

Fort Myers, Florida – Part 1 An Overview Edison Arrives

"World-renowned inventor, Thomas Edison, and his friend and business partner, Ezra Gilliland, traveled to Florida in the winter of 1885 looking for a place to relax and warm weather. They found both in abundance in the frontier town (population 349) of Fort Myers. Edison purchased a 13-acre piece of land on the Caloosahatchee River for \$2,750. Soon after, Edison sketched a plan for his winter retreat, including houses, a laboratory, and extensive gardens." <edisonfordwinterestates.org>

Ford Follows

"Automobile magnate, Henry Ford, developed a deep friendship with Thomas Edison that began with Ford working for the Detroit Edison Illuminating Company in the 1890s. In 1914, the Ford family first visited the Edisons in Fort Myers, and in 1916, Ford purchased the property next door to Edison's Seminole Lodge. Ford's Craftsman bungalow estate, The Mangoes, included lush grounds brimming with citrus on the banks of the Caloosahatchee River." <edisonfordwinterestates.org>

McGregor Boulevard

When Thomas Edison came to Fort Myers, he traveled by boat on the Caloosahatchee River. Roadways were not easily accessible then. "McGregor Boulevard is the grand dame of Fort Myers roadways and illustrative of Fort Myers' rich history peopled with Native Americans and legendary inventors. Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and Harvey Firestone all built winter homes in Fort Myers after discovering its charms during the late 1800s. As legend has it, within 24 hours of arriving in Fort Myers in 1885, Thomas Edison bought 13 acres on the Caloosahatchee River. Aided by his wife, Mina, and others who had an abiding respect for nature, he began planting 200 imported palm trees along the dirt road between the downtown and his estate. An estimated 1800 palm trees, along with many other varieties of trees, now line the former Riverside Drive, later renamed McGregor Boulevard. These magnificent Royal Palms, many surpassing 75 feet, give Fort Myers its nickname as 'the City of Palms.' " <fortmyers-online.com>



Address of the Estates: 2350 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers, FL 33901

Roadway between the Estates property

The McGregor Boulevard, formerly called Riverside Drive, cuts through the 20 acres of the Edison and Ford Winter Estates. Tourists must cross at traffic light to go from the parking lot, experimental buildings, tourist center, flowering plants, and trees to reach the homes of both Edison and Ford.

"McGregor Boulevard was named after Tootie McGregor. Terry was an influential woman who left a major mark on Lee County, making Fort Myers a top tourist destination in Florida and the United States. She was born in 1843 to a middle-class judge, Epaphras Barber, in Cleveland, Ohio. After high school, she married Ambrose McGregor, an ambitious young salesman and barrel maker that she admired for his hard work. To support Ambrose during his early career, Tootie made efforts to save money and sewed clothes for her new husband in their apartment, which was located above a local grocery store."

"In 1868, Tootie gave birth to their only child, Bradford, who became sick as he was growing up. Doctors advised the couple to winter in Florida in hopes that the warm temperatures and fresh air would help Bradford regain his health.

They were lured to Fort Myers for the region's excellent tarpon fishing opportunities..." <edisonfordwinterestates.org/>



Henry and Clara Jane Bryant Ford

"On April 11, 1888, Henry married Clara Jane Bryant of Greenfield, Michigan, the daughter of Martha (Bench) and Melvin Bryant, a Wayne County farmer. Clara lived to the age of 84 and died on September 29, 1950." "Clara's philanthropic endeavors and own self-determination, Clara Bryant Ford (1866-1950) made it her life's mission to improve the life and welfare of women and those in poverty-stricken areas across the country. Clara Ford and her husband, Henry, created and funded numerous programs that focused on women's rights and self-sufficiency, education, healthcare, and environmentalism." <miwf.org> <corporate.ford.com>

"They had one child, son Edsel Bryant Ford, born on November 6, 1893. He became president of the Ford Motor Company in 1919. Edsel had developed stomach ulcers. When he was operated upon the diagnosis was incurable metastatic stomach cancer. He died on May 26, 1943, from cancer and undulant fever brought on by

drinking unpasteurized milk from Ford Farms." <fornology.blogspot.com> Henry Ford died on April 7, 1947, of a cerebral hemorrhage at Fair Lane, his estate in Dearborn, at the age of 83. <wikipedia.org>

PLEASE DO NOT:

- Smoke or vape
- Pick fruit or flowers
- Climb on trees
- Sit on porch railings or wicker furniture
- Note: Portions of the site will be closed when lightning is detected in the area

