

The Wizard of Menlo Park

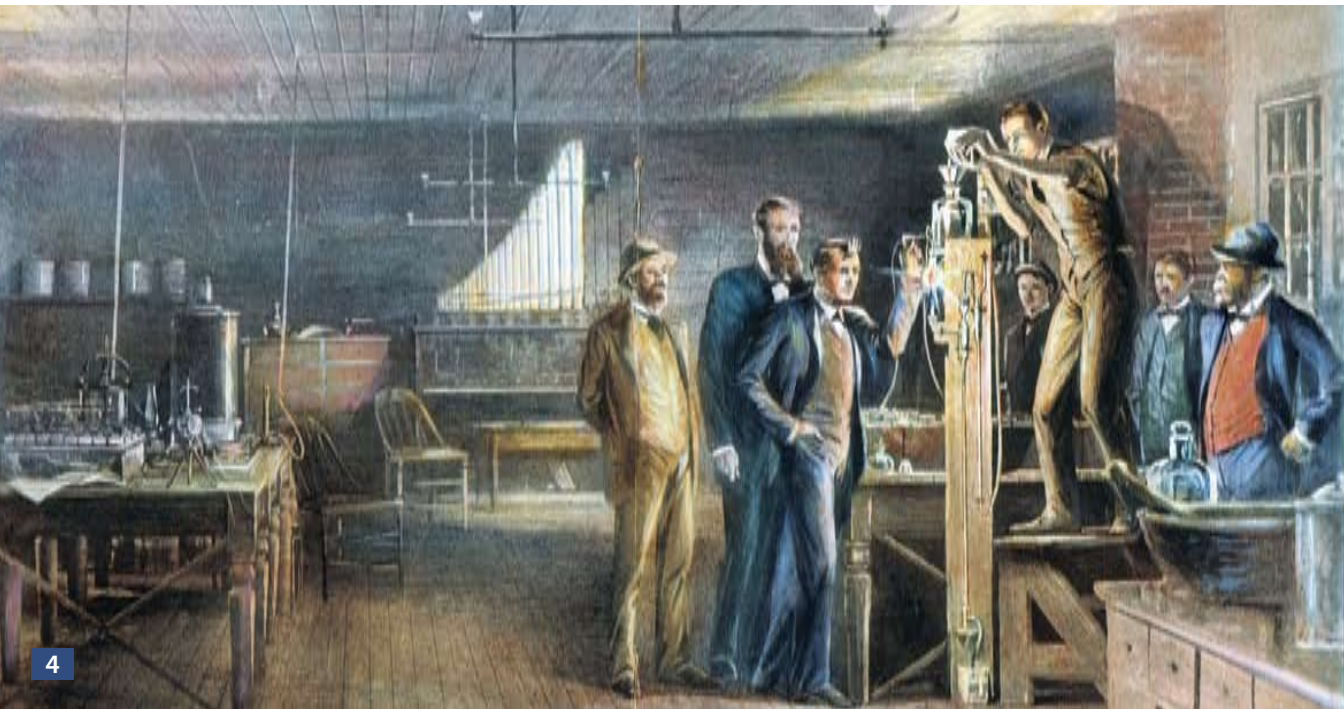
Thomas Edison is one of the most famous inventors of all time. His inventions are still very important in today's world.

Edison worked with a team of scientists. They invented something new every 2 weeks for 45 years. Their inventions are all around us. Edison's most famous **invention** is the light bulb.

How did Edison invent so many new things? People joked that he must be a magician. They nicknamed him the Wizard of Menlo Park.

By age 23, Edison had invented a light bulb that lasted a long time. He also invented the power grid. A power grid gives **electricity** (uh-lek-TRIS-uh-tee) to homes and businesses. The phonograph, movie camera, copy machine, and **alkaline** (AL-kuh-line) storage battery are all Edison's inventions.

