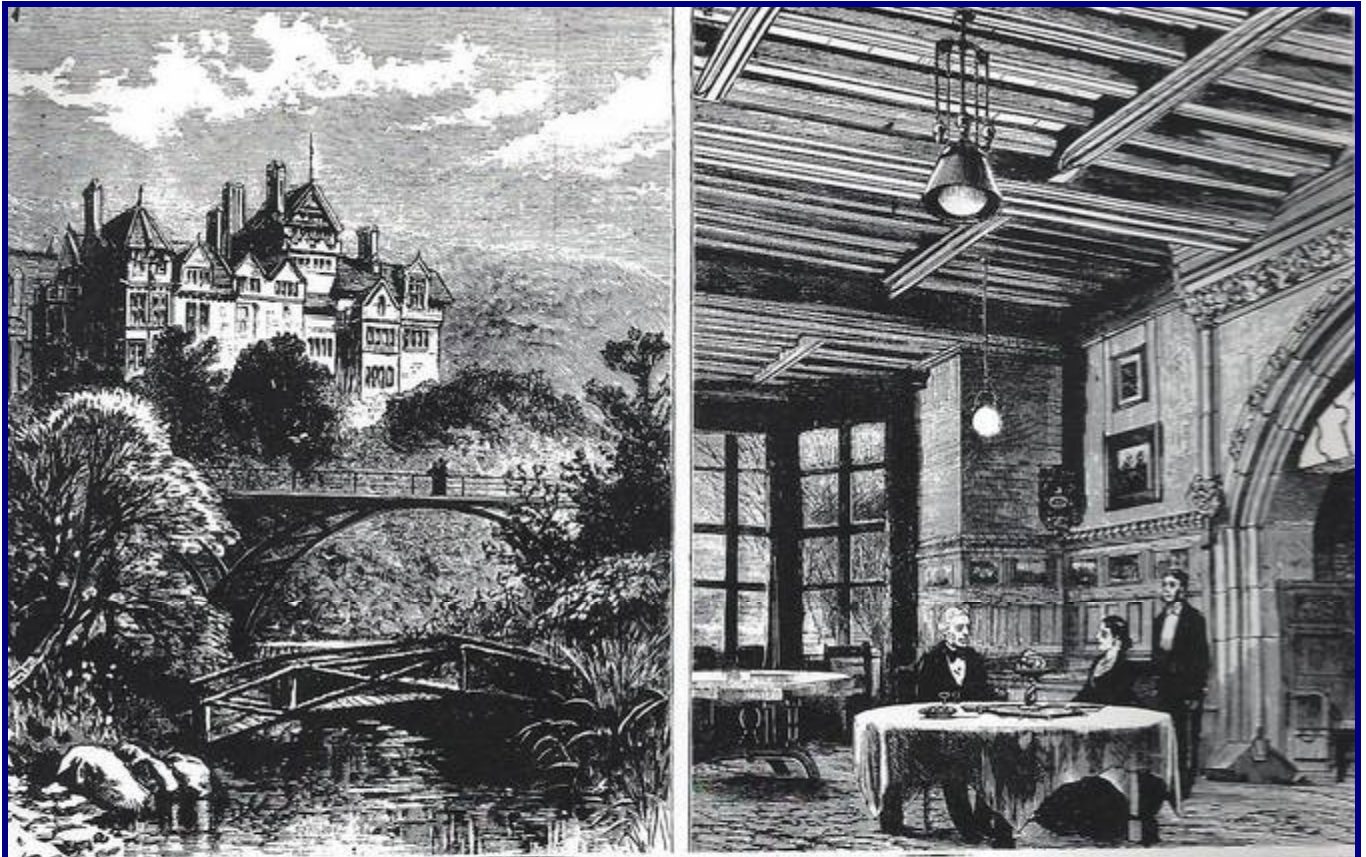
Frederick De Moleyns, d. 1854



Wilson Edwards Staite, 1808-54



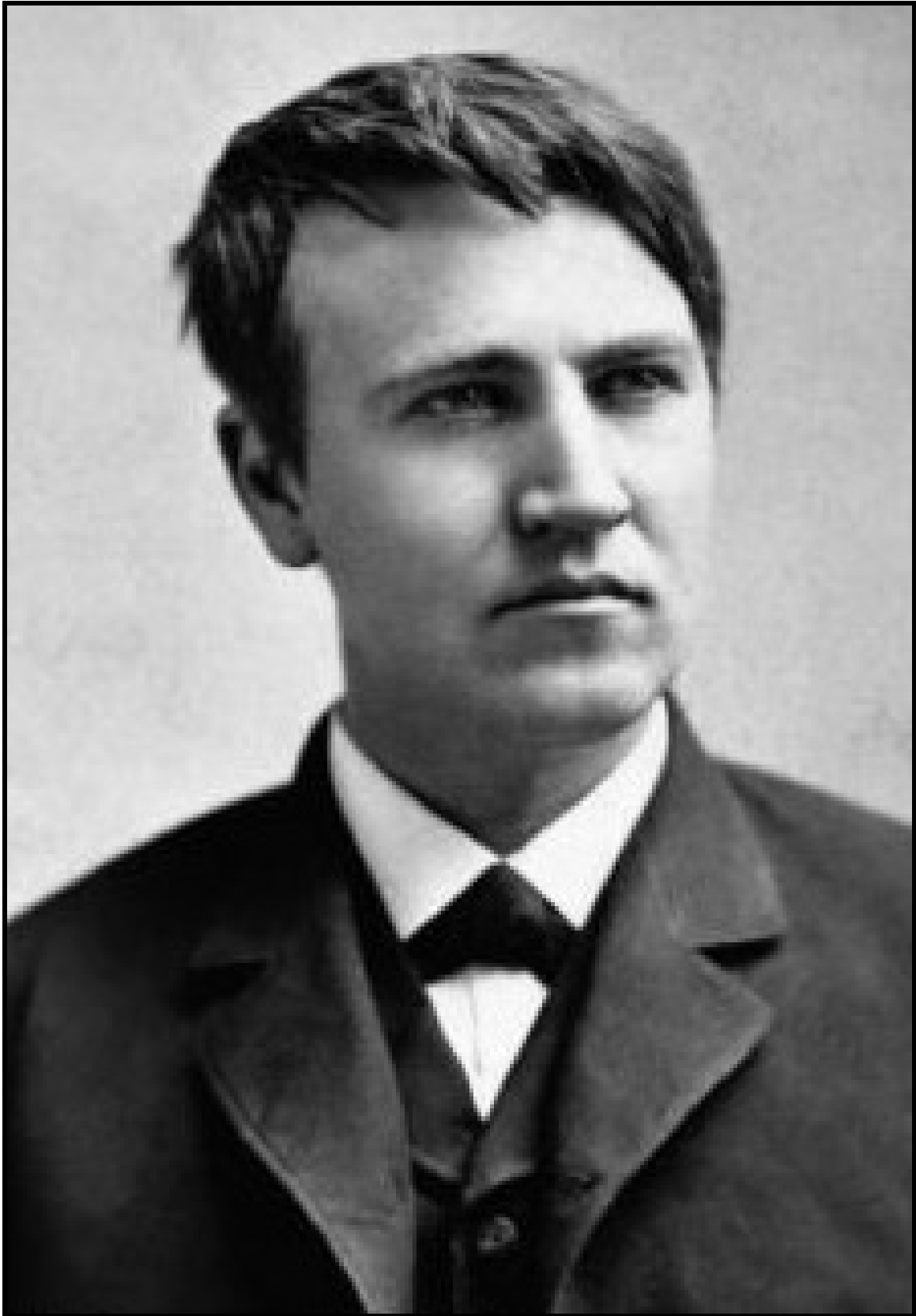
Sir Joseph Wilson Swan, 1828-1914



1. View of Cragside.—2. The Dining Room.—3. The Library.—4. The Bay Window in the Library.—5. The Staircase.
ELECTRIC LIGHTING BY THE SWAN SYSTEM AT SIR WILLIAM ARMSTRONG'S RESIDENCE, CRAGSIDE

Swan's electric light was provided at Cragside in Northumberland in 1880. This was the first English country house to be lit by incandescent lamps, the electric power coming from a water turbine powering a Siemens dynamo. In 1895, the installation was enlarged by the addition of a Parker dynamo, this work carried out by Drake & Gorham

THE WIZARD OF MENLO PARK



Thomas Alva Edison



Edison's Menlo Park Laboratory



Edison's team of researchers at Menlo Park, February 1880



Edison's research team on the steps outside the Menlo Park laboratory

Electric light
 Carbon Spools
 Mr. A. Chas. Satchelov
 Oct 22nd 1879
 9 am.
 We made some very interesting ex-
 periments on straight wire carbons
 made from Cotton thread etc.
 We took a piece of Good
 thread No. 24 which is
 about 18 thousandths in
 thickness and after
 fastening to Pt wire we carbonized
 it in a closed Chamber. we put in
 a bulb and in vacuo it gave a
 light equal to about $\frac{1}{2}$ candle
 it also carbon. it had resistance
 of 113 Ohms at starting & afterward
 went up to 140 - probably due to
 vibration

Oct. 22, 1879. 171
 Carbon spirals and threads
 Trying to make a lamp of
 a carbonized thread. 100 Ohms
 can be made from wire
 of .010 inch thread.
 A ~~short~~ thread with 45 Ohms
 resistance when cold was brought
 up in a high vacuum to 4 candles
 about. It remained constant
 for two or three hours and
 then the resistance seemed to con-
 tract in one spot. Resistance
 cold 600 Ohms.

Pages from the 1879 Menlo Park research notebooks

EDISON'S LIGHT.

The Great Inventor's Triumph in Electric Illumination.

A SCRAP OF PAPER. It Makes a Light, Without Gas or Flame, Cheaper Than Oil.

TRANSFORMED IN THE FURNACE. Complete Details of the Perfected Carbon Lamp.

FIFTEEN MONTHS OF TOIL. Story of His Tireless Experiments with Lamps, Burners and Generators.

SUCCESS IN A COTTON THREAD. The Wizard's Byplay, with Bodily Pain and Gold "Tailings."

HISTORY OF ELECTRIC LIGHTING.

The near approach of the first public exhibition of Edison's long looked for electric light, announced to take place on New Year's Eve at Menie Park, on a late occasion that piece will be illuminated with the new light, has revived public interest in the great inventor's work, and throughout the civilized world scientists and people generally are anxiously awaiting the result. From the beginning of his experiments in electric lighting to the present time Mr. Edison has kept his laboratory guardedly closed, and no authoritative account (except that published in the *Herald* some months ago relating to his first patent) of any of the important steps of his progress has been made public—a course of procedure the inventor found absolutely necessary for protection. The *Herald* is now, however, permitted to its readers a full and accurate account of its inception to its completion.

such closing making a new passage for the electric current and causing it off from the incandescent platinum. When the latter constructed, as it did the moment the heat was lessened, the lever returned to its normal position and allowed the electric current to again pass through the platinum. By this device the inventor hoped to be able to keep the incandescent platinum always a little in the melting point. The contrivance is described in his first patent as follows:—

"The first current given off by a coil of wire of platinum or other metal that requires a high temperature to melt, the electric current tending to the same temperature. In all such lights there is danger of regulating the electric current and thereby passing through such incandescent conductor, and preventing its temperature rising to the melting point, thus producing a reliable electric light."

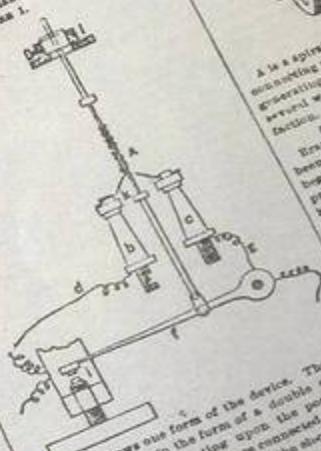


FIG. 1 shows one form of the device. The incandescent metal is in the form of a double spiral A, the two ends terminating upon the posts b, c, to which the conductors d, e, are connected. A circuit closing lever, f, is introduced in the lever, g, at the points of contact being at i, and there is a fine, or similar wire, h, connected with the wire from a magnet machine is connected with the spiral from a, and the current then goes from E to the post, c, thence around the wire, d, and through the spiral, E and d. The current then goes from E to the post, c, thence around the wire, d, and through the spiral, E and d. The current then goes from E to the post, c, thence around the wire, d, and through the spiral, E and d.

induced by the passage of the electric current through the spiral, A, which heat was sufficient to melt the platinum. To avoid this, the inventor introduced a light which more readily melts than platinum, and a series of experiments, and from time to time made many alterations and improvements, but eventually the apparatus was placed in the laboratory of the inventor.

Realizing from the fact the necessity of the light-giving substance offering more resistance to the passage of the electric current—a constant increase in the resistance of the light-giving substance and force that gave a variable resistance to the current, the inventor kept a close watch for the regulating apparatus, which largely embodied the above requirement and for a time gave good results.



FIGURE 2. A is a spiral of carbon with two large ends, B, C, connected with the wires leading to the machine for generating the current. This device was used for several weeks, but did not, as a whole, give satisfactory results.

After making his own electric light, Edison branched off from the line of investigation he had been previously following. Mr. Edison at the time began experimenting with a view to having the light produced by means of a filament of carbon, the filament being supported by two glass rods. The apparatus which he used for the purpose is shown in Figure 3.

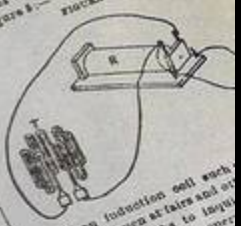


FIGURE 3. K is an induction coil such as is used in the electro-chemical industry. It is operated by means of a dynamo. The vacuum chamber is connected with the coil by means of a glass tube. The filament of carbon is supported by two glass rods, L and M, which are connected with the dynamo. The apparatus is operated by means of a dynamo, which is connected with the coil by means of a glass tube.

The next regulator was in the form of a diaphragm, which cut off the electric current from the platinum every time the diaphragm was pressed outward beyond a fixed limit by the heated air. The regulation thus produced was so rapid that the eye could not perceive any diminution in the strength of the current. But this also was inadequate in many respects. The next important modification in the light was the substitution of platinum for the spiral of finely divided platinum incorporated with non-conducting material. When the electric current was passed through the combination and the non-conducting particles became incandescent with them became material incorporated with them not previously produced.

diaphragm and subjected to the vacuum process the platinum particles were pressed outward by the force of the air, and the diaphragm, giving a rotating surface to the platinum, which light was obtained, whereas the spiral of carbon was not so readily melted. The diaphragm was made of four pieces of platinum, which were held together by means of a screw. The diaphragm was made of four pieces of platinum, which were held together by means of a screw. The diaphragm was made of four pieces of platinum, which were held together by means of a screw.

