

THOUSAND EDISON PATENTS

He Holds the Record Among American Inventors.

WOMEN PATENTEES INCREASING

One Government Office that Has Earned \$6,000,000 Surplus—Issued Patents in 1907 at Rate of Thousand Week.

WASHINGTON, March 21.—The greatest patentee in this country and that probably means the greatest in the world—is Thomas A. Edison. He has rolled up the enormous total of almost 1,000 patents and shows no inclination to quit.

Ask the patent office people who come next to Edison and they will tell you that nobody is within hailing distance of the wizard. A good many men can count their patents by the score, and as some of them are much younger than Edison they may beat him out in time.

Up to the present, however, he deserves the title of the Great American Patentee. That means a good deal, for it is undoubtedly a fact that an American will take out a patent on less provocation than any other man or woman in the world.

As a consequence the patent office is piling up a swollen fortune which makes it a hoisted bondholder among the government departments. It has achieved a surplus of \$6,000,000 and is growing richer every day. Yankee ingenuity is gorging the patent office with records and piling up models by the hundred thousand.

The first patent under this government was taken out by Samuel Hopkins, July 31, 1790. It was on a process for "making pot and pearl ashes." Two other patents were taken out in the same year. One was for making candles, the other for making flour and meal.

Apparently we as a people look kindly to the patent idea from the very start, for we jumped from three in 1790 to thirty-three in 1791. On March 11, Samuel Mulletton took out four all by himself. But on August 31 James Ramsey utterly eclipsed Mulletton by taking out six.

That was the greatest day the patent office had known, for within its limits no less than fourteen patents were issued to aspiring genius. Three of these were on "improvements in Captain Savary's steam engine," and one was taken out by the famous John Fitch for "propelling boats by steam." An eight out of the fourteen patents of that day were for the application of steam to almost everything to be immortalized as a steam anniversary.

The next year there came a decided recession, only eleven patents being issued in the entire twelve months, not even many as on the one day in August of the year before. In 1796 a word which has become the commonest in the patent office vocabulary began to make itself conspicuous. It was "improvement."

Out of forty-four patents issued that year twenty-seven were improvements of one thing or another. The next year the improvements numbered forty out of fifty-one patents.

There is an astonishing frequency of French names in the early patent records. About 1802 they were generally numerous, and they were generally attached to something rather ambitious in the way of an invention.

For instance, that year Jean Baptiste Avelin patented a "machine for raising water," which is described in the patent records, with a profusion of exclamation points and parentheses: (It is a perpetual motion!) A few months later another Frenchman named Marenille invented "an indestructible boat."

Pills, pills, pills! Our patent medicine appetite is one of long standing, for almost the commonest object of the early patents was some form of pills, antacid pills, cream of tartar pills and so on. One of the peculiar descriptions is of a patent issued in 1799 for an "effeminate ropery for spinning rope yarn."

The present activity in producing military balloons had a forerunner in 1799 when a "federal balloon" was patented. In the same year a "check to detect counterfeit" was patented. And in 1800 a description

of a telegraph instrument, the first appearing in the patent records, was filed by Jonathan Groul, jr., of Massachusetts.

In the fifteen years between 1790 and 1805 only 600 patents were issued. That was a big number considering the times. The word "only" is used, because now, a century later, we are issuing patents at the rate of 1,000 a week!

It was not until May 5, 1809, that a woman took out a patent. It is to Mary Keyes that the honor must be given.

Who she was or where she lived the records fail to state. Her patent is described as "Straw weaving with silk or thread." For six years Mary was alone in her glory as the sole woman patentee in this country. Then another woman came forward with an idea. This time it was a corset.

In 1819 a woman patented "cream of tartar, carbonated liquid." In 1822 one of them patented her hair and money to her idea of a footstool; in 1823 it was weaving grass hats; in 1828 a sheet iron shovel; in 1833 a "cataah balloon for ladies"; in 1834, extracting fur from skins and manufacturing it into yarn.

The first ice cream freezer was added to the records by a woman in 1843, and in 1848, if you please, a woman invented a "submarine telescope and lamp." The 1849 feminine patent—the above list includes all taken out by women during this period—suggests a picture of truly idyllic idleness. It was a "rocking chair with fan attachment."

The ladies proceeded to evolve corset styles, skirts, button workers and similar appropriately feminine devices until one of them went far afield in 1858 and patented a method of "mounting a fluid lens."

