Thomas Alva Edison.

Published in: Salem Press Primary Encyclopedia, 2023, Topic Overviews K-5

Inventor

- **Born:** February 11, 1847
- **Birthplace:** Milan, Ohio
- **Died:** October 18, 1931
- **Place of death:** West Orange, New Jersey

Thomas Alva Edison was born in 1847 in Milan, Ohio. As a boy, he was constantly searching for answers to questions. Edison created a laboratory in the basement of his home, and whatever allowance he was given went towards his supplies for experiments.

Thomas Edison and his early phonograph. By Levin C. Handy (per http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cwpbh.04326) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

In time, his allowance wasn't enough to fund his laboratory, so he began to search for new ways to obtain money.

At the age of twelve, Edison began delivering newspapers by train. He soon offered to sell bread, tobacco, and other supplies to the passengers on these trains. He employed a couple of boys to help him and even managed to run a vegetable stand on the side.

Edison continued his experiments and, after befriending the conductor of the train, was given one of the empty train compartments to use as a laboratory. Edison decided to make his own full circulating newspaper and called it the *Weekly Herald* .

Edison was mostly deaf by this young age, but historians do not know the definitive cause. Some historians attribute his deafness to a case of scarlet fever.

When an experiment caused the car to catch fire, Edison lost his laboratory on the train. The conductor threw Edison off, and he was left to find other ways of supporting his work.

After leaving the railroad, Edison worked as a telegraph operator for several years. He received his first patent for an electric voting machine at the age of twenty-one, although the

machine was not accepted by the public. Edison also worked for a businessman, getting prices for gold on the stock market. At this time, Edison created a device for printing gold-stock quotations very quickly.

In 1871, Edison married Mary Stilwell, and the two soon moved to Menlo Park, New Jersey, where Edison built a laboratory for inventions .

In 1876, Edison created the incandescent electric light bulb. The electric lightbulb had already been designed, but the general public could not afford it. Edison's problem was finding a filament for the bulb. He discovered that burnt bamboo worked best as a filament for the lightbulb. Edison made an incandescent lamp in 1879. In 1883, Roselle, New Jersey, was the first town to make use of this lighting system.

After ten years at Menlo Park, Edison moved to Orange, New Jersey, and built the West Orange laboratory to experiment with rubber. The West Orange laboratory also became the first motion picture studio when Edison helped invent the motion picture in 1889.

Over the course of his lifetime, Edison patented over one thousand inventions, many of which we still use today.

Edison's Inventions Include:

- phonograph •incandescent electric light bulb • an electric lamp
- a motion picture camera •mimeograph machine •dictating machine
- stock ticker •automatic and multiplex telegraph
- electric vote recorder •electric railroad signal
- light socket and light switch
- alkaline storage battery •electric pen •loudspeaking telephone

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