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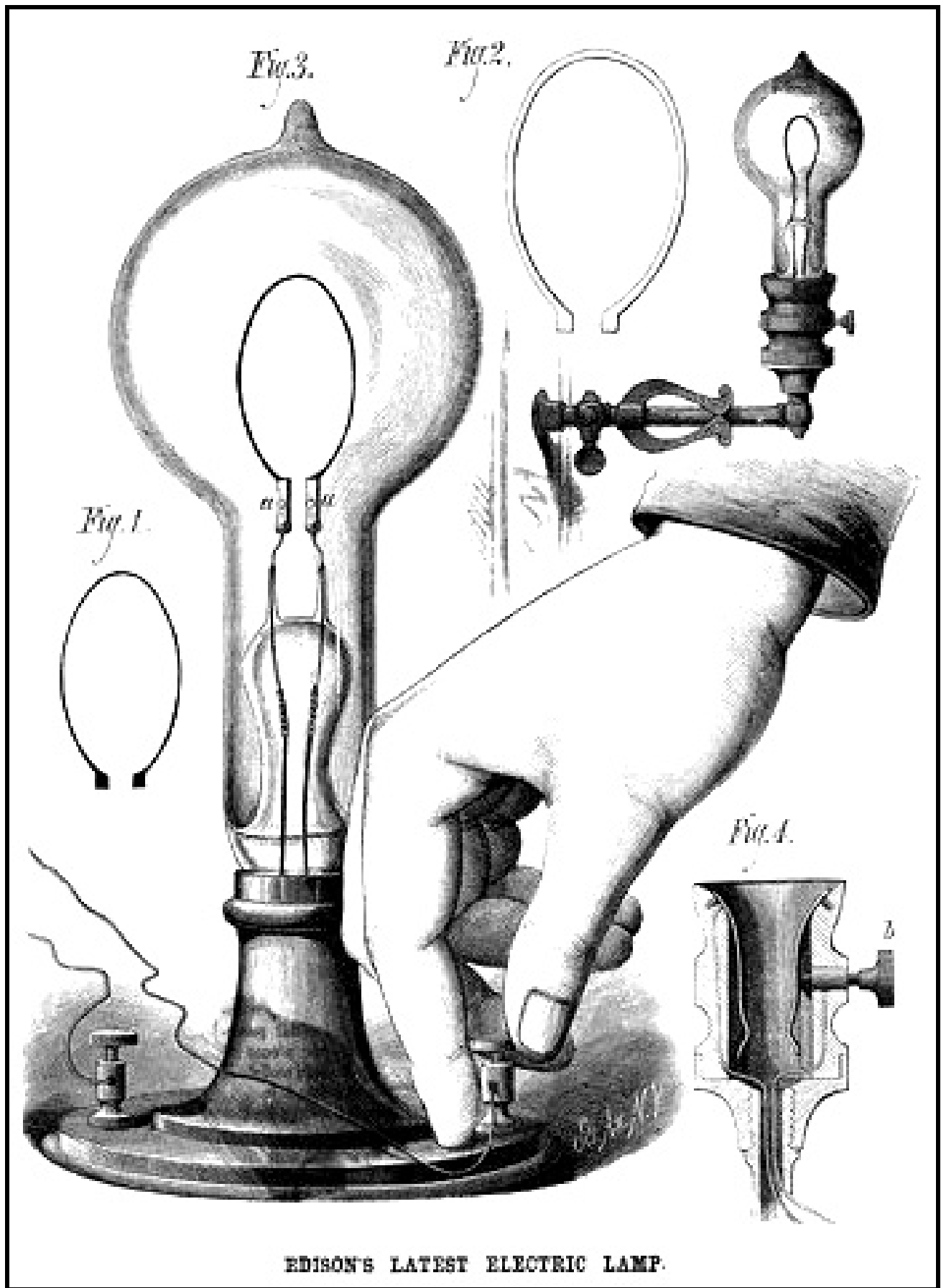
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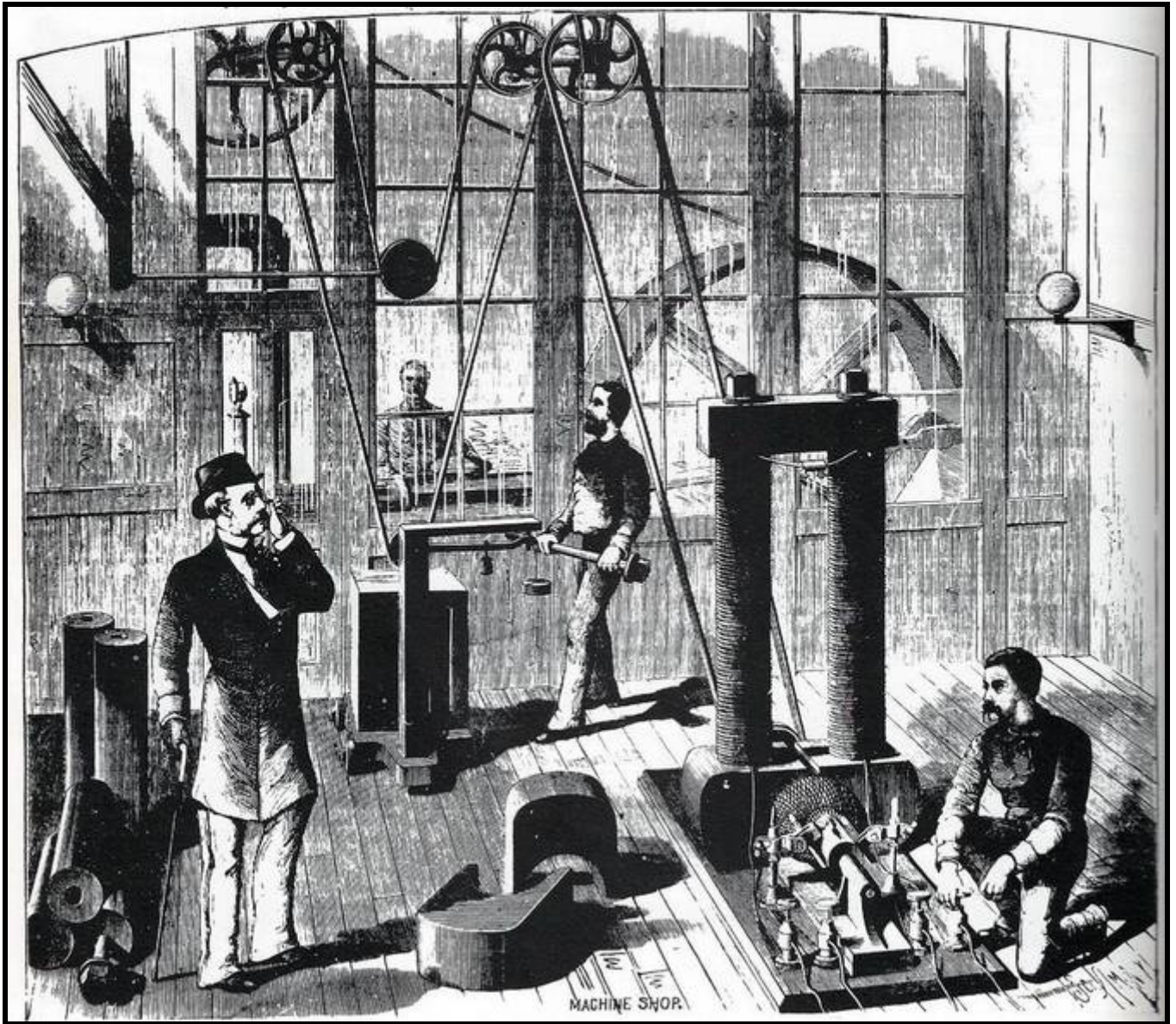
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New York Herald of Sunday, 21st December 1879 reporting Edison's electric light success



EDISON'S LATEST ELECTRIC LAMP.



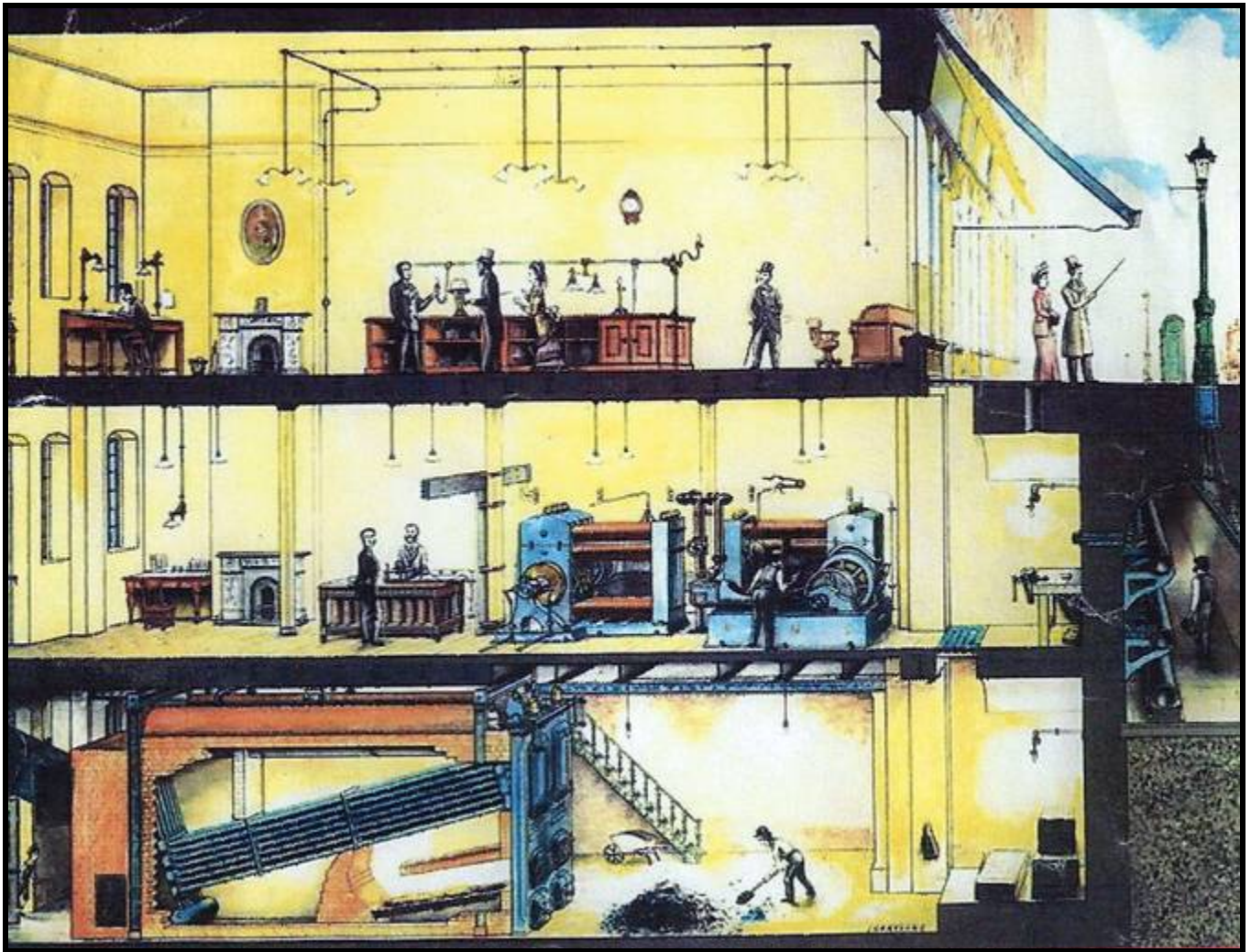
Edison's Machine Shop and his Constant-Voltage Transformer

Michael Faraday invented the transformer in 1831 but it was developed by others, including: Pixii (1832), Hjorth (1855), Siemens (1856), Nollet (1863), Wheatstone (1866) and Gramme (1871).

Prior to 1878, the only known method of distributing direct electric current was using a *Constant Current Dynamo* with lamps connected in series. However, in 1878, Edison developed his *Multiple System* employing a *Constant Voltage Dynamo* with lamps connected in parallel. Edison went on to produce his giant *Jumbo Dynamo* and in 1882 used two machines in his London Holborn Power Station and then six machines in his New York Pearl Street Power Station.

Later, in 1883, he developed his three-wire system, probably based on John Hopkinson's British Patent of 1882. (Hopkinson was then acting as a consultant to the Edison Company of London and designed the Edison-Hopkinson dynamo which improved efficiency and increased output. Hopkinson later developed a five-wire system).

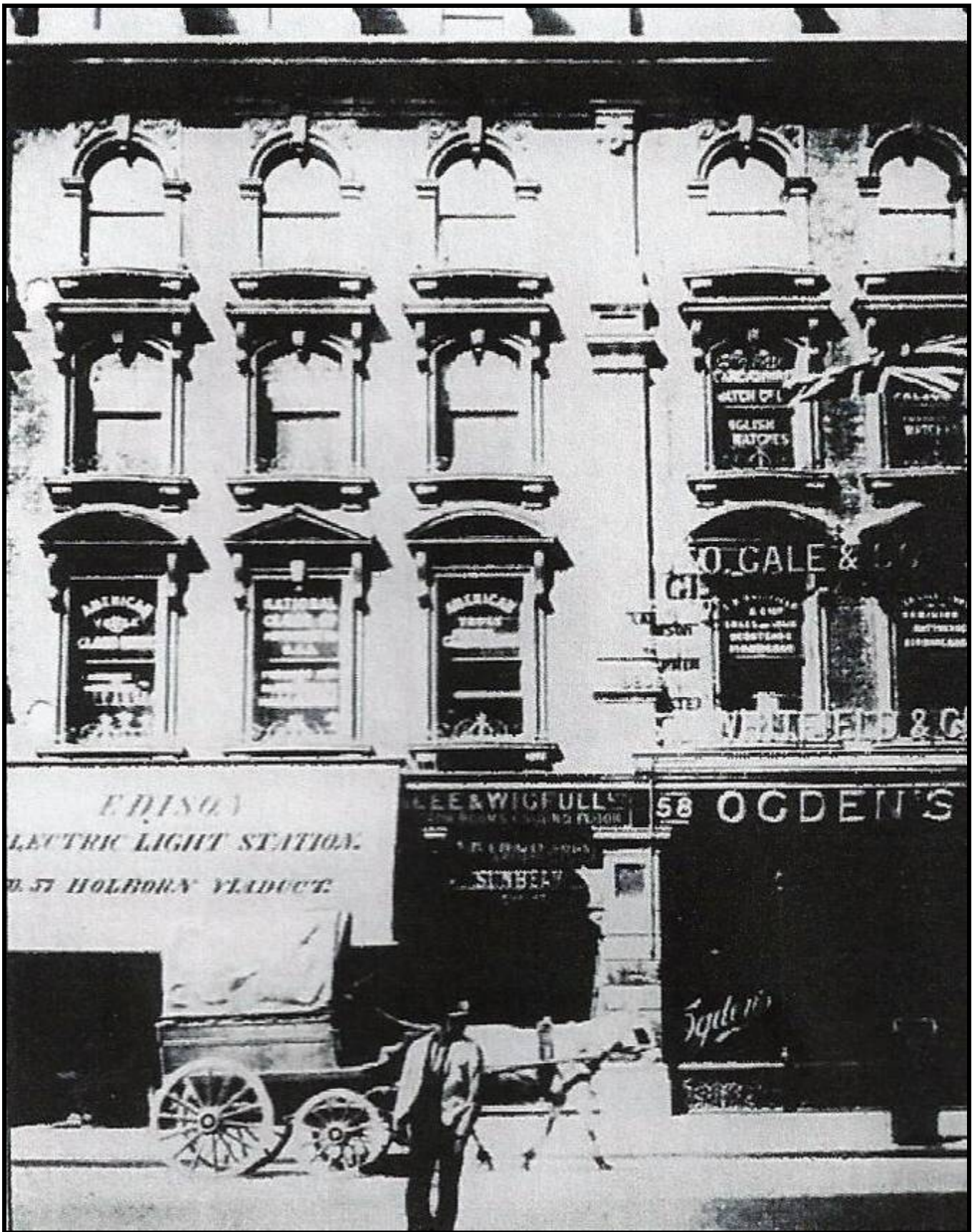
EDISON'S POWER STATION, HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, JANUARY 1882



The Edison Electric Light Station at 57 Holborn Viaduct in London is believed to be the first public steam power station in the world to cater for the private consumer as well as for public lighting. It started to operate on the 12th January 1882, nearly a year before the much larger and highly publicised Pearl Street Station in New York (often quoted as the first).