Just what struck Lavinia Foy of Worcester, Mass., in 1863 is not quite clear, but she broke out with a whole bunch of patents. Whether she was stirred the female mind to unusual activity or not, the women took out more and more patents.

There was Clarissa Britain of St. Jo, Mich., who took out seven in eighteen months all by her own sweet Clarissan self. Rosanna Carpenter was also extremely active.

In 1868 there were seventy patents taken out by women. The number grew to 961 in 1891, and heaven knows what it is now. If you want to go over the record of 50,000 patents granted last year nobody will say you nay. That's the only way you can find out.

But after 1864 there was a record compiled of patents issued to women in the previous two and a half years, and that contained hints that women were continuing to branch out. During that time they patented fifteen agricultural implements, three motors, three horseshoes, twenty-two building appliances, eight fire escapes, eight railway appliances, including one for unloading box cars; thirty-one forms of heating apparatus; and dozens of other such articles classed under such heads as furniture, culinary utensils, trunks and bags, toys, washing and cleaning, games, baby carriages, art appliances, sewing, etc.

Wearing apparel called forth the largest exercise of their ingenuity. 132 patents being credited to that item alone. Culinary utensils came next with 120 patents. In fact, the patent records seem to show that the external feminine is as substantial a verity as ever.

It is rather surprising to find that the patents credited to foreign women are as a rule of a more scientific and unfeeling class. French women are especially noticeable in this direction, being credited in the United States office with such patents as aluminum solder and a process of making anhydrous tannic acid.

Smokeless Coal.

A London inventor claims to have discovered a process for producing smokeless coal, apparently by distillation of coal at low temperature. This, the inventor claims, is said to deposit a very brilliant substance, the heating properties of which are far greater than those of the original coal, and which is absolutely free from smoke and dirt. The inventor contends that this process to overcome the smoke which has hitherto been unsuccessful, because they have been "made" in the wrong direction, and that by the extraction of the smoke-producing material in coal before being burned, he has been successful in producing a smokeless coal. Sir W. E. Richmond, president of the Society for the Prevention of Smoke, has bought up this invention.

WHAT UNCLE SAM GIVES AWAY

Great Variety of Articles Handed Out Without Cost.

MANY DRAFTS ON HIS STOCK

Forest Lumber and Bugs, Congressional Seeds and Wooden Legs, Weather Prophets and Business Tips for the Asking.

This is a mighty paternal government—there is no mistake about it. It gives away no end of things to the people without charging a penny for them; and it almost seems as if one could get anything one wants simply by writing to Washington and asking for it.

Last year the forest service gave away 115,000,000 board feet of lumber, cut in the national forest reserves—mostly to settlers for home-building purposes. It will distribute an equal quantity this year, and so on right along in the future. This is one of the things the national forests are set aside and maintained. But the service does a great deal more than that for people. If you own a tract of naked hillsides, or covered with sand-dunes, it will help you to clothe it with trees. Or, if you possess timber lands, it will look them over and give you detailed plans for their economical management.

It is much the same way if you happen to have on your land a stream or a big pond. The government will stock it for you without charging you a cent, forwarding the little fishes, 1,000 or so in a batch, by rail, expressage paid. You are at liberty to choose the kind of fish you want, so long as they are a species appropriate to the locality. Uncle Sam would not present you with a lot of ahad for planting in a pond, nor with young codfish for a fresh water stream. It is through one's congressman that one should apply in case you want anything of this sort. Instructions for planting and feeding the fishes will accompany them.

Farm Helps.

If you are a farmer and are troubled with grasshoppers, the Bureau of Animal Industry will furnish you with some very deadly microbes, put up in bottles, with instructions as to how to utilize them for the purpose of introducing a destructive plague among the insects. Indeed, no matter what kind of bug is bothering you, the government will, at least, suggest a remedy, and it may be able to provide you with some of its insect enemies. It was in this way that the orange industry of California was saved a few years ago, by the help of a small beetle imported from Australia; and at the present time the Bureau of Entomology is hunting all over the world for parasites of the gypsy moth, the San Jose scale, and other pests, with a view to distributing them in infested localities.

Again, if you grow corn and beans, or clover, for market, you may greatly augment your stock by sowing the land with a special breed of microbes which form colonies on the roots of the plants and enable the latter to absorb nitrogen from the air. The plant bureau will send you a good sized package of these microbes, if you choose to ask for them, and will tell you how to breed them, for yourself, so that from the small quantity provided you can propagate them in any quantity desired. Having done so, all you have to do is sprinkle the water containing the germs over your fields, or else soak in it the seed you are going to plant.