Accessible pathway

- 1 Start Here
- 2 Fountain
- 3 Pool Complex
- 4 Caretaker's House
- 5 Edison's Study
- 6 Moonlight Garden
- 7-11 Edison Main House
- 12-14 Edison Guest House
- 15 Car Exhibit
- 16-18 Ford House
- 19-20 Cottage Shoppe & Mysore Fig
- 21 Statue of Mina Edison
- 22 Garden Shoppe
- 23 Banyan Tree
- 24 Laboratory Vault
- 25 Laboratory

Map labels include: CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER, River Walk, Coconut Grove, River Pavilion, Lily Pond, West First Street, McGregor Boulevard, Ford Citrus Grove, Clara Ford Rose Garden, Orchid Lane, Friendship Walk, Security Station, START HERE, Welcome Booth, Edison Museum Store, Museum, Palmetum, Succulent Garden, Research Gardens, LARCHMONT AVENUE, Overflow Parking, LARCHMONT EXIT to McGregor, EXIT to US 41, MARLYN ROAD, EXIT to US 41, Exit Gate Closes at 5:30 pm.

Parking area has several buildings including Edison Botanical Gardens, the Edison Rubber Laboratory, and the Edison Museum. It also showcases Edison's India banyan tree that today covers nearly one acre. "The trees were brought from India in a butter tub given by Harvey Firestone and planted by Edison in 1925. It is a member of the rubber family. When first planted, it is was only four feet in height and two inches in diameter. Today it is the largest banyan tree in continental United States that covers one acre with over 350 roots." <floridamemory.com/>

Edison's business interest and inventor ingenuity involved his testing of over 17,000 botanicals. His goal was to create a local source of latex to make rubber.

Tour of Edison-Ford Winter Estates



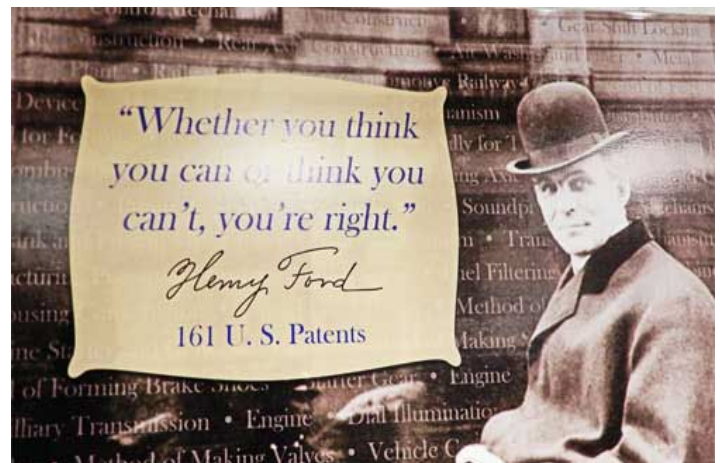
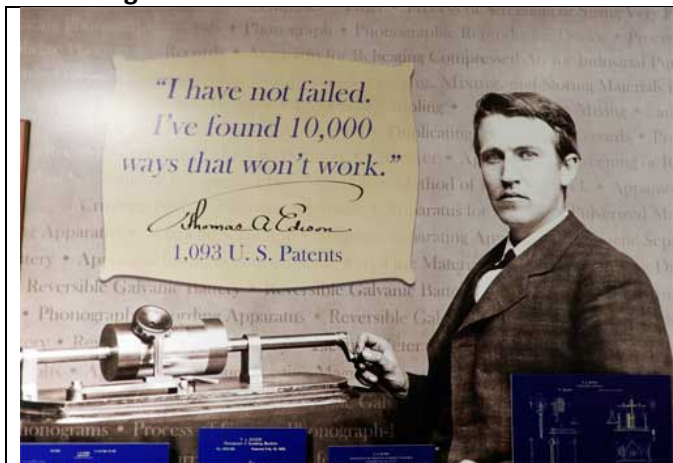
Mina Miller Edison (1865-1947) was the second wife of Thomas Edison. They met at the home of mutual friends. Edison taught her Morse code, and it enabled them to have private conversations. He proposed to her that way. <nps.gov/> Edison married her in 1886 after the death of his first wife, Mary Stillwell Edison. <edisonmuckers.org>

"Mary Stillwell Edison had been a woman of simple means, a worker in Edison's Newark factory. Born in 1855, married to Thomas Edison in 1871. She was one of Edison's "muckers," at Menlo Park. She died in 1884 of "congestion of the brain." They adopted three children but had none of their own. <nps.gov>