One report describes the installation: “Distribution was by DC at about 110 V by the two-wire system. Holborn Viaduct had roomy subways that carried the mains without the expense and legal problems of digging up streets. The two copper conductors were fixed in insulating material and carried in wrought iron pipes. Current for street lamps and for private consumers was taken.....via distribution boxes.”

The initial system had 968 lamps (400 being added later) originally supplied from two Edison American built “Jumbo” dynamos, each driven by a 125 horsepower Porter-Allen horizontal steam engine connected to a Babcock & Wilcox water-tube boiler. Edison considered this, his experiment, satisfactory from the technical viewpoint, but it was running at a loss and he closed it down in September 1886.

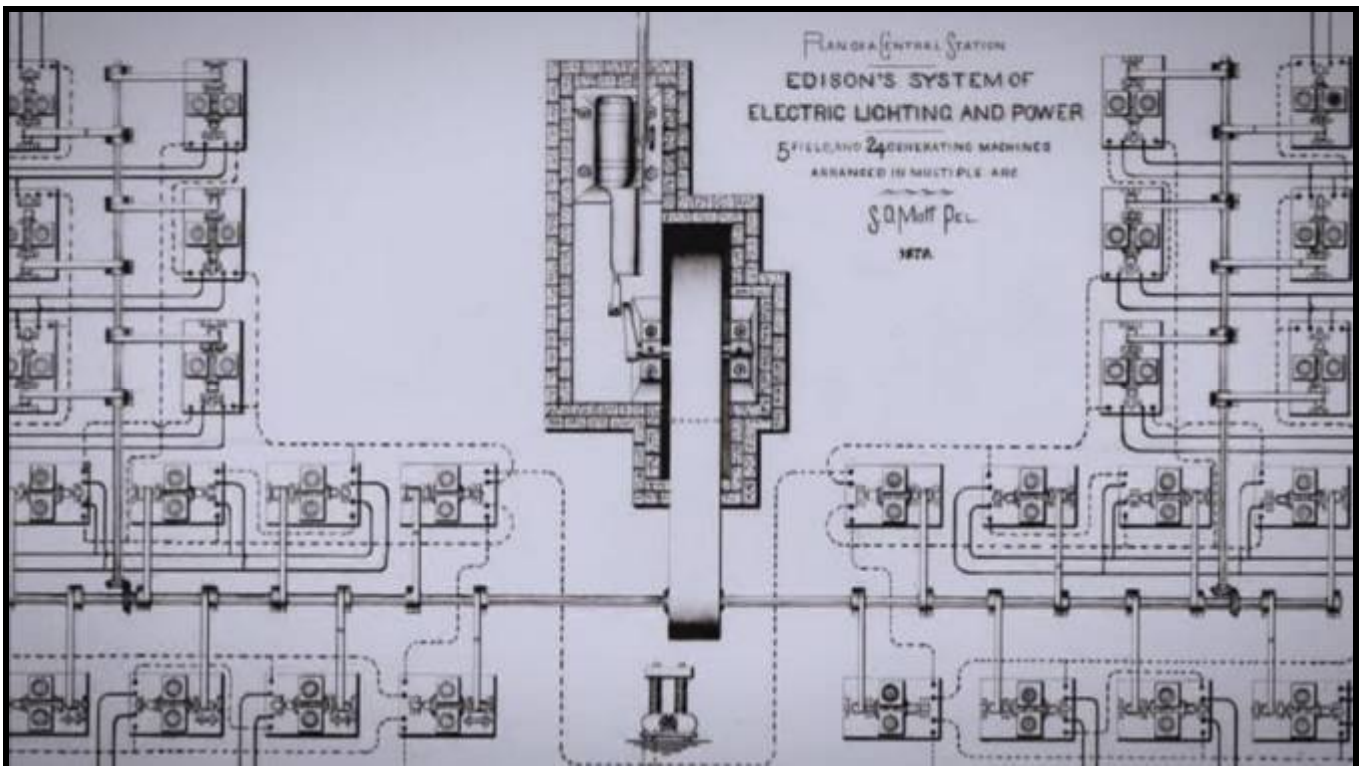


A shop awning advertising the "Edison Electric Light Station" at Holborn Viaduct

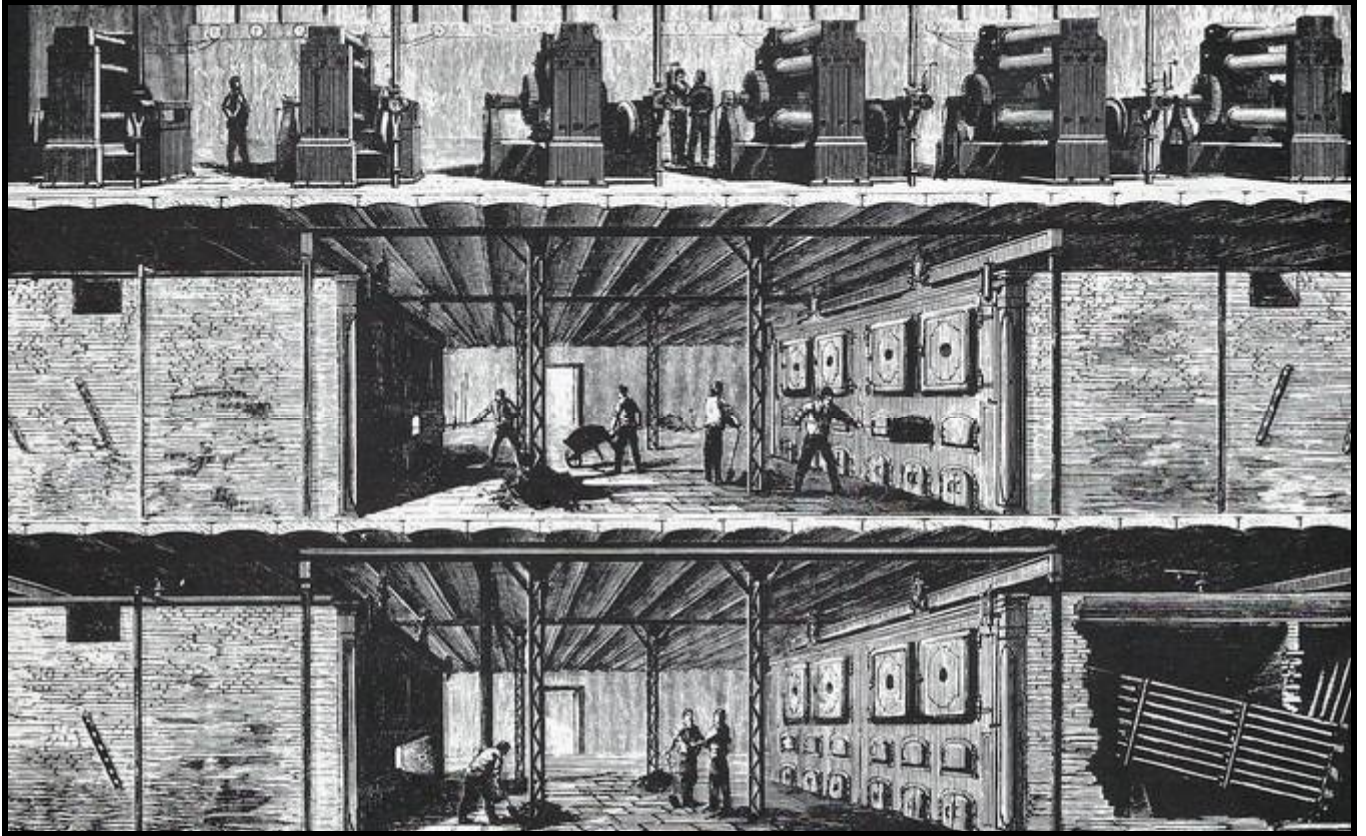
PEARL STREET POWER STATION, NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 1882



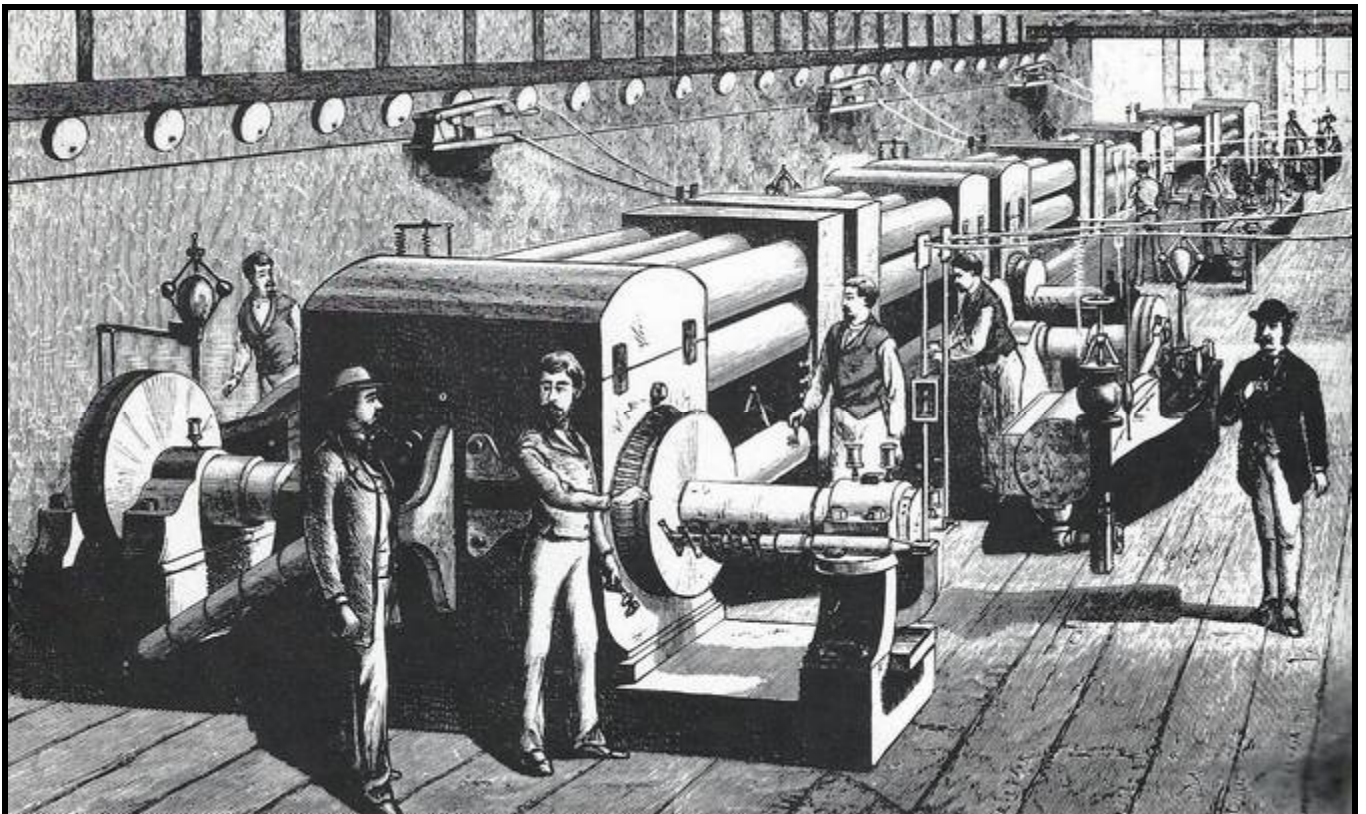
Birth of the incandescent electric lamp



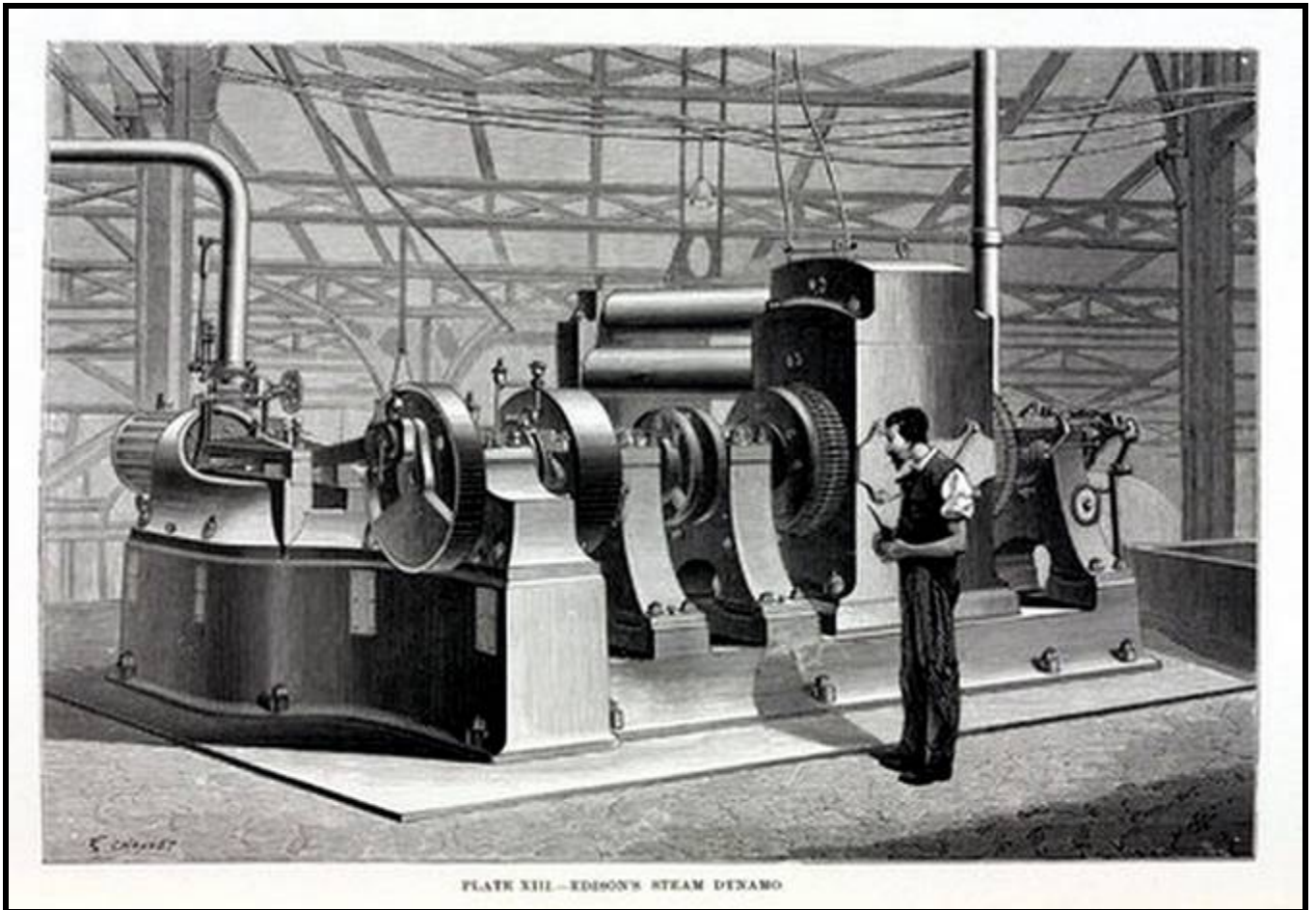
Drawing of Edison's plan for a Central Station distributing electric light and power



