

Edison, Thomas Alva (1847-1931)

Encyclopedia Article

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Edison, Thomas Alva (1847-1931)

Thomas Alva Edison, inventor of the phonograph in 1878 and the incandescent light bulb in 1879, is considered to be one of America's most creative minds. He is the only American to have patented an invention every year for 63 consecutive years, beginning in 1868 with his invention of an electrical vote recorder. Altogether, Edison held 1,093 patents including those for a stock ticker, a component of mimeograph systems, and a telephone transmitter that led to commercial telephone and radio broadcasting. Using a mobile studio and a photographic device he designed, Edison also created the first apparatus for projecting motion pictures. The invention, along with George Eastman's refinement of film, set the stage for the creation of the motion picture industry. It is appropriate that the creator of so many products, a man whose impact on America proved revolutionary, should have provided a symbol to represent originality and intelligence, the shining light bulb, used in logos to represent a "bright idea."

Further Reading:

Baldwin, Neil. *Edison Inventing the Century*. New York, Hyperion, 1995.

Israel, Paul. *Edison: A Life of Invention*. New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1998.

Josephson, Matthew. *Edison: A Biography*. New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1992.