



The Lab Notebook

Servants' Wing Gets New Old Look



Installing Glenmont floor tile piece by piece.

Since the 1950s most of the floors in the Glenmont Servants' wing have been covered with sheet linoleum. Contractors have just finished installing a reproduction of the original interlocking tile floor in the laundry room, the pantry, the kitchen, and the hallway. The servants' dining room retains its original flooring. Naomi Kroll, an architectural conservator, supervised the project.

In 1926 the Dreadnought Flooring Company installed its "Interlocked Sectional Flooring" in the dining room at a cost of \$137.00. The unique flooring was made of cork and other materials and then cut into pieces that fitted together like a jigsaw puzzle. Mrs. Edison must have been pleased with the result because she soon hired the company to extend the floor covering into other rooms of the wing.

Cork linoleum is becoming more popular as a durable and "green" product, but only a few manufacturers make it today, and those mostly in sheet form. Replicating the original design required custom work to approximate the unique shape and green and yellow colors of the original.

Returning these rooms to their historic appearance will give them a distinctive look not seen in decades. Certainly Mrs. Edison would be pleased.

NEWS FLASH:

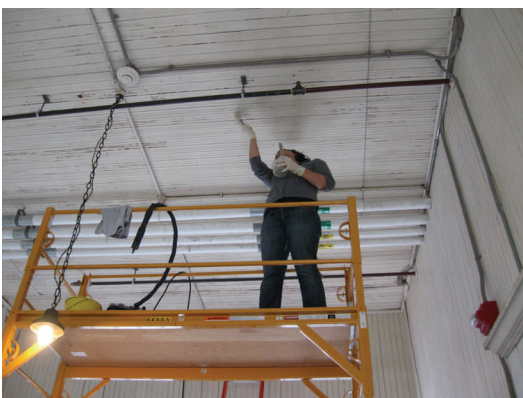
Edison Site Has New Name, New Address

A glance at the masthead above will show you that Edison National Historic Site has a new name.

President Obama recently signed the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 (Public Law 111-11), one provision of which changes the name of this National Park Service unit to Thomas Edison National Historical Park. The designation "National Historical Park" is generally given to parks that extend beyond single properties or buildings; Edison, which includes both the Laboratory complex and the Glenmont estate, certainly qualifies. The two parts of the Park have different but compatible interpretive themes, cultural resource management issues, and operational challenges.

In separate news, Park discussions with the U.S. Postal Service have resulted in a new street number for our mailing address: 211 Main Street. This change will ease mail delivery and assist visitors who use GPS technology in pinpointing our location.

Sprucing Up the Chemistry Lab



Naomi Kroll cleaning the Chemistry Lab ceiling.

Rehabilitation of the chemistry lab is nearing completion. Staff packed and stored a wide range of artifacts including bottles,

vats, scales, burners, and pipettes. Heavy artifacts and those attached to worktables were protected in place with wooden shells.

The major part of the project was the cleaning and repainting of walls and ceilings. Naomi Kroll, an NPS architectural conservator based in New York City, supervised a team of students who steam-cleaned and painted the interior. Finishing touches included the patching of stucco around windows, repointing of mortar and replacement of masonry, and cleaning and repair of the concrete floor.

Upcoming Events

April 25 Junior Ranger Day

Kids are invited to earn their Junior Ranger Badges. Make a drawing of Glenmont and create your own postcard. Plus: a tour just for kids.

June 6 Edison Day

Activities for the whole family.

Edison Welcomes Volunteers

Message from the Superintendent

“The laboratory complex is now open.”

We have all been waiting a long time to say that. It's not true yet, but we're getting close! As proclaimed in the previous issue of the newsletter, we are heading toward our opening. Even the most skeptical among us can see the end of the renovation work later this spring.

Our initial enthusiasm for this challenge of opening the laboratory complex will be focused on a “soft opening” on a date yet to be determined. We plan to schedule a “grand opening” sometime after that.

A “soft opening” is quiet, informal and will include a variety of tours, programs and services for groups and individuals **by reservation**. We will test tour size, ticketing, visitor circulation, carrying capacities, accessibility, noise levels, safety and security concerns, parking, signage, and staffing needs.

Audio tours will be tested with different audiences including individuals, families, and school groups with teachers equipped with a leader headset.

The Museum Shop in the Visitor Center will be open in conjunction with scheduled activities, depending on Eastern National and/or NPS staffing availability.

Fees will continue to be waived during the soft opening period but will be charged after the grand opening.

At a later date staff will determine when the curatorial division will be able to accommodate researchers by appointment prior to the grand opening.

On behalf of the entire staff, I thank you for your patience and support.

Please check out our web site – www.nps.gov/edis for future news and updates.

Greg Marshall

Nine new volunteers have recently joined our ranks at the Park. They are helping staff move and organize artifacts in the Machine Shops, clean the Stock Room, research the history of collections at Glenmont, and prepare spaces at the house for exhibit. Other volunteers will soon begin setting up rooms at the Laboratory in preparation for our public opening.

This increase in our volunteers is the result, in part, of two successful workshops last September. At the first, Bernard Carlson of the University of Maryland and the Smithsonian Institution, introduced potential volunteers to Edison's

invention process and business history. At the second, a trio of experts at Glenmont discussed the Victorian era, historic landscapes and gardens, and women's domestic culture.

