



# Inventing the Future: A Photobiography of Thomas Alva Edison

*Marfe Ferguson Delano, David Edward Edison Sloane*

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This photobiography of Thomas Edison continues the National Geographic children's photobiography series with an especially appealing and well-known subject. Thomas Edison (1847-1931) is thought by many to be one of the greatest inventors in history. Among his numerous achievements, he developed the light bulb, invented the phonograph, and made significant contributions to the fields of photography and filmmaking. His inventions helped lay the foundation for the modern national power grid, the recording industry, and the motion picture industry. He patented an astounding total of 1,093 inventions - more than any other inventor. His famous saying, Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration, encapsulates his attitude toward inventing. He developed his ideas through perseverance, trying things over and over again until he finally made a breakthrough. This approach gave birth to the modern research laboratory, where hypotheses are proposed and then tested. Edison's legacy is as much in his groundbreaking and gritty way of thinking as in his practical inventions. Thomas Edison was a character - a character who makes a great book subject. He slept little at night and so would catnap during the day, anywhere he felt like, even stretching out on his lab table for some Z's. He worked with many assistants, whom he called muckers, and together they would work round the clock to feverishly develop inventions and beat out their competition. One bout of this earned a group the name, the Insomnia Squad. Edison even nicknamed his first children, Dot and Dash after the symbols in Morse code. Thomas Edison was a significant influence on a developing industrial nation, and he was recognized for his achievements even in his own time. When he died at the age of 84, President Herbert Hoover asked all Americans to honor him by turning off their electric lights for a moment of darkness. Edison filled more than 3,000 notebooks with sketches and notes, and the best of that material is captured here. Compelling period images of Edison at work and of his life and times round out a humanizing portrait of a great American.

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