



FRIENDS OF  
**THOMAS EDISON**  
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK



## FUNDRAISING PLAN FOR THE BLACK MARIA'S REHABILITATION 2022-2023





# BLACK MARIA REHABILITATION AND VISITOR ACCESS PLAN 2021



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NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

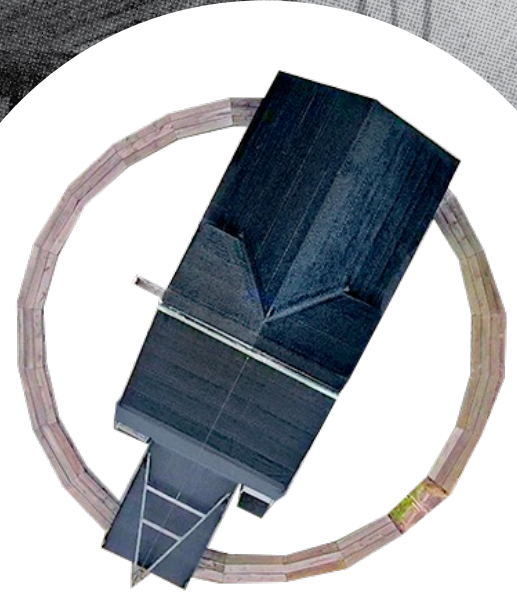


## A LITTLE BACKGROUND

In the summer of 1892, Thomas Edison began preparations on a “revolving photographic building” where movies could be filmed. There are no known drawings or notebooks related to the building of the Black Maria, most likely it was designed by William K. L. Dickson with Edison’s participation. Work began in December 1892 and was complete in February 1893. It was a wooden structure with black tar paper, mounted on wheels and placed on a circular wooden track. A portion of the roof opened and, by pushing the building around the track, it was possible to maximize available lighting by following the course of the sun. **The building cost \$647.67.**

The Black Maria was used from 1893 until 1903. The movies made there were usually no more than one minute in length and were shown in “kinetoscope parlors” across the country. In all 2000 to 3000 movies were made here during the years that the Black Maria was in use.

In 1903 Edison opened a new, larger glass roofed movie studio in the Bronx. The Black Maria was no longer needed and was taken down that same year. A replica of the Black Maria was built on the grounds of the Laboratory Complex in 1954 by the Thomas Alva Edison Foundation, prior to the National Park Service ownership of the site. It was never meant as a truly historical replica but rather as a tourist attraction. It presently stands about 413 feet north of its original location. The exterior is based on the few known photographs of the building (dated 1894/5 and 1903). The interior, originally designed to be used as a small theater, has no historic significance.





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## **BLACK MARIA REHABILITATION AND VISITOR ACCESS PLAN 2022**

### **THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST**

The 1954 replica of the original motion picture studio, the Black Maria, is located at the laboratory of Thomas Edison National Historical Park. The structure/exhibit is a popular and important piece of the Edison story. The NPS would like to expand the story of the Black Maria and showcase the exhibit to the visiting public.

The Black Maria Rehabilitation and Visitor Access Plan has been prepared by the park to provide a scope of costs for the rehabilitation and accessibility of visitors into the structure (see page 5.) It is expected this plan will morph some as we further refine the actual visitor experience once inside the building. An important need of this plan is the development of an Interpretive Concept Plan for the visitor experience in this structure (exhibits, etc.).

We are thankful for the Friends of Thomas Edison, who over 30 years have continued to support the park through dozens of projects at the laboratory, library, Glenmont Estate (Edison's family home), and funding of programs to enrich the visitor experience and educate our youth.