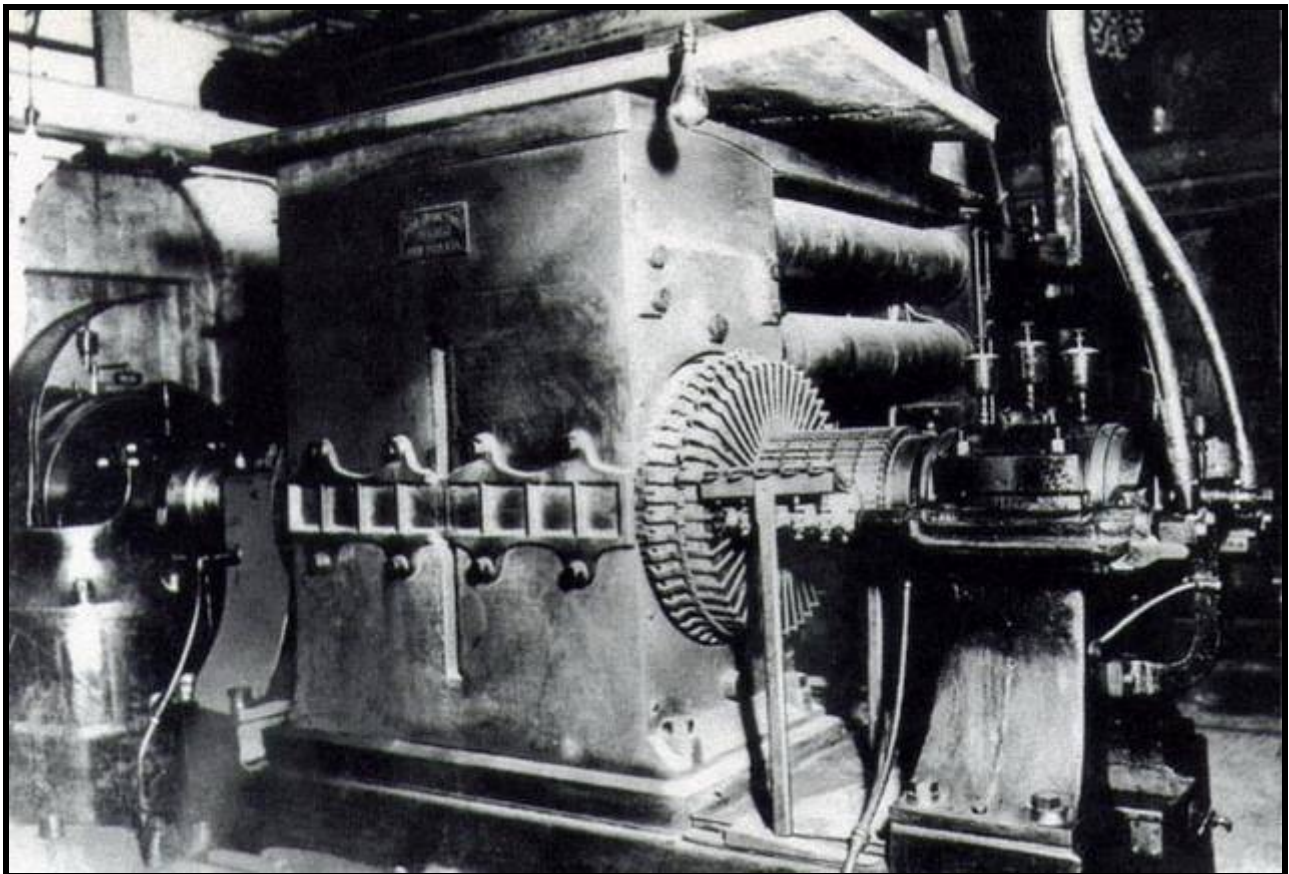
The three lower storeys of Edison's Pearl Street station housing dynamos and boilers, 1882



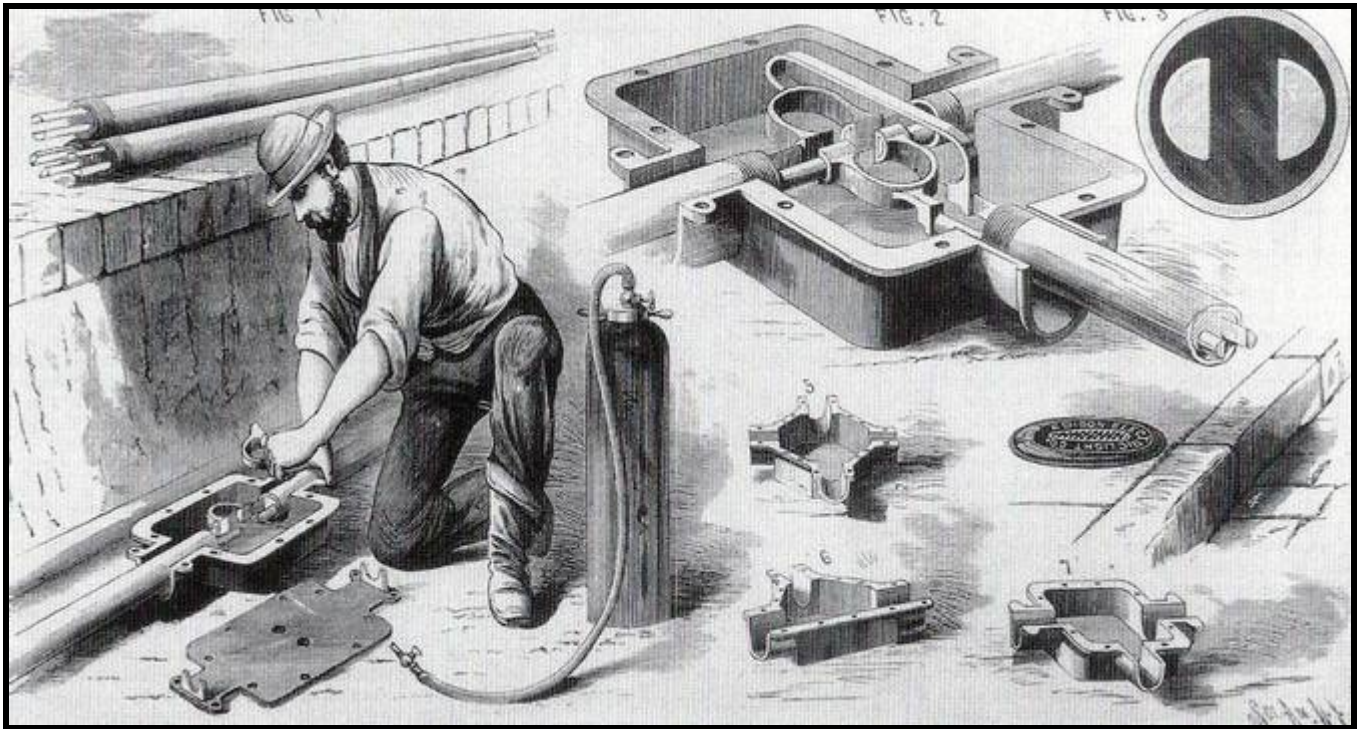
The dynamo room of Edison's Pearl Street Station, 1882



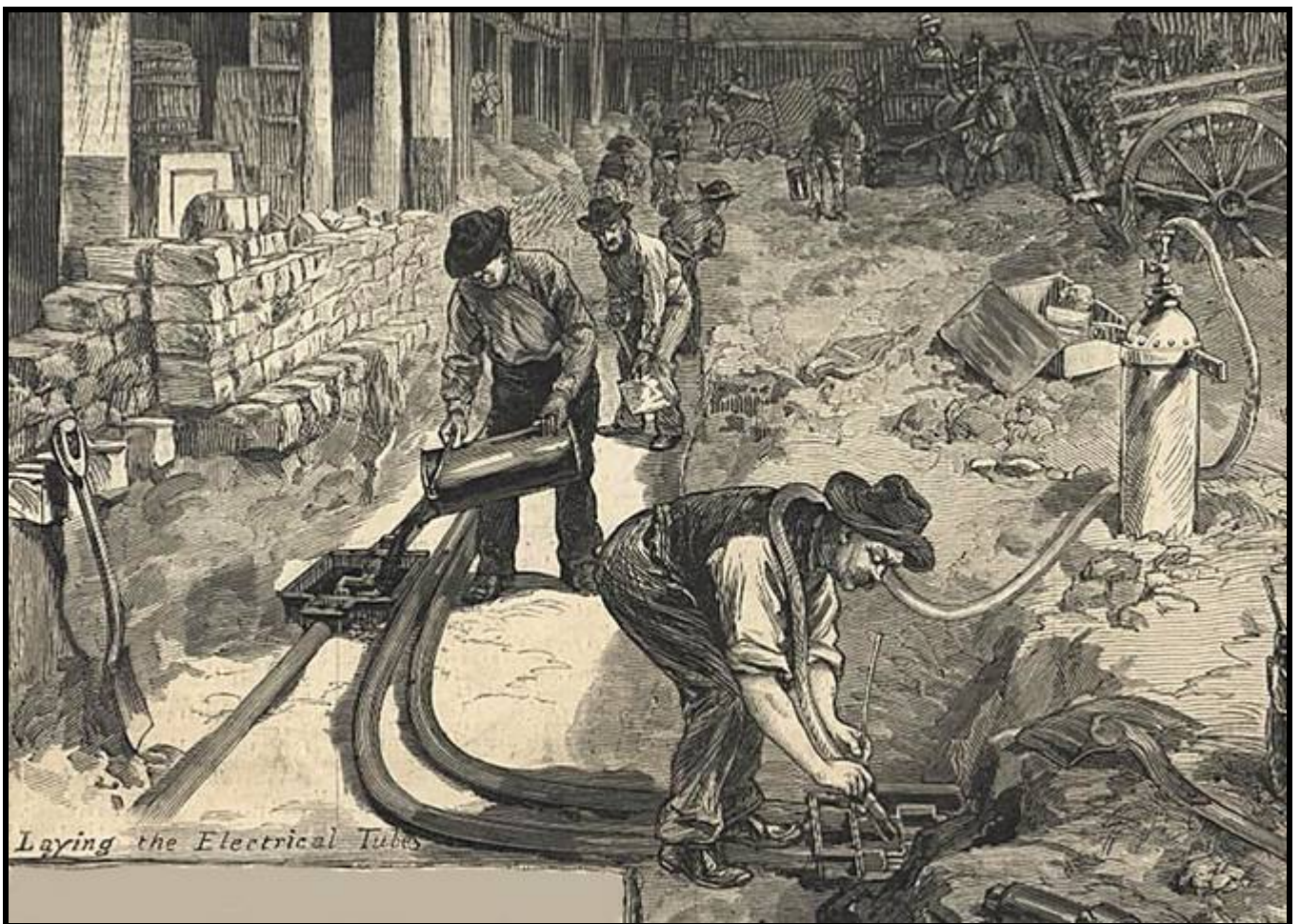
Drawing of Edison's Jumbo steam dynamo



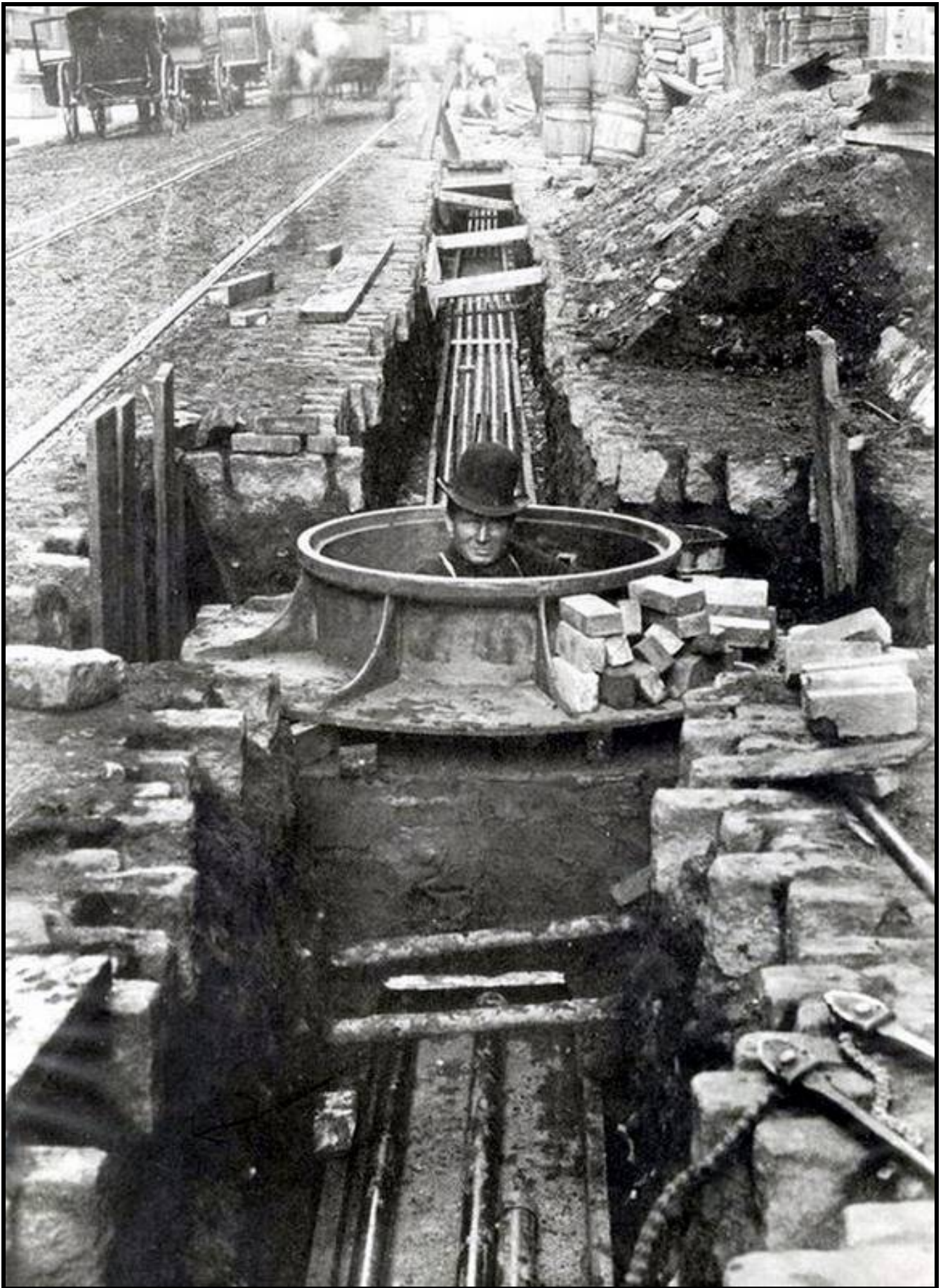
Edison's Jumbo dynamo



Laying Edison's electric light cables in the streets of New York City



Laying Edison's electric light cables in the streets of New York City



Laying Edison's electric light cables in the streets of New York City



Edison's first electric lamp factory 1881



Edison's Machine Works in east lower Manhattan set up in 1881 to produce Jumbo dynamos

