

# STORIES of New Jersey

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## THE WIZARD OF MENLO PARK



*Thomas Alva Edison*

On its 150th anniversary the United States Patent Office issued a list of the 19 most important inventions since its establishment. Only Thomas Edison was credited with more than one device. He was cited as the creator of the incandescent electric light, the phonograph and the moving picture projector. These three and hundreds of others were developed in his laboratories in New Jersey, where he lived and worked from 1870 to his death 61 years later. Menlo Park, where the inventor built a laboratory and workshop, became a magnet for scientists and tourists, and Edison himself was known as "the Wizard of Menlo Park." West Orange, Kearny, Silver Lake and New Village have monuments to the inventor--factories which ship all over the world the products that Edison's mind made possible. And over the Raritan River, above Perth Amboy, the State is raising another memorial--a bridge which will bear Edison's name.

Thomas Edison was not the first of his family to live in New Jersey. His great grandfather had settled near Caldwell about 1730, and the family lived there until the Revolution, when they moved to Nova Scotia. Thomas' father later came to Milan, Ohio. In this thriving town of two or three thousand people Thomas Alva Edison was born February 11, 1847.

When the boy was seven, the family moved once again, to Port Huron, where he was enrolled in school. Everyone called him Al, then--short for Alva. Stubborn and curious, he pestered some of his teachers with questions, while in other classes he sat without any effort to pay attention. Because of his unpredictable nature, and perhaps because of his exceptionally large head, which doctors thought might be indicative of brain trouble, his teacher called him crazy. So angry was his mother that she had him taken from the school and there-