Tom Ross | Superintendent,  
Thomas Edison National Historical Park





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**So who are the Friends of Thomas Edison NHP?**

**We're passionate group of creative, historically minded and innovative folks dedicated to keeping generations loving the legacy of Thomas Edison. Together, we help raise funds to preserve artifacts in his West Orange National Park and share his ideas.**

**Specifically for the Black Maria, we've focused on 3 main areas of need...**

- Honoring Edison's place in cinema history.**
- Preservation of the Black Maria itself for future generations**
- Supporting the Park and (Black Maria) with engaging education programs for onsite visitors as well as our global Edison fans.**

**BEYOND THE BULB**



# BLACK MARIA REHABILITATION AND VISITOR ACCESS PLAN 2022-2023



*"Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up."*

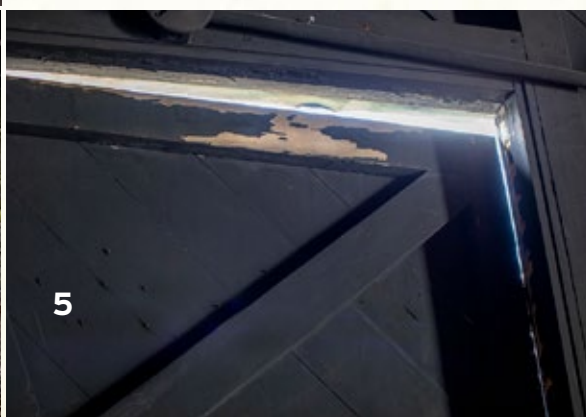
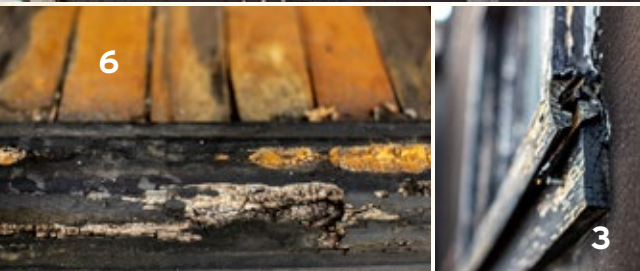
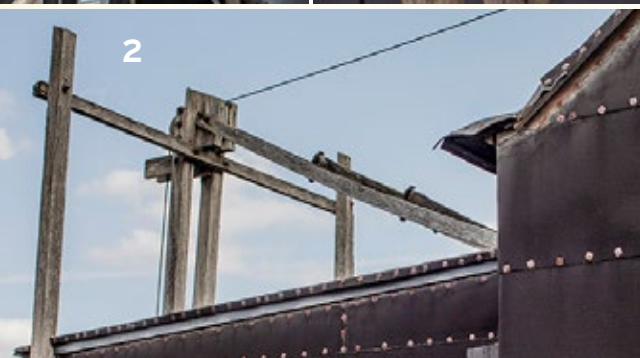
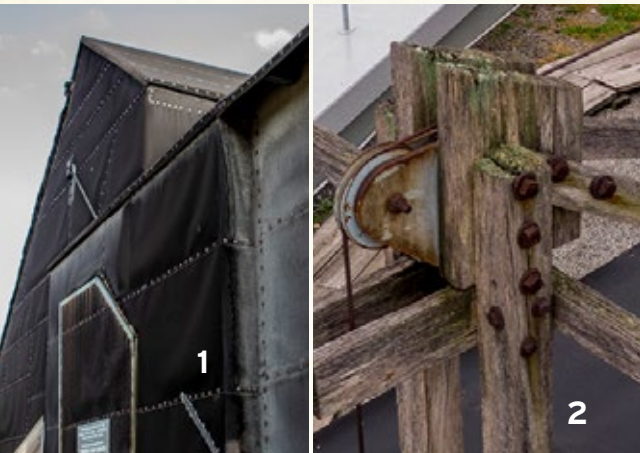
- Thomas Edison

## STRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. Remove/replace all exterior roofing and siding material and repair wood sheathing as needed (first 200 sq. ft. included).  
- \$13,600.00 est.
2. Remove existing wood "pulley" structure and replace with new timbers to match existing. Replace failing ornamental timbers on the sides of the building as well.  
- \$5,800.00 est.
3. Repair working roof and replace flashing around the opening to ensure water-tight and safe.  
- \$5,800.00 est.
4. Remove/replace wood "track" around the perimeter with new timbers to match existing.  
- \$12,600.00 est.
5. Fabricate and install new metal flashing around (4) four door-ways.  
- \$3,000.00 est. based on materials (copper vs. aluminum)
6. Install new 2" maple flooring in place of damaged flooring (approx. 200 square feet).  
- \$6,200.00 - \$9,000.00 est. based on option selected.
7. Inspect and adjust all hardware, locks and hinges on all doors and windows. Facility Management Group will inspect the door and window hardware and make the appropriate adjustments and repairs.