Likewise, without charge, the Department of Agriculture sends out through the mails little bottles of "antitoxins," with which to inoculate cattle and other domestic animals for the prevention and cure of certain diseases. But the most remarkable of the giving done by this branch of the government has to do with new varieties of fruit, grains and vegetables, which, as fast as they are developed through scientific experimentation, are put first in the hands of a few selected farmers for practical trial, and finally placed at the disposal of everybody, a single new variety of wheat exceptionally productive, has been made in this way to add millions of bushels to the output of that cereal in one state.

Congressional Seeds.

The annual appropriation made by congress for the purchase of useful seeds, to be distributed free among the people, has been steadily increasing until at the present time it amounts to something like \$18,000 a year. This amount of money buys enough seeds to fill 38,000,000 paper packets. In the putting up of which machinery of the most ingenious kind is employed. The seeds, arriving in sacks at the government barn in Washington are dumped into huge hoppers, from which they pour down through chutes into queer looking mechanical contrivances. Each of these contrivances fills 3,500 paper bags an hour, a tiny scoop dumping into each bag the exact measure required. Then a metal hand which acts with an intelligence almost human, rises from beneath, grasps each envelope by the bottom and passes it beneath a roller, sealing it with paste incidentally and throwing it into a basket. The packets put up in this way are made up into bundles of five, the final touch being to put on a label that bears the congressman's frank. He furnishes the addresses.

If you have lost an arm or a leg in the service of the country, whether fighting for it or in civil life, the government will make you a new one every three years. And, if you would rather have the money, you are at liberty to accept \$5 in place of a leg, or \$50 instead of an arm. A lost hand or foot, likewise, is worth \$50 to you every three years, if the injury was received while working for Uncle Sam. Over 3,000 persons lacking a leg and 2,500 lacking an arm draw their limbs regularly, or the cash substitute, from the government department. Most of them prefer the cash, especially where arms are concerned, because, though false legs are quite serviceable, artificial arms are of small use except for ornament. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that when a recipient of this kind of bounty wants to get a new arm or leg, he can go to any city in the union for it, the government paying his fare both ways, including passage on a Pullman.

Aids for Castaways.

In case you are making a voyage at sea and passage to the nearest convenient port. Supposing that you happen to be cast away anywhere on the shores of this country, you will be fed, taken care of and treated with medicines, if you need them, at the nearest life-saving station, all without a penny of cost to yourself. Indeed, the government frequently engages in charitable work on an enormous scale—just as, for example, it gave a great sum of money, as well as other help, for the rescue of the sufferers by the earthquake at San Francisco. Congress is always generous on such occasions, but in an emergency, if congress is not in session, the president does not hesitate to sign an order on the treasury on his own responsibility for any amount that may be required. In one such case \$400,000 out of the appropriation for rivers and harbors was expended in succoring the survivors of the great Mississippi overflow. The weather bureau, in addition to giving away \$1,500,000 worth of weather predictions every year, which are of the greatest practical use to farmers, to mariners, to shippers of perishable products and to

ever so many other people, tests, without charge, mariners' barometers for accuracy. Likewise the hydrographic office of the navy makes gratuitous tests of compasses and chronometers for skippers, and the bureau of standards tests weights and measures of all kinds for manufacturers and other business men. The latter bureau, among other things, tests the candlepower of incandescent lamps and determines the accuracy of the clinical thermometers which physicians use.

Information for the Asking.

Information of all kinds the government distributes gratis. The bureau of manufacturers has commercial information, indexed on millions of alphabetically arranged cards, telling what the people in every town in the world, big or small, want to buy, and how much they consume. Anybody, merchant or manufacturer, who wants to know about such matters, has only to write to the bureau, and he will get an answer by return mail. In the same way the bureau is able to tell him about home trade opportunities—what classes of buyers for different goods are to be found in any town or district in this country, what their wants are, and in what shape the merchandise should be sent.

