



The Lab Notebook

Park's Opening Season Is A Crowd Pleaser



Opening ceremonies, October 2009.

Since reopening the Laboratory Complex, Thomas Edison National Historical Park has welcomed about 800 visitors per week for a total of nearly 16,000. Punctuating the fall season were special events and holidays during which already strong visitation soared.

Opening Weekend

The Laboratory Complex formally reopened on Friday, October 9, 2009, with remarks by Superintendent Greg Marshall and John Keegan of the Edison Innovation Foundation. These were followed by musical interludes, phonograph recording demonstrations and special tours. Over 3,000 visitors came through the gate on that opening weekend.

Thanksgiving Weekend: "Black Friday" and Beyond

Usually a period of high visitation, this Thanksgiving weekend conformed to tradition. Interpretive staff counted 890 visitors on Friday, 765 on Saturday, and 329 on Sunday. Despite the large volume of visitors, everything went well, and visitors moved

smoothly throughout the buildings. Thirteen volunteers helped out over the weekend; several signed up for one day, but after seeing how busy the Park was on Friday, they came back again on Saturday.

An archival exhibit—including letters, ads, and photos from several collections—was on display for visitors in Building 4. Similar exhibitions will be a feature of both Edison Day each June and the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.



Visitors examine Edison company records in Building 4 on Thanksgiving weekend.

Holidays at Glenmont (and the Lab)

Thanksgiving marks the opening of the holiday season. As in the past, the Edison home reflected the festive holiday spirit. The dining room was set for family dessert on a 1920s Christmas Day, and a ten-foot tree

stood in the Den with presents arrayed beneath its illuminated branches. The servants' dining room sported a small tree and decorations over the fireplace mantel. Two special exhibits in the Conservatory featured tree ornaments and household storytelling traditions.

Two dozen members of the Friends of Thomas Edison NHP enjoyed a special holiday visit to Glenmont in December; they explored the decorated first and second floors to the music of the Steven Riley Duo. It was easy to imagine the Edisons and their guests enjoying just such an evening.

Visitation remained heavy throughout the season. In fact, the week after Christmas saw crowds so large that movement through the courtyard became a challenge.

The Park staff is thrilled with the public response and looks forward to welcoming even more visitors in the future. So spread the word and encourage newcomers to pay us a visit.

Month	Visitors
October	5754
November	6144
December	3181
January (to 01/10)	781
Total	15,860

Park visitation for the first few months of Fiscal Year 2010.

Message from the Superintendent

Two key themes are reflected in this issue of *The Lab Notebook*. First, the staff here at Thomas Edison National Historical Park is extremely pleased with the public's response since we reopened the Laboratory Complex on October 9, 2009, a response gratifying not only from the standpoint of the number of visitors, but also from our visitors' comments and feedback on how much they enjoyed their experience. From the audio tour to the 20,000 square feet of new exhibit space in the main laboratory building, to special programs in the Black Maria and the Chemistry Lab—the visitor response has been overwhelmingly positive.

While the number of visitors is important, we like to think that we also measure our success by the quality of the experience we afford our visitors.

We are also pleased that about half the visitors to the Lab Complex also take the opportunity to visit Glenmont, the Edison estate in Llewellyn Park.

The other key theme in this issue is the outstanding success of our Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) program, thanks to our staff's efforts.

VIP hours have increased over the previous year by 45%! We now have 52 volunteers signed up to help us in a number of areas from Interpretation and Education to Curatorial Services.

The park staff is very grateful for the response to our call for volunteers and for all the assistance they provide. We're off to a terrific start. Both visitation and our volunteer program have been growing. So, on behalf of all the park staff and our volunteers, thank you for your continued interest and support of Thomas Edison National Historical Park.

Greg Marshall



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.

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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.

A Facelift for Historic Frames at Glenmont

On a visit to Glenmont you will notice the art displayed throughout the house, including family portraits and landscapes by artists of the Hudson River School. Look closely and you will see that the frames are works of art in themselves. Gilded and covered with carved figures ranging from berries to acanthus leaves, they draw the eye into the paintings. This year the Park received funds to conserve fifteen historic frames at the house. In addition, three paintings removed from exhibit years ago due to their unstable frames will return to public view. Decades of deterioration had resulted in crumbling, discoloration, and missing pieces.

Our conservator, Lauren Isaacs of Flying Pig Art Conservation, will restore the frames to their original luster. Lauren attended the State University of New York College at Buffalo and currently resides in New York City. Lauren's expertise has led to assignments at several important sites and museums, including the Museum of Modern Art and Arlington National Cemetery. Lauren also assisted museums in need after Hurricane Katrina devastated seven southern states in 2005. Lauren likes to point out that the field of conservation combines art and science. Wouldn't Thomas Edison be proud!