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Allocation of approx, \$52,000 of the \$150,000 we're seeking



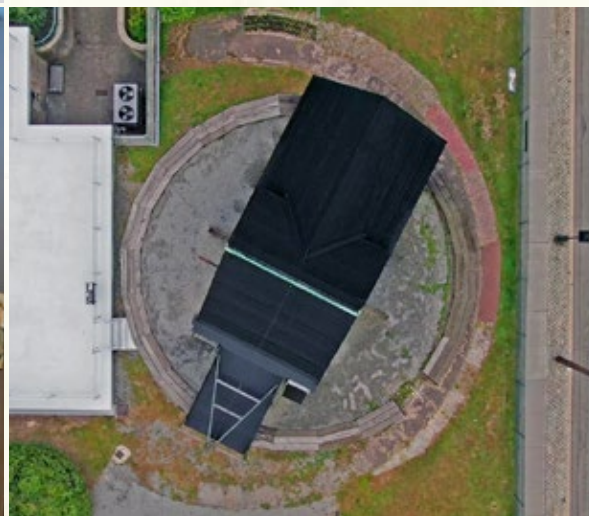
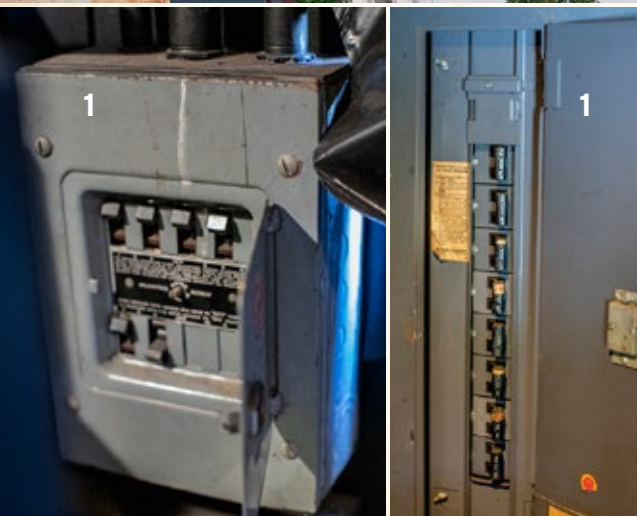
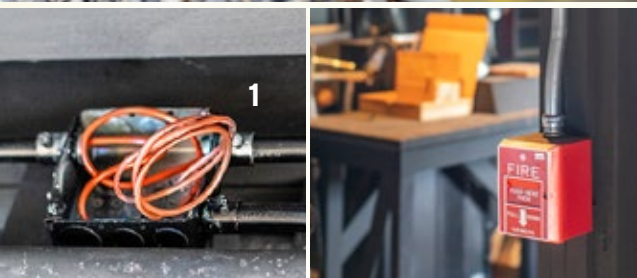


# BLACK MARIA REHABILITATION AND VISITOR ACCESS PLAN 2022-2023



*"Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."*

- Thomas Edison



## ELECTRICAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. Remove old electrical equipment no longer in use and convert voltage from three phase to single phase and install a new 200 AMP main breaker panel. Reconnect all wiring and mark panel. Install 12 new duplex outlets where required on (4) four new 20 AMP 120-volt circuits. Upgrade and improve electrical supply, wiring and disconnect and remove old electrical equipment for safety and use for future equipment.  
- \$9,000 est.

## INTERPRETIVE CONCEPT PLAN:

2. Develop an interpretive concept plan for the Black Maria. Thematic areas could include: the Black Maria, the actors, making movies and Edison's role in motion pictures, etc.
3. Develop an exhibit plan to address themes.
  - Sections of the room could be furnished with scenery flats and a replica camera as if a movie were being filmed.
  - Video screens could also show films that were made in the Black Maria and historic photos from the site's archives. Banners to highlight thematic areas.
  - Equipment: Video screen(s), Computer, DVD/digital receiver, LAN connection, digitize historic films
  - \$50,000.00 - \$75,000.00 cost estimate

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Allocation of approx, \$75,000 of the \$150,000 we're seeking