Many volunteer opportunities exist here at Edison, from working with visitors in public programs to gardening and groundskeeping, preparing artifacts for storage and display, or assisting in the administration office. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Michelle Ortwein at 973-324-9974.



Left, Tim Pagano learns to clean a cylinder phonograph under the supervision of Sound Recording Curator Jerry Fabris.

Below, Dave Ault prepares a listing of the sheet music collection at Glenmont.



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

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Visitor Information

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



Master Gardeners at Glenmont



teers to earn their “Master Gardener” designation.

Popular as a garden plant since the Victorian period, the canna produces large leaves and large, bright flowers.

Left, the canna bed at Glenmont.

Below, something to look forward to: a canna plant in bloom.

About a dozen volunteers working under the auspices of the Master Gardeners of Essex County will soon be rehabilitating the giant canna bed at Glenmont. The bed faces the rear lawn, and borders the house from the Conservatory to the dining room.

The gardeners will be testing and aerating the soil, weeding, and re-planting the bed. The project serves as their internship and will permit the volun-



This image from the Park Archives shows the giant canna bed at Glenmont in July 1949. Taking in the view is Henry Horsey, who had been Mrs. Edison's butler from about 1910 into the 1920s. Even after his retirement, Horsey would occasionally rejoin the staff for big events. Lynn Givens, Mrs. Edison's secretary, recalled, “He was a real honest to God butler.”

An Edison Memory

Constance Cicalese Chew, who lives in Clearwater, Florida, writes us: “I have a little story about Edison's kindness that I have told my children, my grandchildren, and now my great grandchildren.

“Mr. Edison often went for a walk down Lakeside Avenue hill from his lab. One day Mom gave my oldest brother ten cents to go to Church's bakery to buy a loaf of bread. Ralph dilly-dallied along the way, tossing the coin and catching it in his small ten-year-old hand. He usually caught it, but he pushed his luck and lost the coin! Not wanting to go home without the bread and not knowing what to tell Mom, he just walked past the bakery and sat on the curb at Main Street and Lakeside Avenue. Mr. Edison, coming out of the lab, approached Ralph and asked why he was sitting there all alone! Ralph told him what had happened. By this time it was getting dark and Mom and Dad were worried about their boy and were ready to call the police. We all knew who Mr. Edison was and often said hello, so when he took Ralph's hand and walked to the bakery, there was no fear of a “stranger.” He told Ralph to get the bread and to pick out some cookies. With Ralph's hand in his, Mr. Edison led him safely home to the front door, where Mom and Dad thanked him.”

Ms. Chew adds that by 1940 her family lived next to the Orange Armory, and she remembers waving to Spencer Tracy, Rita Johnson, and Mickey Rooney when they came to town for the gala openings of the biographical films *Edison the Man* and *Young Tom Edison*.

Our thanks to Ms. Chew. If you have a family story or a reminiscence of life and work at the labs, the factories, or Glenmont, please share it with us. The editor's e-mail address is edward_wirth@nps.gov.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Thomas Edison National Historical Park
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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

Volunteers-In-Parks Coordinator Thomas Edison National Historical Park

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

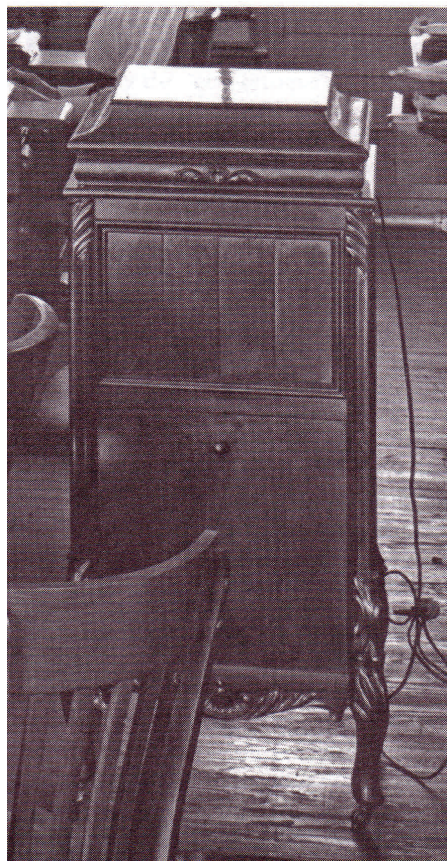
"The Lab Notebook" is a quarterly publication of Thomas Edison National Historical Park.

Printed on recycled paper. 

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We're Looking for a Grafonola

Jerry Fabris, Sound Recording Curator, has been busy furnishing the Music Room and nearby spaces in preparation for the opening of the third floor of Building 5 to visitors.

One item no longer in our collection, however, is a Columbia Grafonola (such as the one pictured at the left in a detail from a 1917 photograph). A Grafonola would help complete the Music Room display. A Model 125E or 150E is preferable, but a spring motor 100 model would be adequate, since the machine would be for display only, not for playing recordings.

If you have one of these machines (or know someone who has one) and would like to **donate** it to the Park, please contact Jerry Fabris by phone at 973-736-0550, x 48, or by e-mail at gerald_fabris@nps.gov.