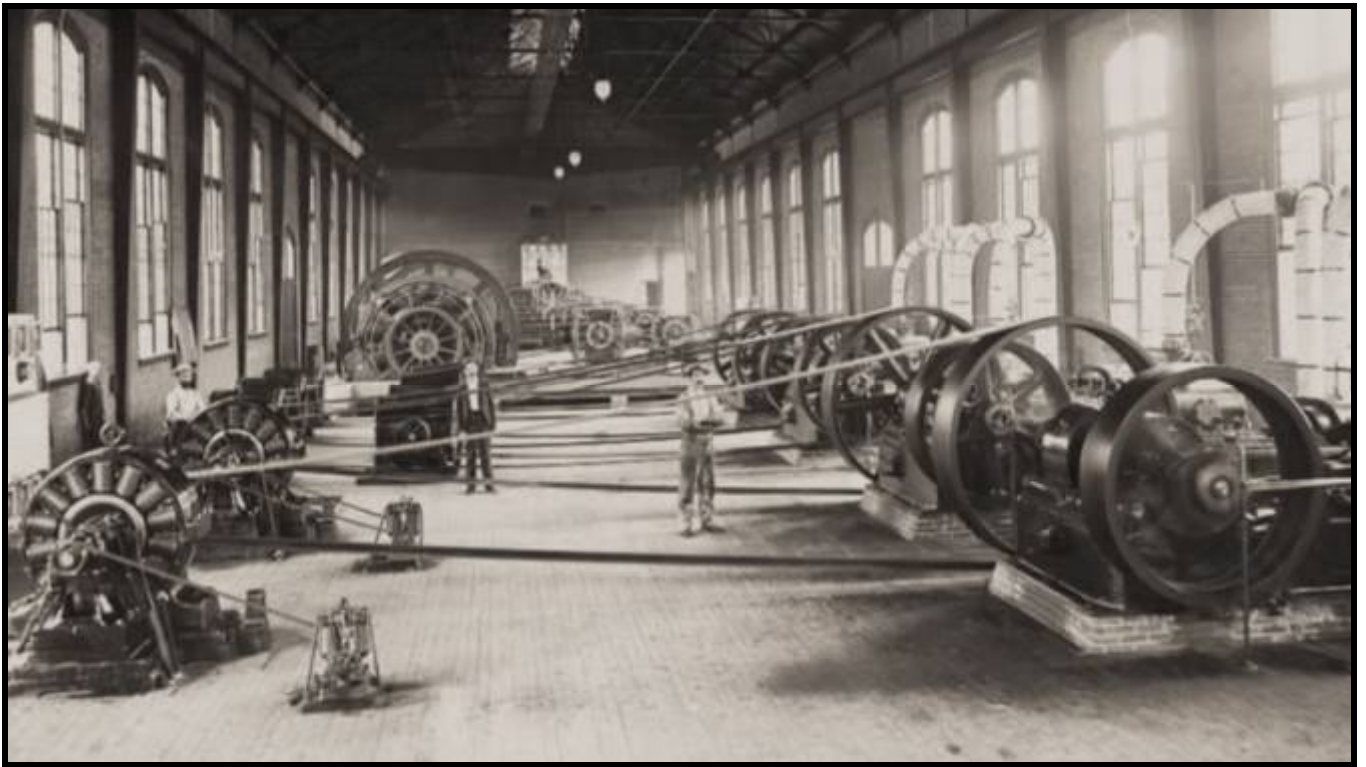
C.S. - 825 ★

THE
EDISON

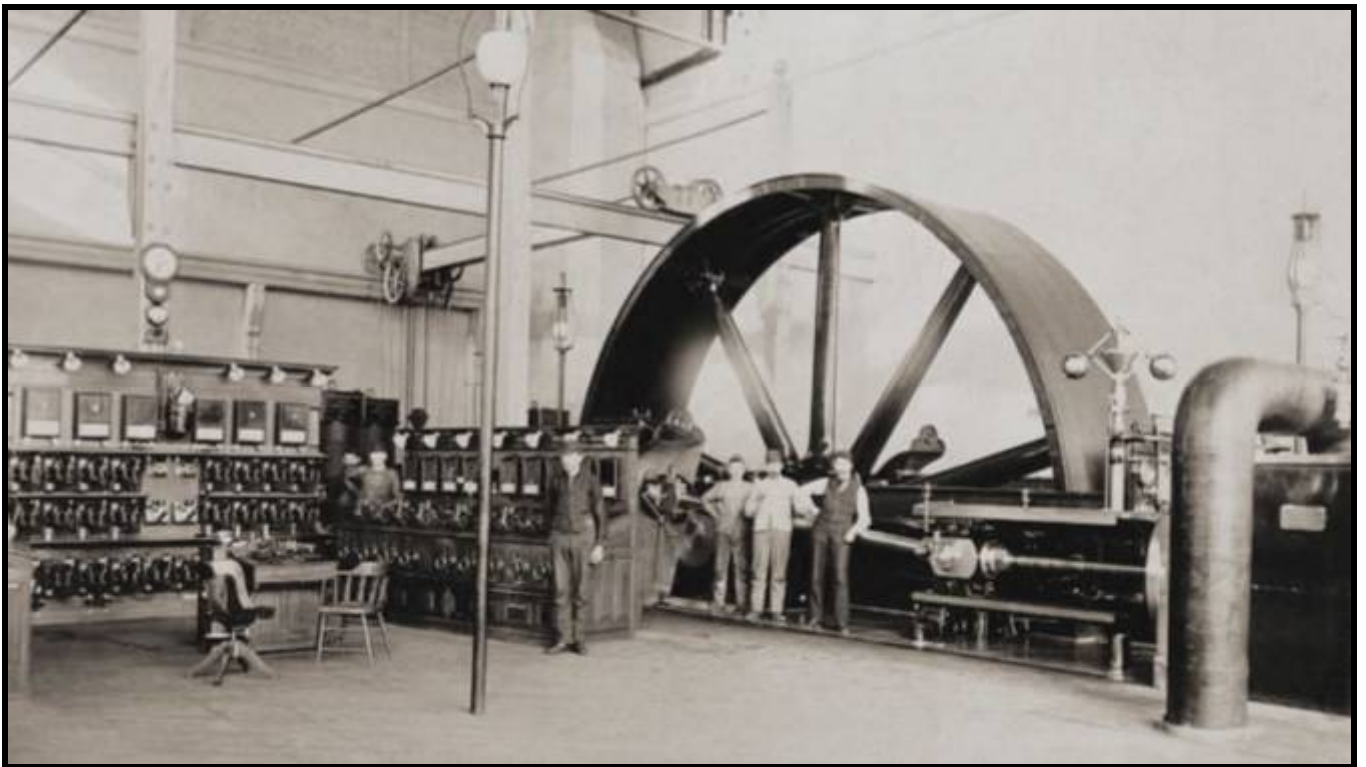
INCANDESCENT
ELECTRIC
LIGHT

*Its superiority
to all other
illuminants.*

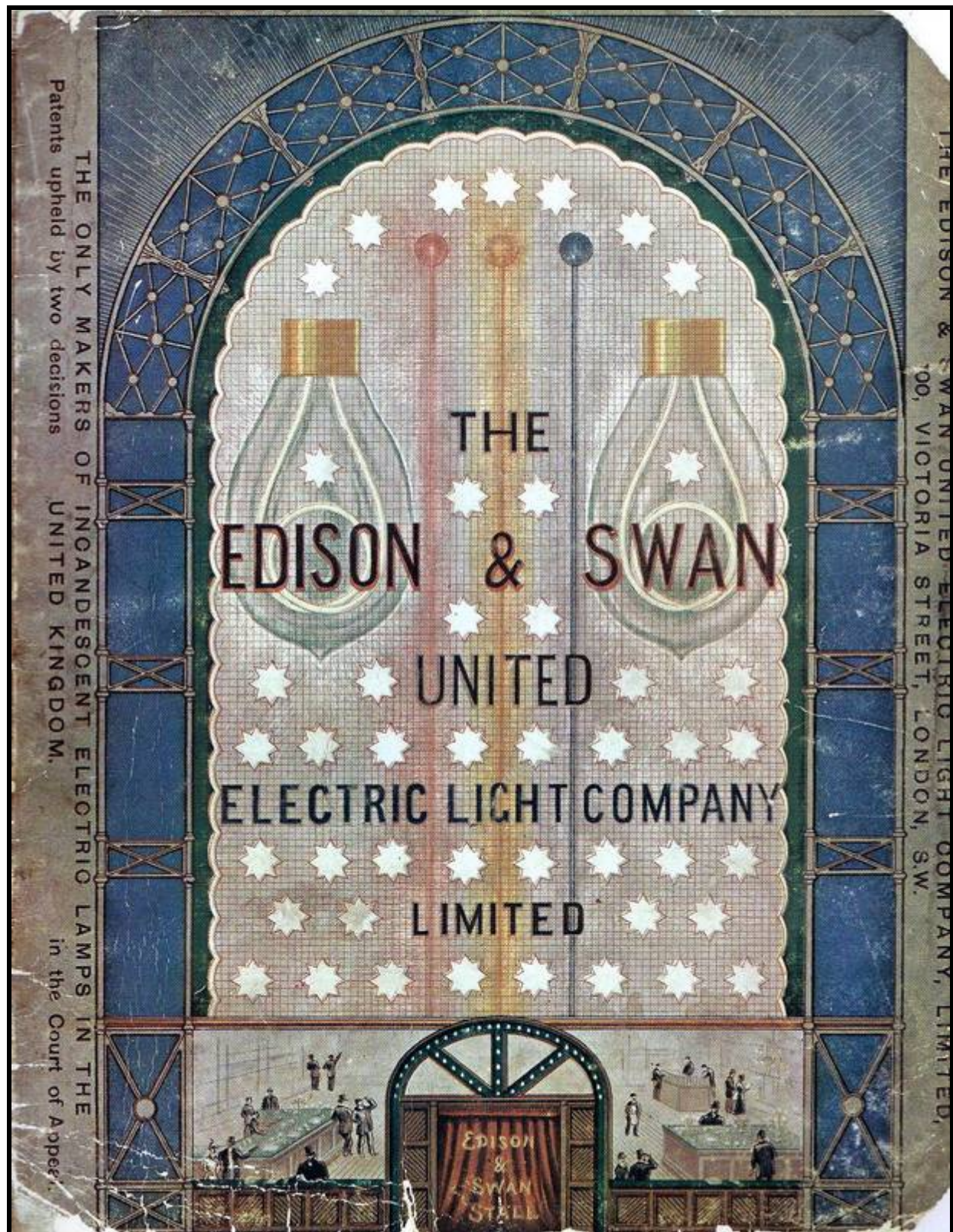
Incandescent electric light



An early Edison electric light direct current power station



Edison electric light power station



Brochure of the Edison & Swan Company

After initial legal arguments over patents, a possible court battle in Britain between the Edison and Swan companies was avoided when they agreed in 1883 to form the Edison & Swan United Electric Light Company Limited.

ENTER NIKOLA TESLA: AC versus DC, THE BATTLE OF THE CURRENTS

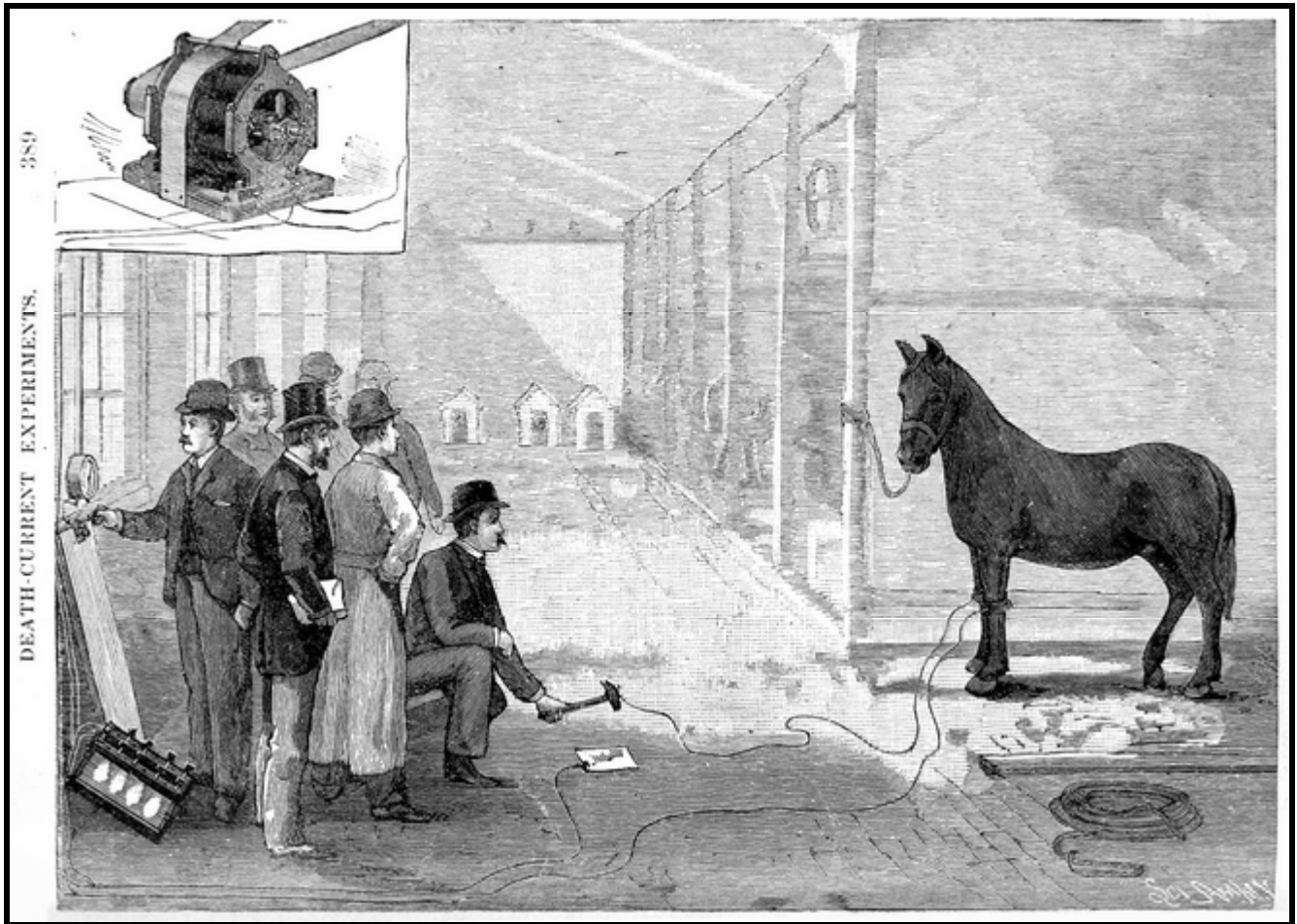


Nikola Tesla 1856-1943, took up American Citizenship in 1891

Alternating current was produced by the Frenchman Pixii in 1832 based on the principles set out by Michael Faraday. Other early researchers include Duchenne (1855) and Sebastian Ferranti who employed his alternating current systems at London's Grosvenor Gallery Power Station in the 1880s. In Hungary, the Ganz factory and ZDB developed high efficiency AC transformers and in 1886 installed a steam-powered AC power station in Rome. However, the widescale introduction of alternating current was due largely to Nikola Tesla and George Westinghouse in the United States.

Tesla was born on the 10th July 1856 in Serbia and gained experience in electrical engineering before emigrating to the United States in 1884 and working for Thomas Edison in New York City. Edison refused to accept new ideas and, probably because of his poor understanding of mathematics, could not fully comprehend the workings of the alternating current system. It appears that after Tesla was not given a promised bonus he resigned, which turned out to be a big mistake on Edison's part.

George Westinghouse, who made his fortune by inventing the railway air brake, saw the possibilities in alternating current systems and bought up Tesla's and various European patents and went into competition with Edison who waged a vitriolic campaign against AC. The battle ended in defeat for Edison since DC systems could only supply customers up to a mile from the power station while high voltage AC could be transmitted several hundred miles.



EDISON ELECTROCUTED AN ELEPHANT IN 1903 TO PROVE TESLA'S AC CURRENT WAS DANGEROUS.