↓ Edison's lab

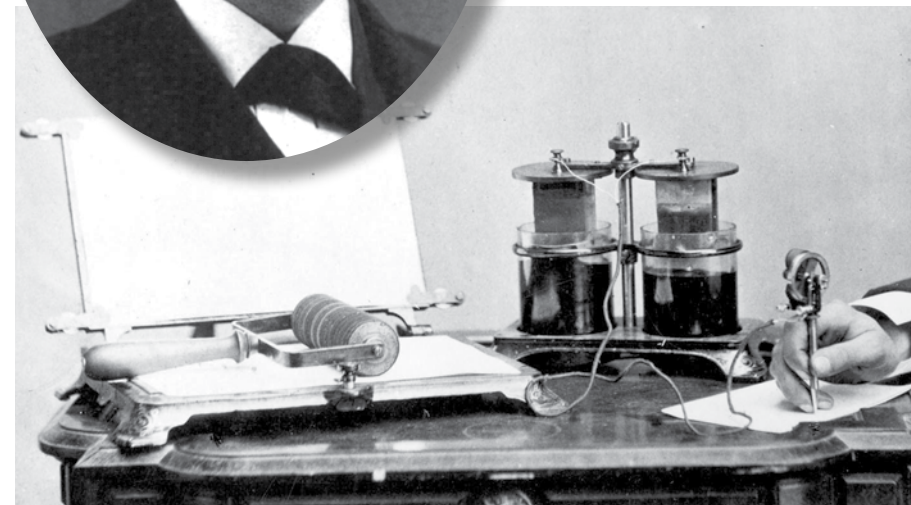


Patents

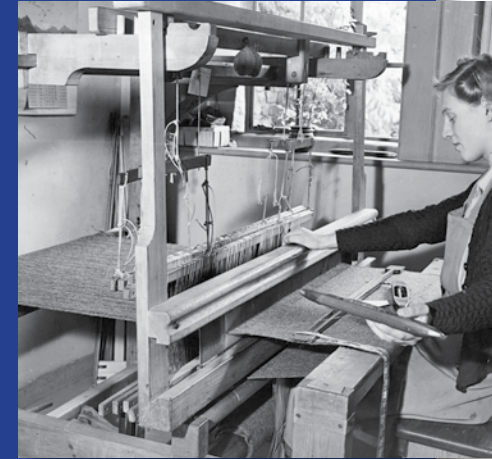
When an inventor creates something new, he or she wants to be sure no one else will use his or her idea. Inventors apply to the government for a document called a **patent**. A patent protects an inventor's ideas. Thomas Edison holds the record for the most patents for new inventions. He holds over 1,000 in the United States!



← Edison as a young man



← The mimeograph machine was one of Edison's early inventions.



She Did It First

Mary Dixon Kies was the first woman to receive a U.S. patent. She patented her method of weaving straw with silk. Her method was used to improve the making of hats. (At that time, nearly everyone wore hats.) Kies received her patent on May 5, 1809.



The Early Years

Thomas Edison was born in Milan, Ohio, in 1847. As a young boy, Edison loved to study new things. He liked to read, too.

Edison started school late because of an illness. He did not do well in school. His mind wandered. His teachers did not think he was very smart. So, Thomas' mother took him out of school and helped him learn at home.

When Edison was a teen, he left home and traveled around the country. He worked as a **telegraph** operator. He was partially deaf, but this helped him block out noise. He couldn't hear the operators sitting next to him.

Edison worked long hours. He only slept four or five hours a night. But he loved to take catnaps. When he had his own lab, if anyone ever visited him at work, they might see him sleeping on top of a table!



↑ The Morse kids, Dash (above) and Dot (right) →

Morse Kids

Telegraph operators used a language called **Morse code**. Their job was to use this code to send electronic messages. The operator would tap short bursts of electricity called dots and dashes. Different groups of dots and dashes stood for letters of the alphabet. Later, when he had children, Edison nicknamed two of his children Dot and Dash after the Morse code.



↑ Mattie "Ma" Kiley

← Edison was comfortable at Menlo Park.

Working on the Railroad

Mattie "Ma" Kiley was one of the first female telegraph operators to work for the railroads. The railroad system had to communicate. Dispatchers used the telegraph to share information. Kiley worked for the railroads until 1942.