Conservator Lauren Isaacs evaluates the condition of one of the gilded picture frames at Glenmont.

Changes at Eastern National

Midge Wohl recently retired as sales representative at the Park's Eastern National museum store. During her tenure Midge greatly expanded the choice of items available to visitors. She supervised the closure of the store for the restoration project, the establishment of the new shop at the Glenmont Potting Shed, and the opening of the new and larger store in the Visitor Center. Park staff are grateful for all her work and wish her the best in retirement.

The new Eastern National representative is Joe Napurano, recently retired after more than two decades with the New Jersey Probation Services Division. Joe will be here several hours on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Welcome, Joe.

Sound Recording Catalog Now On-Line

The National Park Service recently loaded the Thomas Edison National Historical Park's (TENHP) database of recorded sound holdings into its Voyager catalog, which is available for public searches on-line at <http://www.library.nps.gov/>. The database includes data for the 10,000 cylinder records and 28,000 disc records at the West Orange Lab. Most of the recordings were made between 1888 and 1929. The collection also includes some recordings made by competitors. The project began in 1995 and concluded in 2005.

To search Voyager for the Edison records only, go to the NPS Library Information center, at <http://www.library.nps.gov/>. Under "NPS Voyager Catalog", click "search." Choose "Basic Search." Click on the list titled "Optionally limit to major NPS library." Choose TENHP, listed under "Major Park Libraries."

For more information, please contact:
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Edison Gems

Each afternoon at 2:30 we offer "Edison Gems." These are short programs presented by a ranger on a specific topic such as the Photography Department, the Stockroom, the making and marketing of storage batteries, and the business of motion pictures. Don't forget ranger-led phonograph demonstrations and tours of the Chemistry Lab.



Volunteer Harry Roman presents a special program in Building 11.



Volunteers 2009

During fiscal year 2009 (October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009), the number of volunteer hours at Thomas Edison NHP increased over the previous year by 45% thanks to several new volunteer programs.

The Park signed a group volunteer agreement with the Master Gardeners of Essex County, New Jersey, and the members went on to rehabilitate the giant canna bed behind the house at Glenmont.

Two Clean-Up Days in Spring and Fall brought volunteers together with staff to spruce up the Laboratory Complex for the Grand Opening and the Glenmont Estate for regular tours. The Clean-Up Days also succeeded in recruiting more volunteers.

After receiving training from conservators, volunteers cleaned several phonographs and the eagle in the Building 5 library that Mr. Edison bought at the Paris World's Fair in 1889.

A very special thank you to everyone who volunteered for us during the year!

Total VIP hours at Thomas Edison NHP: 4,409
Total number of VIPs: 52

Our high-achievers this year were:

Jamie Magale	500 hours
Garden Club of the Oranges	366 hours
Tim Pagano	306 hours
Dave Ault	231 hours
Sean Coakley	190 hours
Jessica Diedalis	190 hours
Master Gardeners of Essex County NJ	126 hours

More VIP (Volunteers-In-Parks) News

New Volunteer Training and Orientation: Interest in volunteering rose after the October opening, and as a result, we initiated a new training and orientation program for volunteers. Each new volunteer should attend a 2½ hour orientation offered the third Tuesday of every month. A Saturday orientation will be scheduled occasionally. New volunteers should also view *The Invention Factory* film in the Visitor Center, take the audio tour of the Laboratory Complex and listen to all the messages, take a tour of Glenmont, and meet with park staff. If you would like to volunteer at Thomas Edison NHP or plan to attend an orientation, contact Michelle Ortwein at michelle_ortwein@nps.gov or 973-736-0550 x31.

Volunteer Meetings: We now offer regular meetings that give our volunteers the opportunity to meet one another outside a work situation and to learn more about the Park. Previous meeting topics have included an orientation to the National Park Service and a discussion on improving the volunteer program. The most recent meeting was January 23, 2010, in Building 4. Archivist Lenny DeGraaf presented an overview of the Park archives. The next meeting is scheduled for February 20.



Archivist Lenny DeGraaf discusses the Edison Archives with volunteers. Examples of documents can be seen on tables in the foreground.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

Volunteers-In-Parks Coordinator Thomas Edison National Historical Park

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Two views of the Main Gate. At right, opening day in October 2009. Above, an impression by Brian, who visited with his classmates. Programs for school groups, always an important part of Park visitation, have resumed and are returning to their full strength.