# BLACK MARIA REHABILITATION AND VISITOR ACCESS PLAN 2022-2023



*“Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.”*

- Thomas Edison

## ACCESSIBILITY

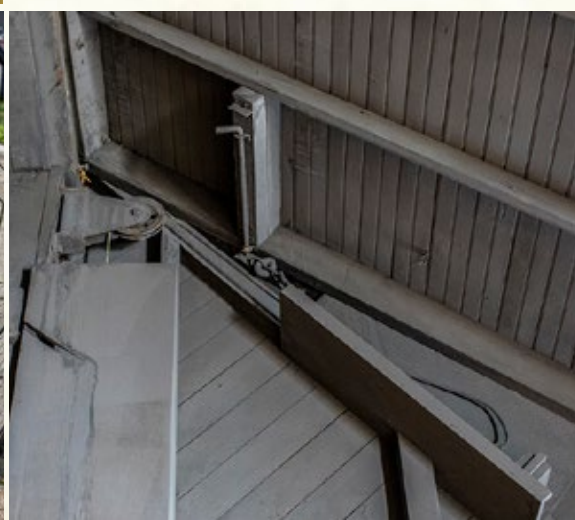
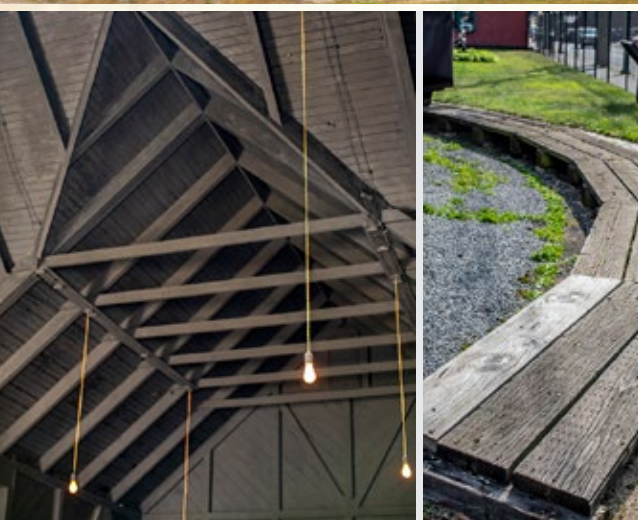
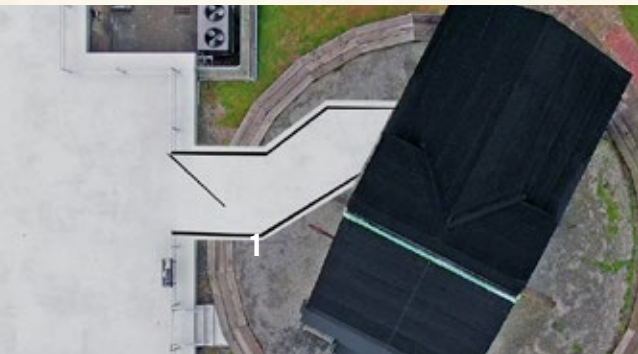
1. Install a ramp/bridge between Vault 12 and the Black Maria to allow universal accessibility.
  - (Option A) 23' ramp/bridge with 6' of ramping with handrails. Width of ramp/bridge 5' with a 7'x7' landing at door with a gate to open door 180 degrees to be secured against building.
  - (Option B) includes an additional platform at approximately 8'x7' at the entrance, allowing the door to swing open and providing a gathering space (cost estimate forthcoming).
  - **\$15,000 est.**
2. Design and install a “glass” door to allow visitors to see the interior without staff presence. A water-tight cover would be in place of opening on Vault 12 side of building. (if needed).
  - **\$9,000 est.**
3. Emergency backlit “Exit” signs at interior doorways and emergency egress lights.
  - **\$3,000 est.**

## OPERATIONS

4. Black Maria Campaign reimbursement for hard expenses and marketing materials including website, fundraising materials, video, event costs, etc.
  - **\$5,000 est.**

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Allocation of approx, \$35,000 of the \$150,000 we're seeking







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## WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE...

Success means that we do our part to preserve the legacy of Edison's impact on the origins of Cinema for future generations in a way that is safe, secure, experiential and inspirational.

