

Called Address "Edison, New York"

From the Laboratory  
of  
Thomas A. Edison,  
Orange, N.J.

Mr. J. W. Hammond,  
General Electric Company,  
1 River Road,  
Schenectady, New York.

September 13, 1927.

My dear Mr. Hammond:

I learn with interest that you have undertaken to write a history of the General Electric Company, involving, as it does, a survey of much of the early electrical development in America. Such a story cannot fail to reveal some most interesting beginnings in our national economic life, not only in electrical manufacturing but also in the central station branch of the industry.

It will be fifty years in 1928 since I first took up the investigation of electric lighting and began to study the possibilities of an incandescent system. I had in mind substituting such a system for the gas-light system then in common use, and after considerable preliminary study I came to the conclusion that what had been done with gas illumination in the way of distribution of the illuminating element and its subdivision into many small burners could be matched in every particular in electrical illumination, and I set about developing such a system.

Of course, I had to have an electric lamp, one that would utilize a small fraction of the current, and give a small volume of light, similar to a gas burner, and entirely different from the glare of the arc lamp, which was altogether too large for such a purpose. I well remember the autumn of 1879, when my experimental lamp first burned for any length of time, and convinced me that I was on the right road. This had followed a great many previous experiments, first with platinum and then with carbon filaments. All this happened nearly a half century ago; in fact the Edison Electric Light Company, which provided the funds for my laboratory expenses at Menlo Park, was organized fifty years ago next year.

It is indeed a remarkable growth that has taken place since those days. From the rather crude but successful central station in Pearl Street, New York, where incandescent lighting was first produced as a commercial proposition, to the nation-wide system of central stations, (many of them gigantic in size,) which serve the American people to-day, is surely a phenomenal advance.

I trust that your history will find many interested readers.

Very truly yours,

Thomas A. Edison