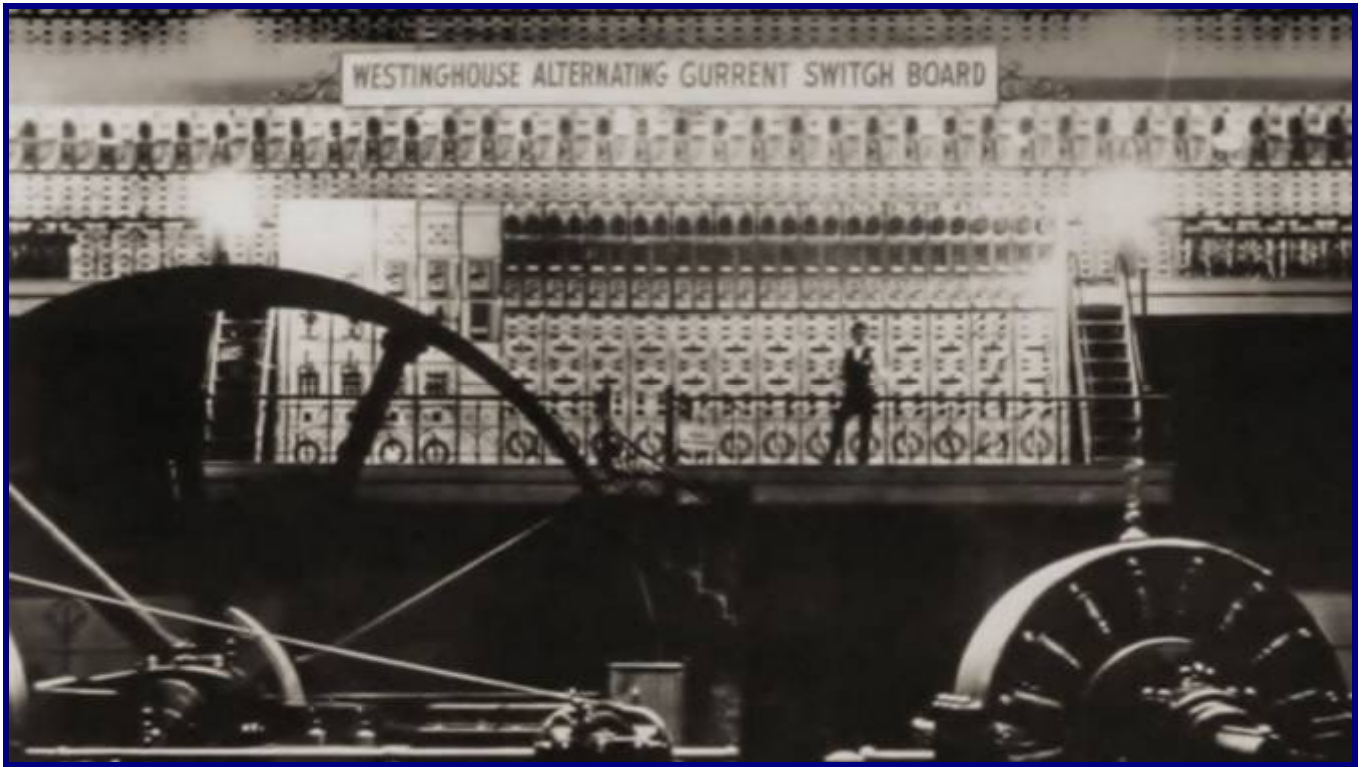
As part of his campaign against the introduction of the alternating current, Edison arranged demonstrations killing dogs, horses and even a rogue elephant by electrocution



George Westinghouse 1846-1914



The Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Company (later Westinghouse Electric Corporation) was founded in 1886



Westinghouse demonstrated his AC system at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893



The success of AC was assured when in 1896 the Niagara Falls hydroelectric power station went on-line with the first four of ten Tesla-Westinghouse 5000 horsepower generators providing 3-phase distribution lines to Buffalo, some 22 miles away

The Westinghouse Company and Thomson-Houston (with a Westinghouse licence) built more and more AC power stations. Edison's financial backers urged him to convert to AC but he refused. So they merged the Edison Company with Thomson-Houston and the General Electric Company was established in 1892.

CASSIERS' Electric Lamps MAGAZINE

GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY,

44 BROAD ST., NEW YORK CITY. 620 ATLANTIC AVE., BOSTON, MASS.

THE EDISON INCANDESCENT LAMP

IS THE ONLY
LAWFULLY



INCANDESCENT LAMP
MADE.

The right of the
to an injunction
has been
by
U. S. Circuit

Edison Company
against infringers
determined
the
Court of Appeals.

ALL OTHERS INFRINGE THE EDISON PATENTS AND ARE COUNTERFEITS.

See decision of U. S. Court of Appeals in case of Edison Electric Light Company vs. United States Electric Light Company, decided October 4th, 1892.

See decision U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals, December 15, 1892, in case of Edison Electric Light Co. and Edison General Electric Co. against Sawyer-Mann Electric Co.

Copies of these decisions will be sent on application.

BRANCH OFFICES.

620 Atlantic Ave., Boston, Mass.

173 and 175 Adams Street, Chicago, Ill.

264 West Fourth Street, Cincinnati, O.

Gould Building, Atlanta, Ga.

15 First Street, San Francisco, Cal.

44 Broad Street, New York.

509 Arch Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

1333 F Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

401-407 Sibley Street, St. Paul, Minn.

Masonic Temple, Denver, Colo.



Edison's first wife, Mary Stilwell 1855-84



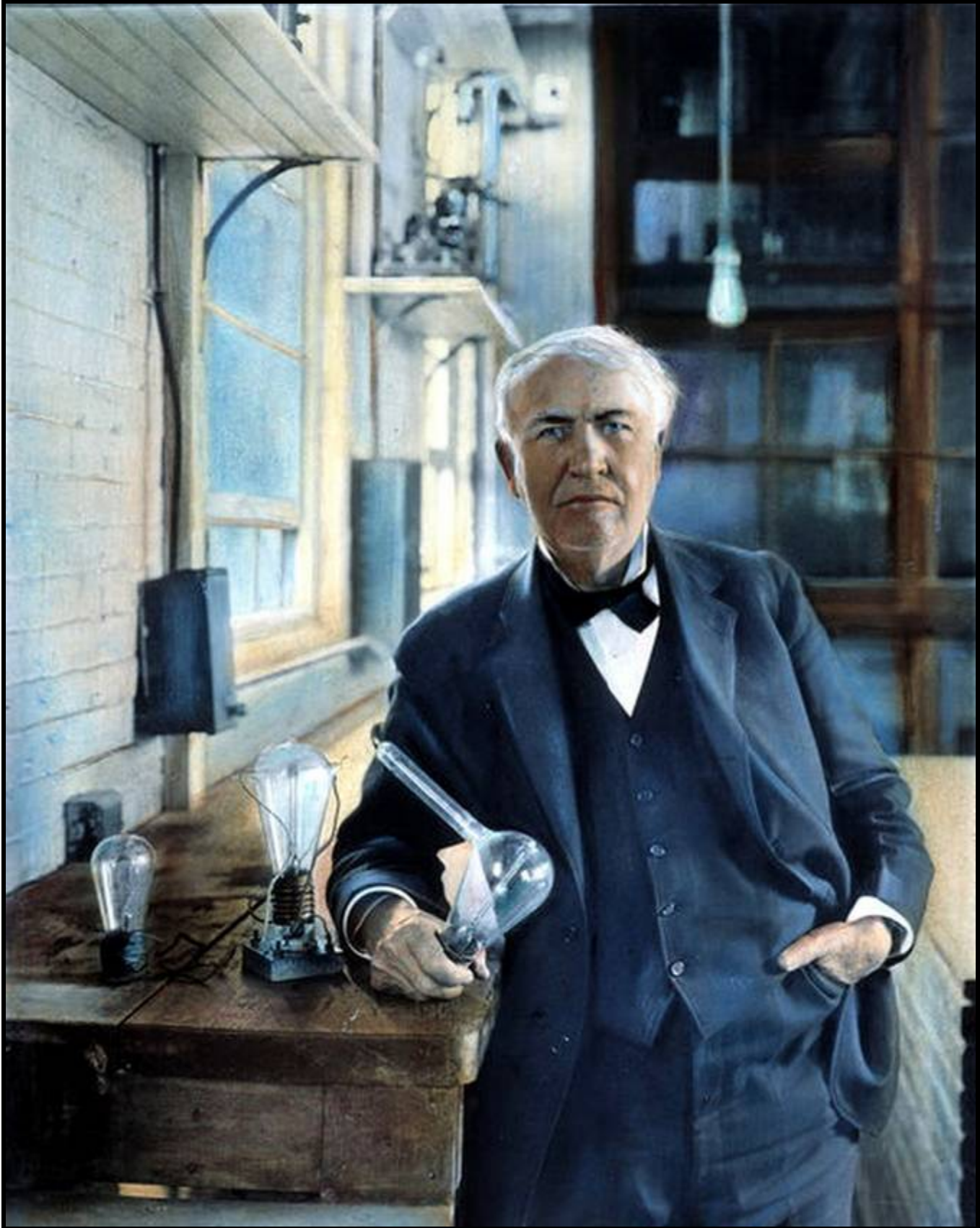
Edison's second wife, Mina Miller 1865-1947



Having lost interest in electric lighting, Edison spent the next ten years and two million dollars of his own money devising a process for the crushing of low grade iron ore from boulders to small particles and then using a magnetic separation process. It failed financially when large deposits of high grade ore were discovered elsewhere in the United States.



Edison lying in state at his West Orange Research Laboratory



This Room Is Equipped With
Edison Electric Light.

Do not attempt to light with
match. Simply turn key
on wall by the door.

The use of Electricity for lighting is in no way harmful
to health, nor does it affect the soundness of sleep.



APPENDIX: EDISON'S EARLY LAMP PATENTS

T. A. EDISON.
Electric-Lights.

No. 214,636.

Patented April 22, 1879.

Fig. 1.

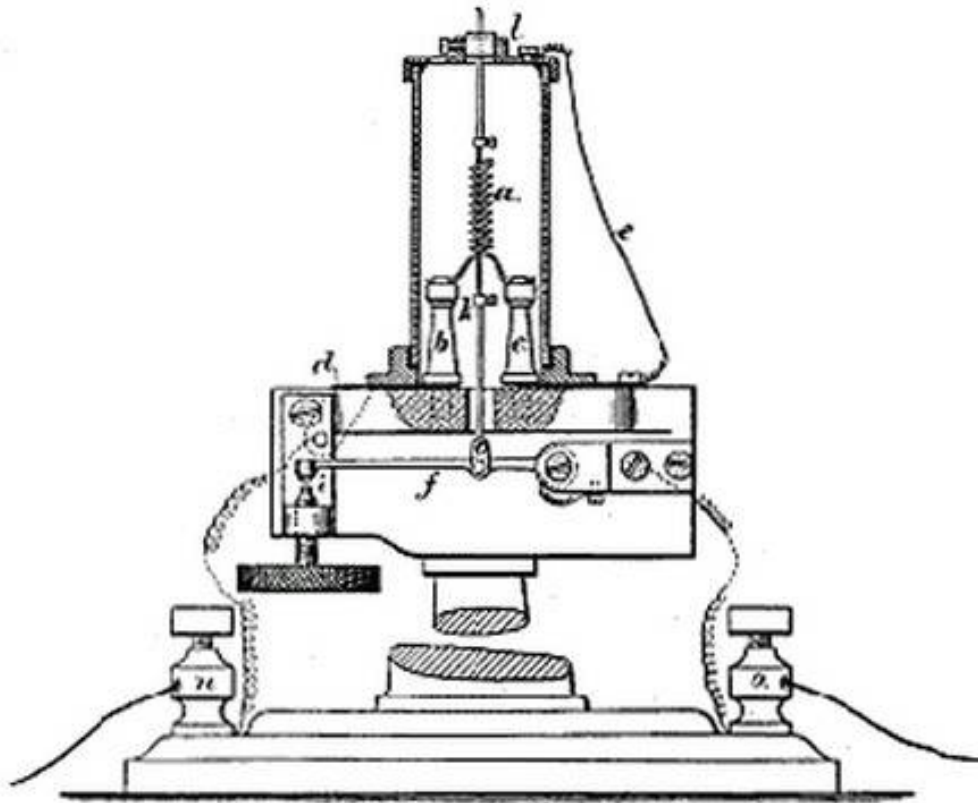
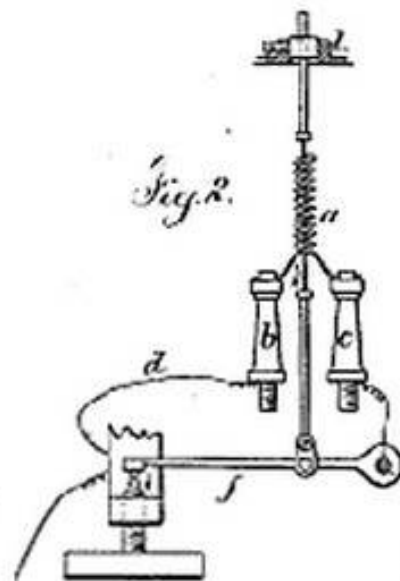


Fig. 2.



Witnesses

*Charles McKim
Lewis Tinsley*

Inventor

*Thomas A. Edison
Lemuel W. Perrell*

T. A. EDISON.
Electric-Light.

No. 219,628.

Patented Sept. 16, 1879.

Fig. 1.

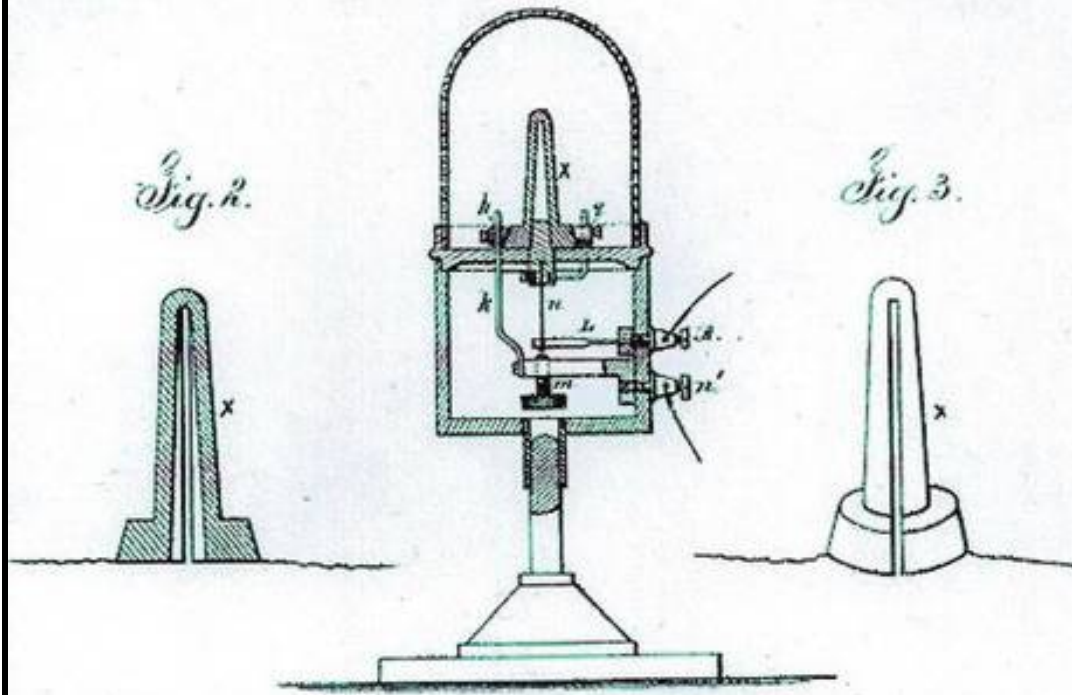


Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.