By raising the capital to fund our mission we help Thomas Edison National Historical Park thrive for years to come and increase the traffic bolstering our West Orange community.

Our goal is to raise \$150,000 which will enable the Friends of Thomas Edison NHP to implement the Park's Black Maria Rehabilitation and Visitor Access Plan.





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## THE BIRTH OF CINEMA

Let's start our story at the beginning



The audio and action captured together!



The first gymnast man on film



Fred Ott's Sneeze, was the first ever film to be copyrighted, making Fred the world's first film celebrity!

God Bless you!

Prior to this, there was no visual record of dancing



World's first non-America dance captured!



The world's first movie studio!



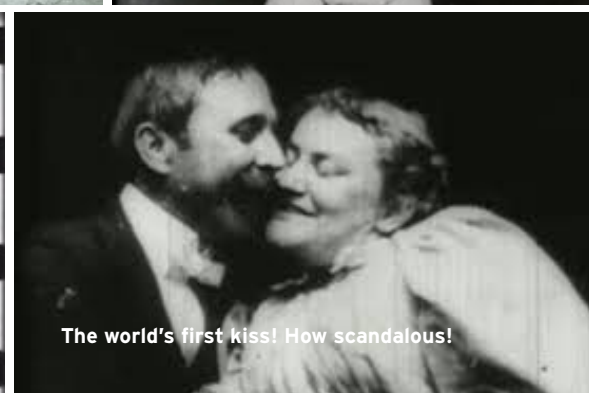
The first strong man on film



Boxing Cats



The world's first kiss! How scandalous!



First gun shot on firm, Annie Oakley!

THE BLACK MARIA IN WEST ORANGE,  
THE ORIGINS OF CINEMA'S FIRST'S





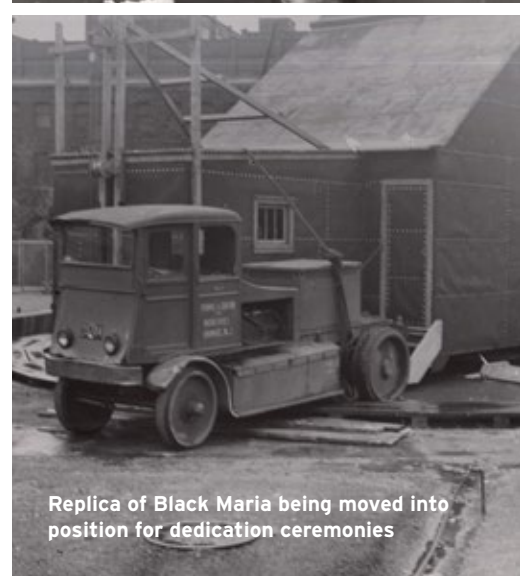
Charles Edison in front of the Black Maria during Edison Pageant of Progress



Mina Edison and Rita Johnson in front of the Black Maria during Edison Pageant of Progress.



Construction of Black Maria replica.



Replica of Black Maria being moved into position for dedication ceremonies



Dedication ceremonies for Black Maria replica



Model of Black Maria exhibited in New Jersey pavilion at New York World's Fair.



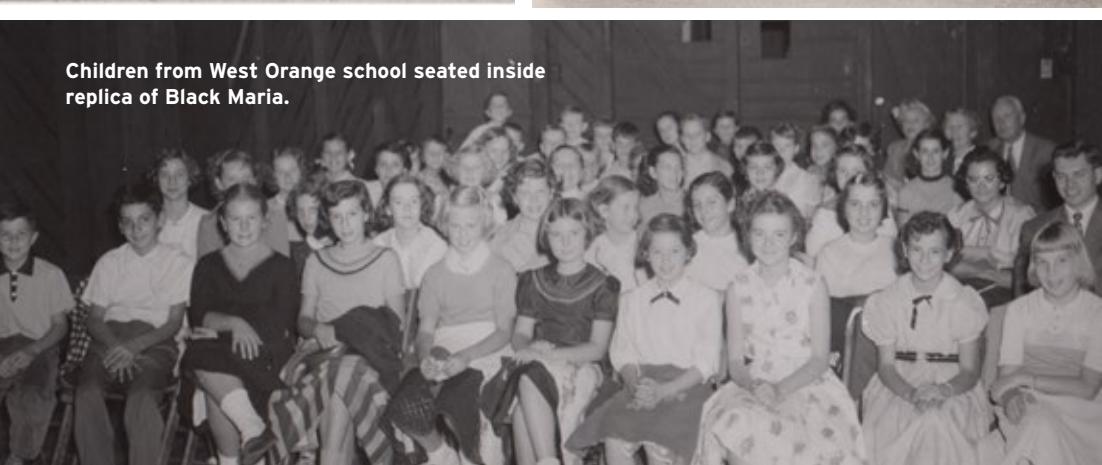
Charles Edison and John Coakley in the library with model of the Black Maria.