The bureau of manufactures issues a daily newspaper, devoted to the discussion of trade opportunities at home and abroad, which is sent free to any business man who wants it. Its work is supplemented by the foreign markets bureau of the Department of Agriculture, which keeps the most up-to-date of the foreign demand for our farm products. In fact there is no end to the useful information one may get from the government free of charge. The Patent office will act as your patent attorney if you write to it direct, sending an application, with a rough sketch of your invention. The bureau of pomology will tell you how to pack perishable fruits and vegetables, and the bureau of mines will give you hints as to where to look for precious metals or other mineral resources, furnishing an estimate of the value of your claim when you have located one. There is hardly any sort of trouble you can get into which Uncle Sam will not try to help you out. Even the Indians of Alaska are not forgotten and are being supplied with free reindeer to keep them from starving.—Brooklyn Eagle.

SEND DOLLARS AFTER CENTS

Law Suits Over Trifles that Cost a Small Fortune Before They Were Settled.

Many men, level-headed enough about other things, seem to lose their wits entirely when they get tangled up in a lawsuit. In a case recently concluded in the German courts a Berlin business man paid out over \$300 to recover the value of a 5-cent postage stamp, and now everybody is laughing at him because he didn't even get the stamp back. It seems as if this claimant had justice on his side, too; he had written a polite letter asking for an address and inclosing postage for reply. Failing to get an answer, he sued for the stamp. The famous Missouri watermelon case was just as trifling and even more disastrous. The seed was planted on one farm, but the vine crept through a crack in the rail fence and the melon grew on the other side. Both farmers claimed it, and instead of seeing the melon they went to law. To add to the puzzle of ownership an additional complication, the fence was on a county line and a question of the jurisdiction, of course, was involved. The farmers bankrupted themselves without deciding the question of ownership. The melon, worth about 25 cents in the first place, had disappeared long before the Iowa case which concerned the identity of a red and white heifer calf, was equally disastrous. It is said that subpoenas were issued for more than 200 witnesses, who attended court after court and received their fees and mileage. The question of who owned the calf grew from a joke into a neighborhood tragedy. Perfectly honest men and women took the witness stand and swore against each other. So great was the puzzle that jury after jury was unable to agree and no man knows to this day whether there were two spotted calves that looked just alike, or whether one tried to steal the other's calf. After they had spent all their money in litigation the rival owners met one day and tossed a coin to settle the case.

How the costs ran up in these trivial actions was shown in a Canadian case. By one of those queer marriage settlements sometimes made in England a young man agreed to pay his wife's mother \$100 on the first day of every year. He settled in Canada, and when he came to make the remittance he deducted the amount of the money order and sent her only \$25.4. The mother-in-law insisted that she must have the other 15 cents and after a month or two she had her attorneys bring suit against him in the Ontario courts. She made him pay, too, and stuck him for the costs of the action, though she was obliged to fee her own lawyers. The total expenses of this 15-cent lawsuit were said to be exactly \$62, most of which fell upon the economical son-in-law.

One of the celebrated French cases was over a 2-cent toy balloon, and the litigants were Baron de Silbert and the Paris Metropolitan railway. The balloon belonged to the baron's little girl, and the railway employees on account of some rule they felt obliged to enforce would not permit it brought into the passenger car. The baron stormed and threatened, but the guard was obdurate, and the toy was left behind while the child wept. The next day the nobleman sued the company for the 2 cents to accept \$75 in place.

Some of the smartest lawyers in Paris were engaged in the case. It was proved that the balloon was filled with gas, and that it was likely to explode at any time, and the wise court held that even if its explosion could not possibly be attended by danger to the passengers, the company was liable for the damage to the passengers, and the decision was against the baron. He spent hundreds of dollars trying to get even with the company, and the more he lost the less satisfaction he obtained.

The most expensive lawsuit in the world is said to have been that over the will of Antonio Traversa, a merchant who lived at Milan. He left a fortune of \$2,000,000, and there were a large number of heirs with conflicting interests. The case was in the different courts of Italy for years, and the 150 lawyers engaged in it ran up costs aggregating more than \$200,000. The estate lost in value, too, during the contest, so that the winning heirs found themselves with a small sum to their share when the final decision was rendered.

One of the most persistent complainants on record was the aged Belgian lawyer who once tried to ride the subway car, street car or "tramway" on a ticket which he maintained was good, but which the company refused to honor. He brought suit against them next day and the court decided against him. He paid his costs, only a trifle, and the next time he got on the car he offered the same ticket. It was refused, and again he hailed the company into court.

As he was his own lawyer and the ticket was his witness, it was not an expensive course of litigation for him, but it cost the company something. As often as he would board a car he would sue the company, and establish grounds for a new case. At last the tramway company saw a great light. They accepted the ticket one day and let the lawyer ride.—Chicago Tribune.



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