"Thomas Edison had enough genius to realize that he need educated, hard-working, dedicated people to be his hands in the laboratory. Unlike many inventors, Edison depended on these "muckers", as Edison liked to call them, to do the somewhat tedious work of building and testing his many inventions. Remember Edison had over 1,000 patents to his name. Edison was the idea man! These muckers came from all over the United States and Europe to work with him." <tattooarchive.com>

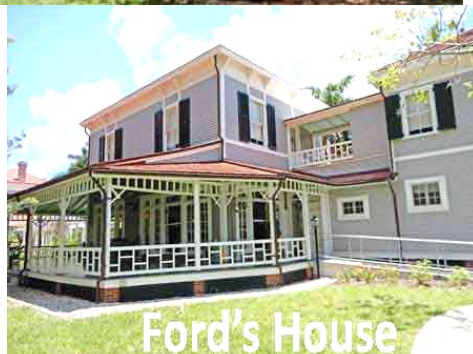
"Mina was poised, the daughter of parents of culture and good upbringing in Akron, Ohio. Her father Lewis was an inventor himself of farm machinery, having much of the inventive spirit in common with his soon-to-be, son-in-law, Thomas Edison. As it would turn out, Mina would become the daughter, wife, and mother of inventors. Her son Theodore Edison would also take up an inventive life, although he would never achieve the acclaim his father enjoyed." <edisonmuckers.org>

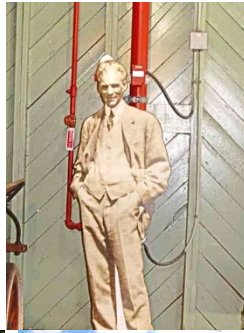
Interesting-Influential-Inventors



Crossing McGregor Boulevard

Once we crossed the street there was much to see. Photos include fountain, river walk, the dock, the pool complex, Ford's car exhibit, Edison's Main and Guest Houses, Ford's House, Banyan tree near Ford's house, and our guide Chase, who provided an excellent tour talk. The Edison and Ford Winter Estates have three other parts: Part 2 Edison & Ford Houses, Part 3 Museum, Botanicals and Ford's cars, and Part 4 Edison's Laboratories.





"Quadricycle"
1896
Ford Motor Co.
1903
Tin Lizzie-Model T
Mass production
1914
<history.com>



Edison-Ford Winter Estates: Part 2-Estate Homes; Part 3-Botanicals/Ford's automobiles; Part 4 Museum; Part 5 Edison's Laboratory

Sources: <https://www.edisonfordwinterestates.org/>, <https://www.cityftmyers.com/1871/Standing-Thomas-Edison>, <https://www.nps.gov/edis/learn/historyculture/mary-stillwell-edison.htm>, <https://www.nps.gov/edis/learn/historyculture/mina-miller-edison.htm>, <https://www.edisonmuckers.org/mina-miller-edison/>, https://www.tattooarchive.com/history/edison_thomas_muckers.php, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/92761>, <https://miwf.org/timeline/clara-bryant-ford/>, <https://www.publicgardens.org/about-public-gardens/gardens/edison-and-ford-winter-estates>, <https://www.visitfortmyers.com/listing/edison-and-ford-winter-estates/39817>, <https://www.edisonfordwinterestates.org/historical-connection-tootie-mcgregor-terry/>, <https://www.thisismysouth.com/visiting-edison-ford-winter-estates/>, <https://www.tclf.org/landscapes/edison-and-ford-winter-estates>, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edison_and_Ford_Winter_Estates, <https://www.edisonfordwinterestates.org/visit/tickets-tours/>, <https://www.keywestexpress.net/prepare-and-go/fort-myers-beach-activities/edison-ford-winter-estates>, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McGregor_Boulevard, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McGregor_Boulevard, <https://www.fortmyers-online.com/mcgregor-history.htm>, <https://corporate.ford.com/articles/history/henry-ford-biography.html>, <https://fornology.blogspot.com/2021/12/the-tragedy-of-edsel-ford-death-by.html>, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Ford, <https://www.history.com/topics/inventions/henry-ford>, <https://corporate.ford.com/about/history/company-timeline.html>, <https://www.news-press.com/story/news/2017/08/26/mcgregor-mayweather-fight-las-vegas-boulevard-fort-myers-florida/605189001/>, and https://localwiki.org/fortmyersfl/Edison_and_Ford_Winter_Estates.

acuri.net John R. Vincenti Welcome to Edison-Ford Winter Estates Part 1