Construction of Black Maria replica.



Tour guide explaining the significance of the Black Maria



Children from West Orange school seated inside replica of Black Maria.



Man turning replica of Black Maria on its turntable.





# WORLD'S FIRST FILM STUDIO IN W.O. SPAWNED GLOBAL INDUSTRY

By Joseph Fagan  
West Orange Official Historian



Today an oddly shaped small black building sits near the entrance of the Thomas Edison National Historical Park in West Orange. It is not glamorous, often misunderstood, and likely doesn't call much attention to itself as an attraction. It stands as a tribute to the Edison genius and the worldwide film industry of today that he helped create.

When Thomas Edison first arrived in West Orange in 1887, he practically was already world famous. Known as “**The Wizard of Menlo Park New Jersey**” for inventing the phonograph in 1877 and perfecting the electric light in 1879. But it is his former Main Street complex in West Orange that gave birth to the world's first motion picture studio. The tar paper covered building is the size of a small bungalow and was first built in 1893. It was specially designed on a track so it could be rotated with the roof open to keep it aligned with the sun. The film speed was so slow that only natural sunlight would work. The inside walls of the studio were painted black helping eliminate reflections and create needed contrast between actors and the background. The name of the studio was dubbed the **Black Maria** (pronounced Mui-ra-a) by those who worked there. Since it was a small and an uncomfortable place to work it reminded many of Black Marias which were cramped police vans also known as paddy wagons. Edison's own name for it was the doghouse.

By the late 1880s the concept of moving images as entertainment was not a new one and not uniquely that of Edison. The films produced at the Black Maria were not film as we know it today but specifically for use in Edison's invention the Kinetoscope.



This device sat on the floor and required the user to insert a coin and look into it while standing. It was commonly referred to as a peep show. The first Kinetoscope parlor opened in New York City on April 14, 1894. For a total of 25 cents a customer could view the films in all five machines which were neatly placed in a row. Kinetoscope parlors soon increased in popularity and opened around the country. Production of a constant flow of new film subjects was needed at the West Orange studio to keep the new invention popular. Many vaudeville performers, dancers, and magicians became the first forms of entertainment to be filmed at the Black Maria. Subjects also included acts from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show including Annie Oakley with a troop of Native American dancers who visited West Orange. The films were intended to appeal to mostly male audiences with boxing and cockfights and at times even featured scantily clad women. During 1894 over 75 of all types of these motion picture were made in West Orange at the Black Maria studio.

By 1895 sales of Kinetoscopes began to slow down mostly due to competing technology that developed and used projected motion pictures as we know today. To compensate for the declining popularity of the Kinetoscope in April 1895 Edison developed the Kinetophone. It was Edison's attempt to combine a moving picture with sound from a phonograph and make talking pictures a reality. However, the device could not achieve exact synchronization and ultimately failed to find a market. Edison was slow to realize films projected for large audiences could generate more profits because fewer machines were needed. By January 1901 Edison had focused his efforts towards work on conventional motion picture projection. He opened a new studio in the Bronx bringing a final end to the Black Maria studio era in West Orange.

The original Black Maria studio was constructed in 1893 for a total cost of \$637.67 and was torn down some-time around 1903. In May 1940 a temporary reproduction was built near the site to coincide with the release of the film "Edison the Man" starring Spencer Tracy and Rita Johnson. Its life was short lived and was dismantled following the film's debut. In 1954 the current Black Maria reproduction now standing at the Thomas Edison National Historical Park was built near the original location at a cost of \$25,000. It was designed for the Edison Foundation by Bernard Grad an architect from Newark. When it was used by Edison it had underwent various changes in appearance and now is a representative and fully functional example of how it once looked and worked.