Witnesses

Chas. H. Smith
Geo. J. Prickney

Inventor

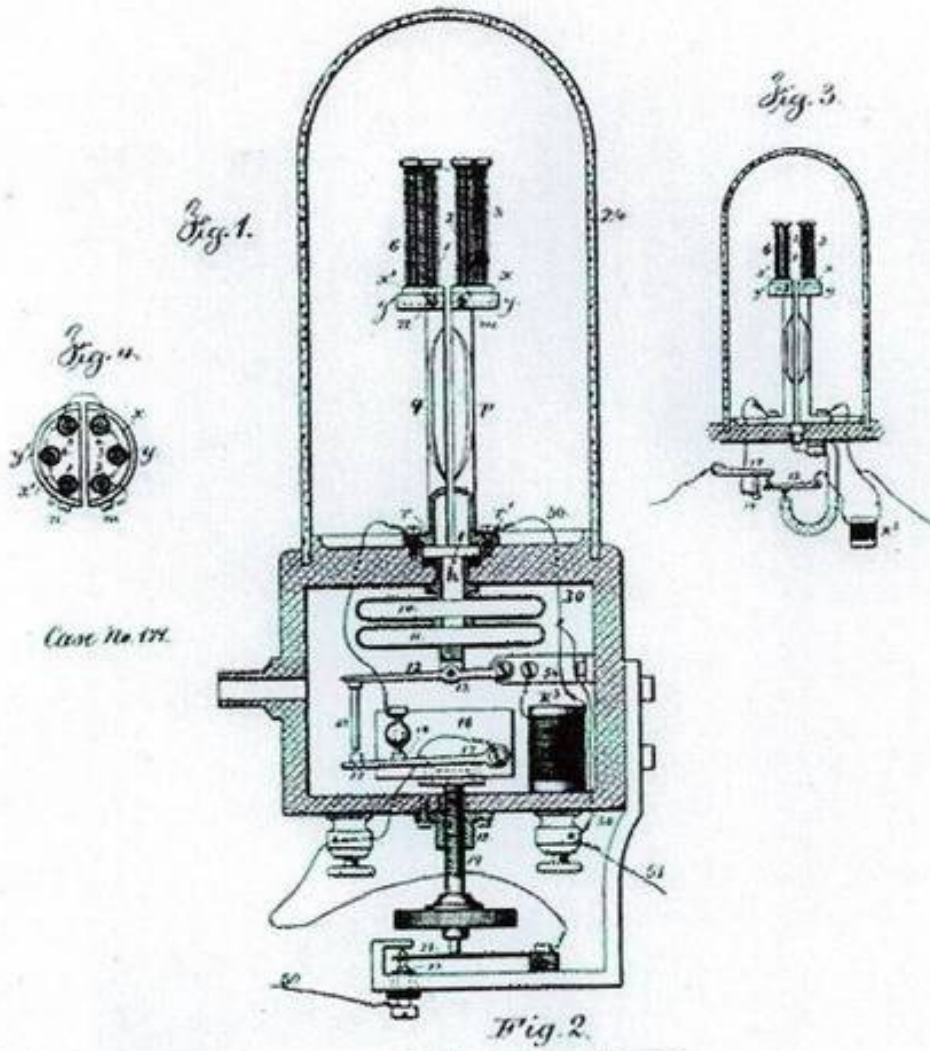
Thomas A. Edison.

per Lemuel W. Loring

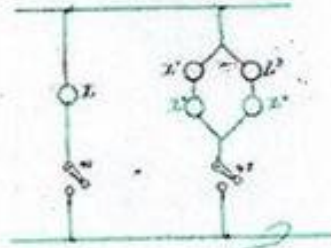
T. A. EDISON.
Electric-Lights.

No. 227,227.

Patented May 4, 1880.



Case No. 179.



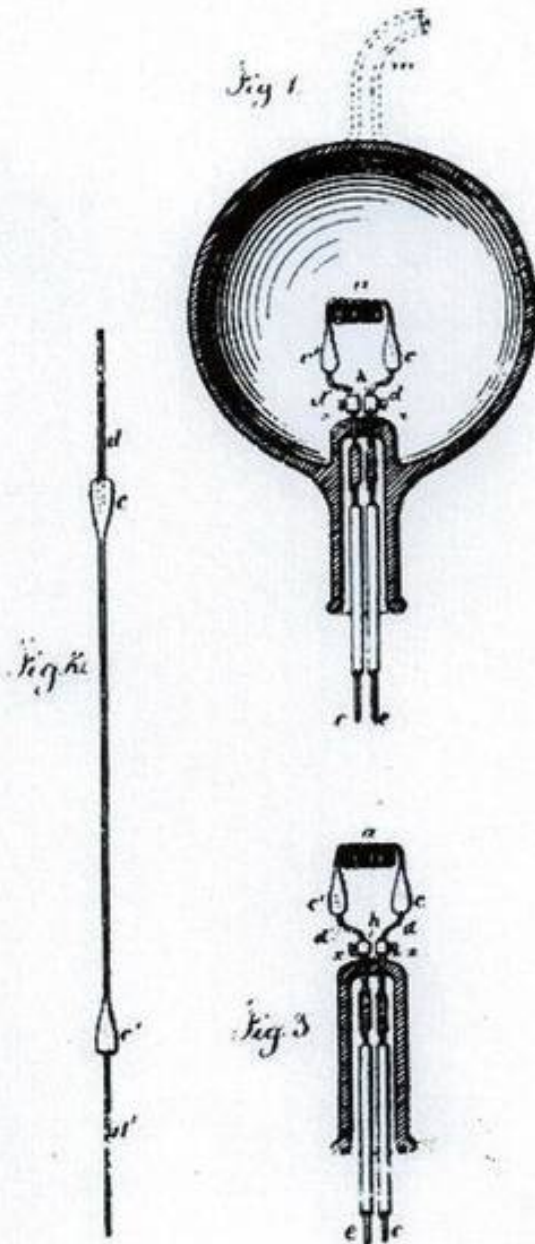
Witnesses
Chas. H. Smith
Geo. D. Poole

Inventor
Thomas A. Edison
 by *Samuel W. Merrill*

T. A. EDISON.
Electric-Lamp.

No. 223,898.

Patented Jan. 27, 1880.



Witnesses

Charles Smith
Geo. P. McKney

Inventor
Thomas A. Edison

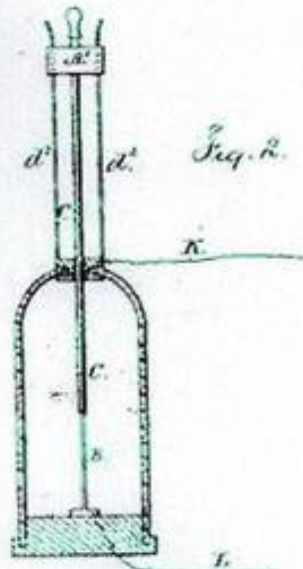
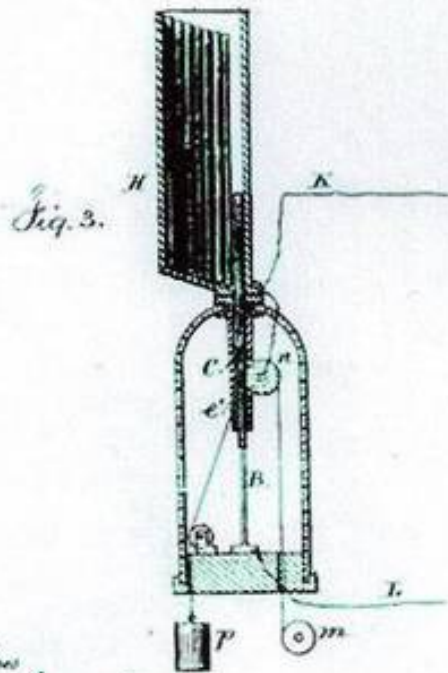
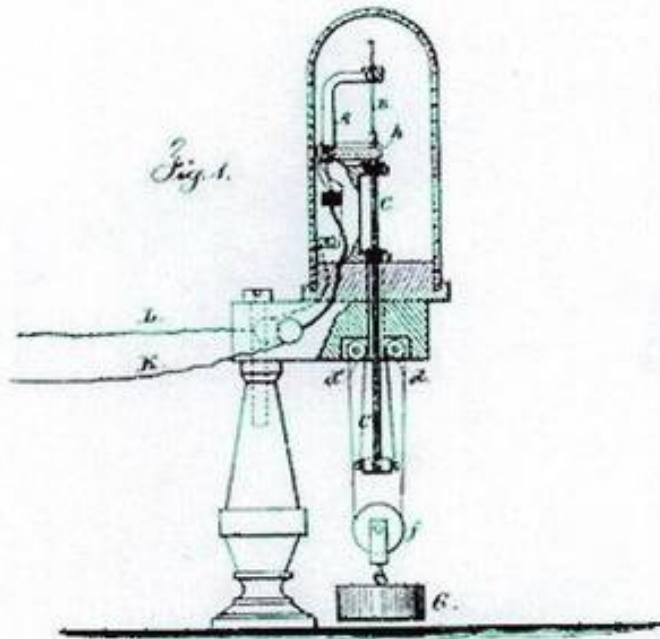
Per Lemuel W. Ferrall

1114.

T. A. EDISON.
Electric-Lighting Apparatus.

No. 224,329.

Patented Feb. 10, 1880.



Witness
Chas. H. Smith
Geo. D. Pinckney

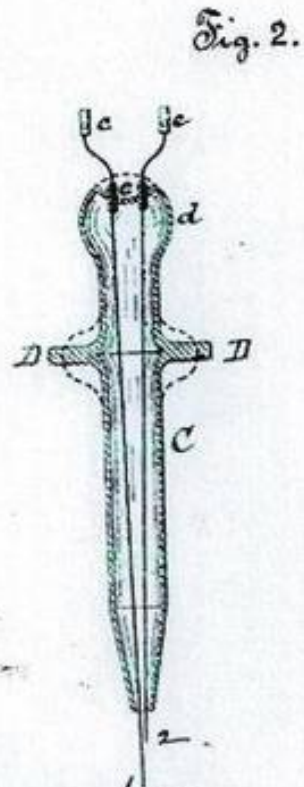
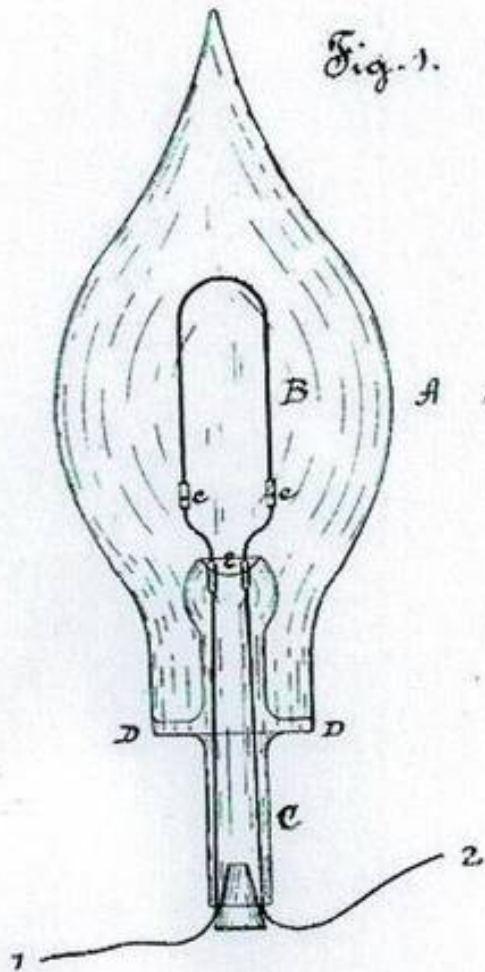
Inventor
Thomas A. Edison
per Lemuel W. Gerritt atty.

(No Model.)

T. A. EDISON.
Incandescing Electric Lamp.

No. 239,149.

Patented March 22, 1881.



Attest:

O. D. Mott
W. Howard

Inventor:

Thos. A. Edison.
per Dyer & Miller

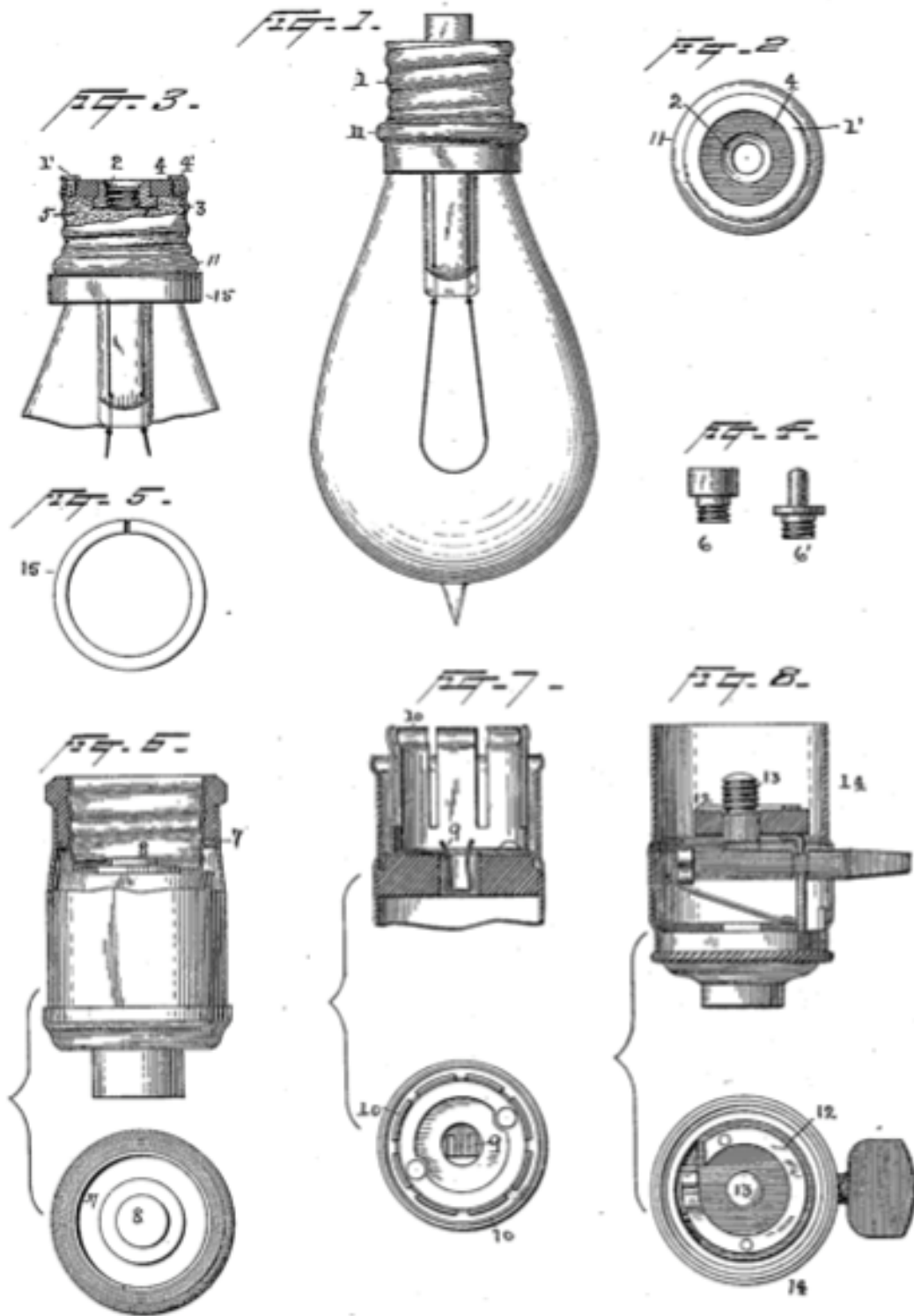
Atlys.

