**Thomas Edison NHP News Release**

**For Immediate Release**

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**THOMAS EDISON - RUBBER AND ROAD TRIPS**

September 2014

WEST ORANGE, NJ – Collaborating with his close friends, Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone in his last significant research campaign, Edison searched for a domestic source of natural rubber in the late 1920s. Explore these ideas, attend a program, and see a special exhibit of original artifacts, documents and historic photos during the month of September at Thomas Edison National Historical Park (NHP). The programs are free with admission and will be held at the Laboratory Complex at 211 Main Street unless noted.

**1st Friday – September 5th at 2:30 p.m.**

**Edison’s Quest for Rubber In 1927**

**Joan Harris-Rico, Museum Curator**

Edison began searching for a domestic source of rubber to protect Americans from foreign control of this vital commodity. He experimented with thousands of plants at his Ft. Myers estate, eventually selecting goldenrod as the most promising source of rubber. This program includes film footage from Edison’s Ft. Myers Botanical Research Lab and interesting facts about the rubber experiments from the West Orange museum collection.

*Joan Harris-Rico has been the Collections Manager at Thomas Edison NHP since 1999. She was formerly the Registrar at Statue of Liberty NM/Ellis Island Immigration Museum and the Museum Technician/Curator at Manhattan Sites. Prior to her National Park Service employment, she was a Project Archivist at the New York City Municipal Archives and Curator/Archivist at Queens Historical Society. She holds a B.A. in Anthropology from St. John’s University, an M.A. in Anthropology from City University of New York/Hunter College, and a Certificate in Museum Studies from New York University. She also completed the Collections Care Training Program at University of Delaware*.

**2nd Saturday – September 13th at 10:00 a.m. (especially for children)**

**Chemistry 101**

Join a Ranger to learn about Thomas Edison’s final experiments with rubber. In this workshop kids can explore the properties of a polymer like silly putty and slime…and even mix up their own batch! This is a children’s event with parent or guardian supervision.

**3rd Thursday – September 18th at 7:00 p.m.**

**Our Vacation Days: The Road Trips of Thomas Edison**

**Leonard DeGraaf, Archivist**

Combining his love of automobiles and his interest in “nature’s laboratory,” Thomas Edison enjoyed annual car trips throughout the U.S. from 1915 to 1924. Accompanied by his friends Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone and joined by such notables as John Burroughs and Warren Harding, Edison camped in the Adirondacks, the Catskills and the Shenandoah Valley, among other places. For Edison, the trips were a welcome break from lab and business pressures. For the public, who followed the trips through newspaper reports, the trips offered a glimpse of business celebrities at play. Using rarely-seen historic photos and archival documents, park archivist Leonard DeGraaf traces the travels of Edison and his vagabond friends.

*Before joining the National Park Service in 1991, DeGraaf was on the staff of the Thomas A. Edison Papers at Rutgers University. He is the author of Edison and the Rise of Innovation, Historic Photos of Thomas Edison (Turner Publishing, 2008), and his articles have appeared in Business History Review and other publications. He received an M.A. in history from Rutgers University.*

**Special program in September:**

**New exhibition opening August 28:**

**TRANSFORMED: LOOKING AT THE AGE OF EDISON THROUGH THE WITNESS TREES OF GLENMONT**

**August 28 to October 5, 2014**

**ValleyArts Firehouse Gallery, 580 Forest Street, Orange, NJ**

An exhibition of artworks made from trees downed by Hurricane Sandy in 2012 from Thomas Edison’s estate, Glenmont, in Llewellyn Park. A joint program of the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), Thomas Edison NHP and ValleyArts, the exhibition will be featured at the ValleyArts Firehouse Gallery, 580 Forest Street, Orange NJ fromThursday, August 28 through Sunday, October 5, 2014. The Gallery is open Thursdays5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.; Saturdays 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; Sundays 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and by appointment. Admission is free.

**Exhibition Events:**

**Preview Opening – Thursday, August 28, 5:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.**

Featuring a short talk with National Park Service Curator Beth Miller on the Edison’s at Glenmont. Beth Miller is a graduate of the Seton Hall University museum professions program and the historic preservation program at Drew University. She obtained her undergraduate degree from Montclair State University in both studio art and art history. She received a grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission to publish a catalogue of the works of art at Glenmont in the year 2000.

**Opening Celebration – Saturday, September 6**

**3:00 p.m. Gallery Talk**

4:30-7:30 p.m. – Artists’ Reception

Gallery Talk speakers: Charlie Pepper (horticulturist, senior project manager, preservation maintenance and education, Olmstead Center for Landscape Preservation), Susanna Bohme (lecturer in history, philosophy and social sciences, RISD), Dale Broholm (senior critic, Department of Furniture Design, RISD), and students from RISD.

**Gallery Talk – Saturday, September 20, 3:00 p.m.**

Michael Commisso, historical landscape architect and co-author of the Cultural Landscape Report for Glenmont (2012), on the development of Llewellyn Park and Glenmont from a landscape perspective.