The Kinetoscope parlors featuring Edison's new remarkable invention often attracted crowds and long lines to see films which only had an average length of 40 seconds. This early commercial success, although short lived, seemed to pass into history almost as quick as it had appeared. But West Orange will forever hold historic and significant relevance as the birthplace of today's world-wide film industry.



## **\$25,000 INNOVATION PARTNER**

**Ideal partner has an innovative product or service that track could track it's inspiration back to Edison and his team.**

- Two tables for up to five guests each at the event
- 10min speaking opportunity at our event
- A Park Superintendent seated at your table
- Most prominent brand recognition on all printed materials, online/social marketing and on-site signage
- Full-page cobrand press release drawing comparisons to your business and Edison's innovations
- Personal tour of both Glenmont and the Main Campus for up to 10 of your Innovation Partners, includes a delicious local meal.
- 10 items of FOTE merchandise

## **\$10,000 ROOF RAISER**

**Ideal partner is a company that is at the forefront of their industry and full of creative energy and intellectual property and patents.**

- Two tables for up to five guests each at the event
- 5min speaking opportunity at our event
- A Park Ranger seated at your table
- Prominent brand recognition on all printed materials, online/social marketing and on-site signage
- Small Paragraph mentions in all our PR and articles
- Personal tour of either Glenmont or the Main Campus for up to 10 of your Roof Raisers
- 10 items of FOTE merchandise

## **\$5,000 LAB MUCKER**

**Ideal partner is a mid size company making big waves in their industry and deeply appreciate the R&D & creative process.**

- One table for up to five guests at the event
- 3min speaking opportunity at our event
- Recognition on all printed materials, online/social marketing
- Small Paragraph mentions in all our PR and articles and at event
- Personal tour of the Main Campus Labs for up to 5 of your Muckers (a term Edison used to call his hard working, dedicated lab leaders)
- 5 items of FOTE merchandise

## **\$1,500 VISIONARY**

**Ideal partner is creative minded company looking to solve community challenges and amplify their message and value.**

- Shared table for up to 3 guests at the event
- Recognition on all online/social marketing
- Mentions in all our PR and articles and at event
- Personal Lab tour for 2 hours before our event for up to 5 people
- 5 items of FOTE merchandise

## **IN-KIND SPARK PARTNER**

**Ideal partner is local West Orange business donating their service or food and/or beverages to help amplify their local exposure.**

- Shared table for up to 3 guests at the event
- Recognition on all online/social marketing and at event
- Mentions in all our PR and articles
- Provided branded signage for your table and offerings
- 2 items of FOTE merchandise

# JOIN OUR FUNDRAISING KICK-OFF EVENT



FRIENDS OF  
**THOMAS EDISON**  
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

PRESENTS

# RAISE THE ROOF

## A FUNDRAISER TO PRESERVE — EDISON'S — BLACK MARIA

HELP US RESTORE THE FIRST MOVIE STUDIO IN CINEMA HISTORY

LEARN ABOUT & TOUR THE  
BLACK MARIA

PRIZES



MUSIC

JOIN US AND CELEBRATE EDISON'S INNOVATIONS  
WITH DELICIOUS LOCAL TREATS AND DRINKS

**MAY 15<sup>TH</sup>**  
4:30-6:30 PM

WHERE  
THOMAS EDISON NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK,  
211 MAIN ST. WEST ORANGE, NJ

\*\* UNDER THE TENT \*\*

COST  
MEMBERS \$45  
NON-MEMBERS \$60  
(MAIL OR PAY ONLINE)

FOR TICKETS VISIT [friendsofedison.org](http://friendsofedison.org)

OR

OR MAIL TO:  
FRIENDS OF THOMAS EDISON NHP  
12 HONEYSUCKLE AVE.  
WEST ORANGE, NJ 07052

KEEP  
UPDATE



FoTENHP

HOW  
&  
WHERE  
TO HELP