(No Model.)

T. A. EDISON.
LAMP BASE.

No. 438,310.

Patented Oct. 14, 1890.



Witnesses
Morris A. Clark,
Charles M. Catlin.

Inventor
T. A. Edison.
By his Attorney,
Syert Seely.

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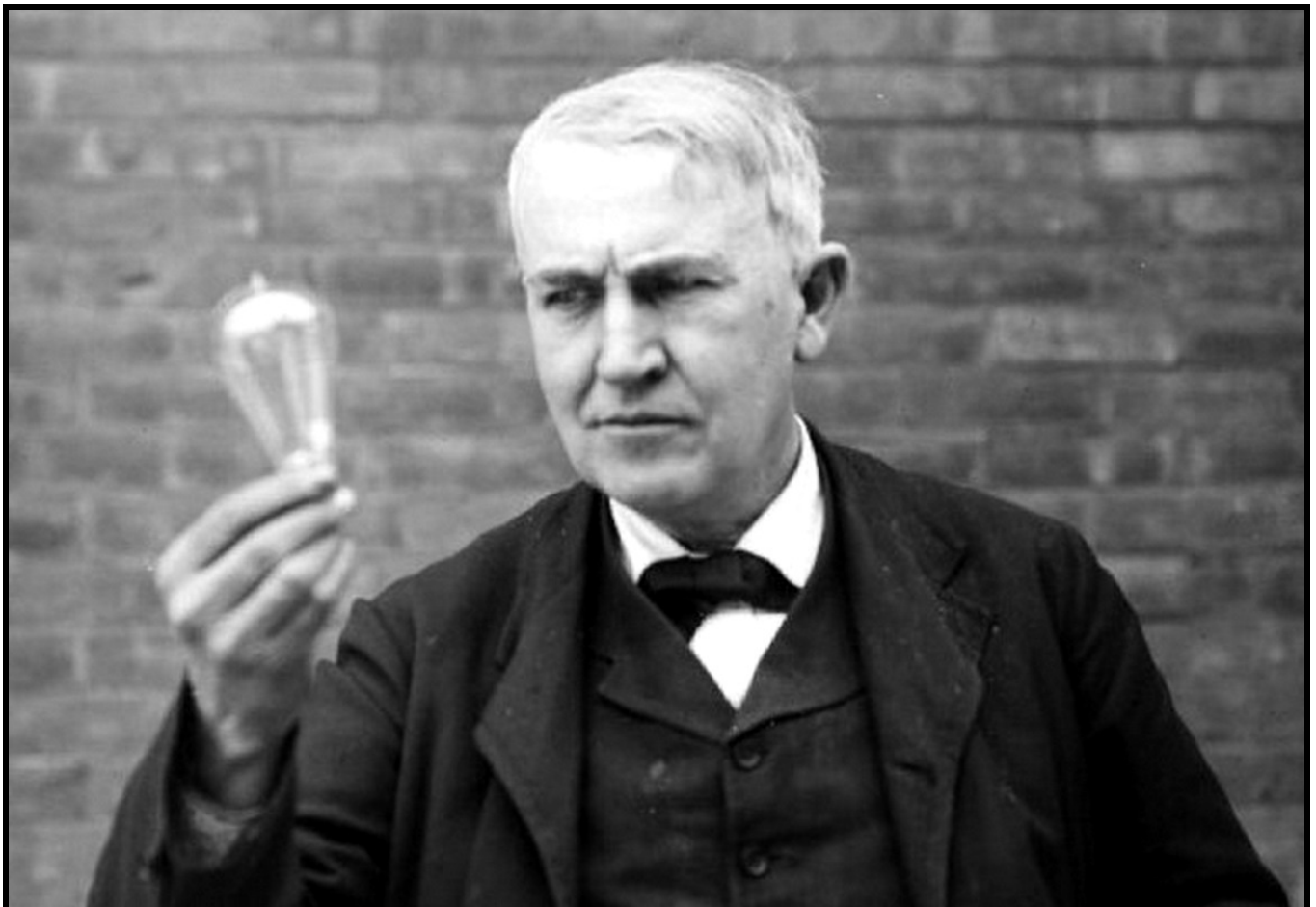
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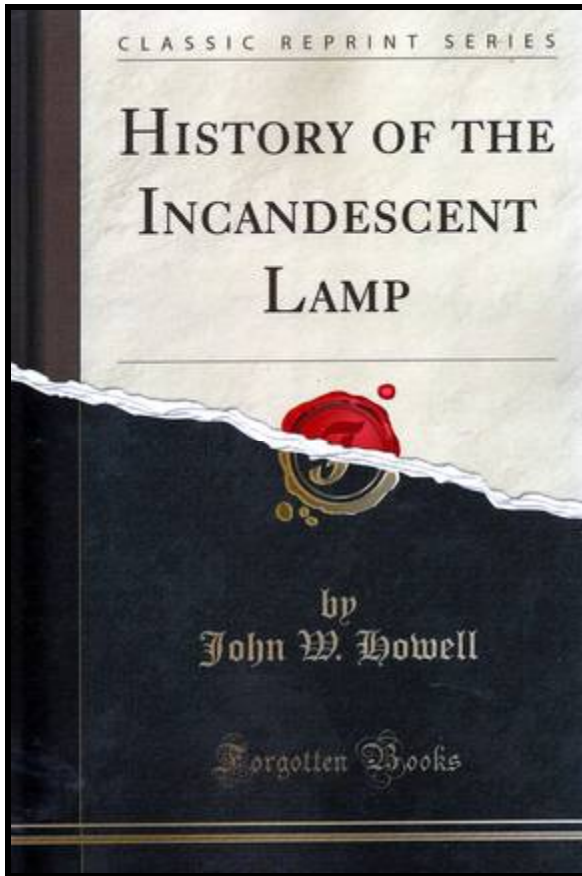
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Note: Also available are *The Papers of Thomas A Edison* in 8 giant volumes (to date) compiled by Rutgers University and published by John Hopkins University Press, USA

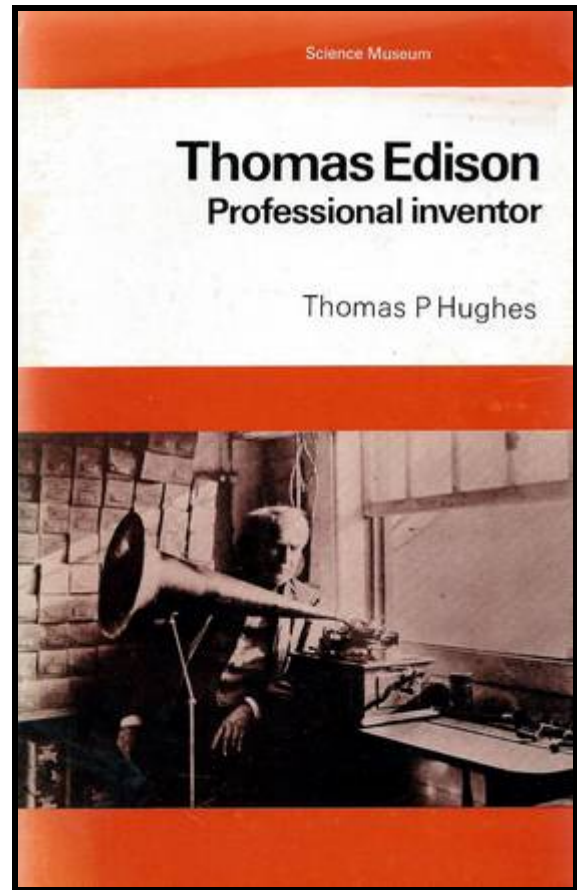
A complete listing of Edison's US Patents with Drawings is available on the internet



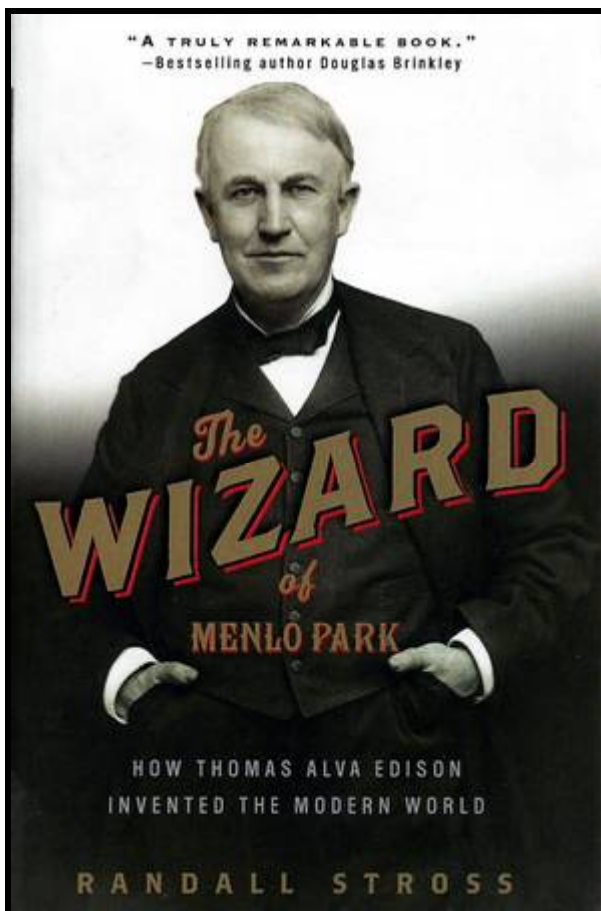
POSTSCRIPT: FURTHER READING and VIEWING



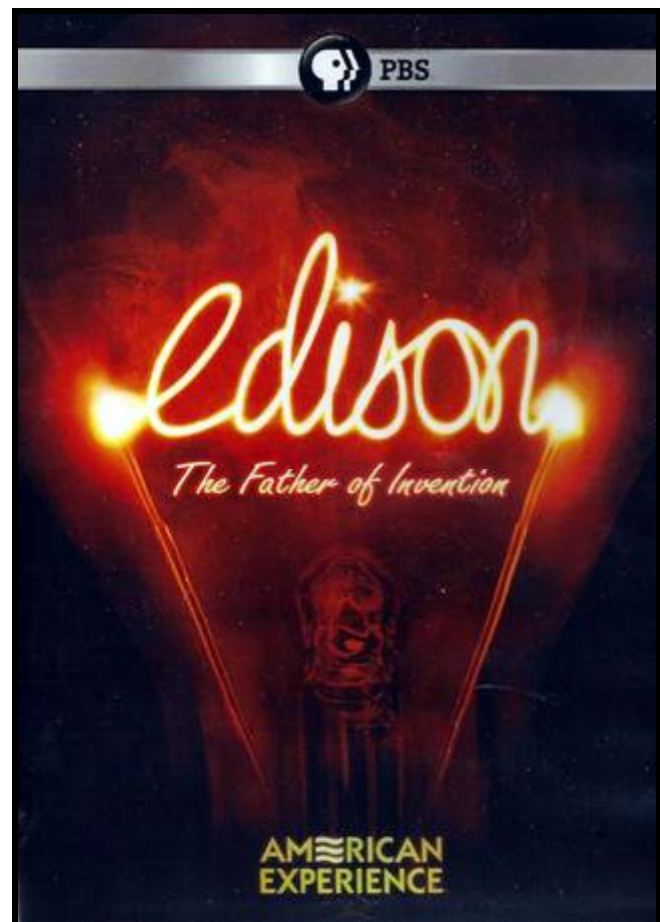
1927



1976



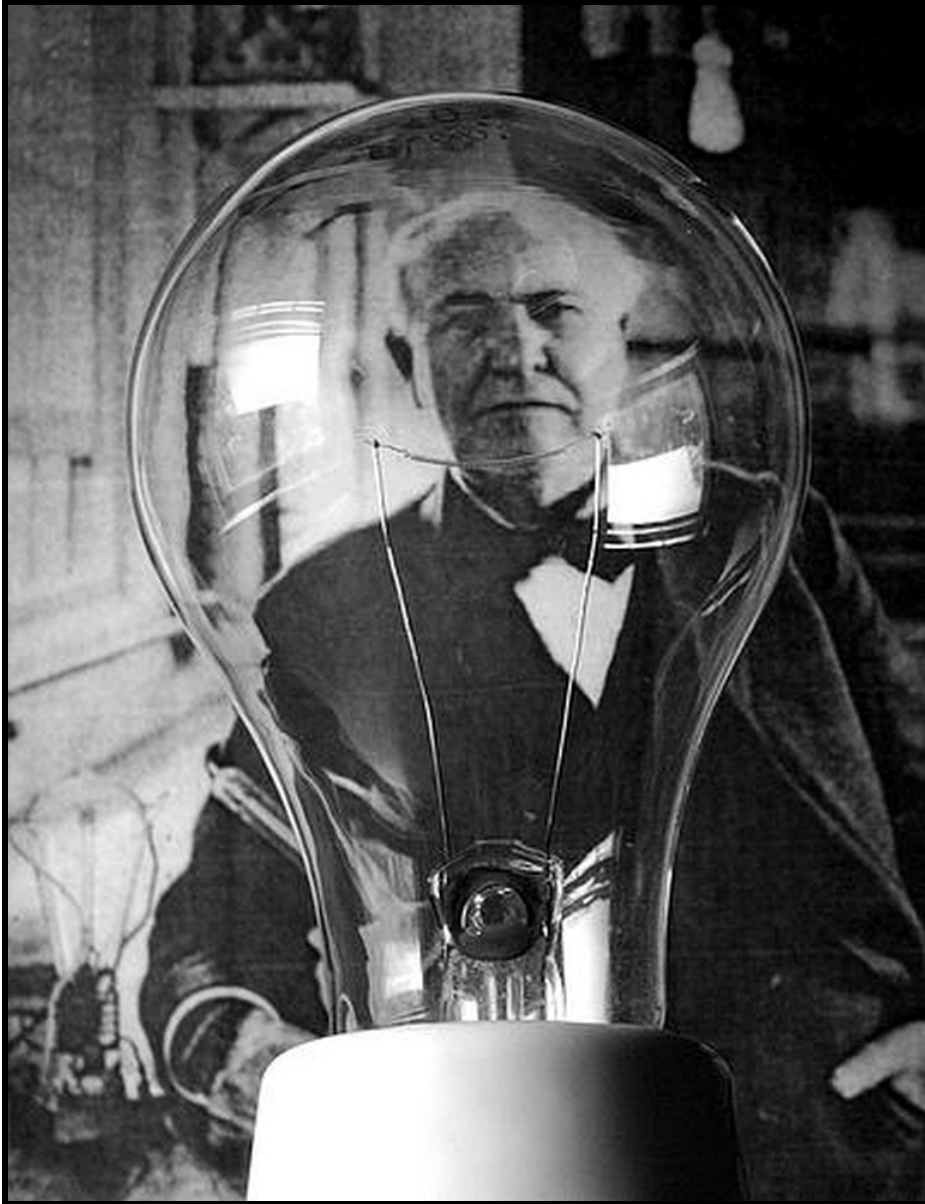
2007



2015 DVD

EPILOGUE

It appears that Edison saw out his days as a celebrity and elder statesman being feted wherever he went. He died in 1931 and one evening, shortly afterwards, the lights in New York were switched off for a few minutes to honour his memory.



Thomas Alva Edison's accomplishments were many. With his research laboratories at Menlo Park and later West Orange he secured 2332 patents world-wide with 1093 being in the United States. Companies in his name were established around the world.

In addition to a practical incandescent lamp and the associated power station and distribution network, he was responsible for improved telegraph apparatus, the phonograph, kinoscope (a system of moving pictures) and the dictaphone.