

Business History Review

S U M M E R 1 9 9 2



Edison's Lamp Factory at Menlo Park, 1880



Cover: Edison's Lamp Factory, 1880
Back Cover: Interior of Foundry, Westinghouse
Air Brake Company, 1890

Illustrated on the front cover are the workers and plant at Thomas Edison's lamp factory at Menlo Park, New Jersey; the back cover shows the foundry at George Westinghouse's air brake plant in 1890. The electric lamp, or "light bulb," business would become the financial mainstay of the General Electric Company, established in 1892 by the merger of Edison and Thomson-Houston. Yet, given the lamp factory's importance, the relative simplicity and casualness of that shop's organization (although it had the distinction of being the first factory in the world run completely by electricity) stand in marked contrast to Westinghouse's air brake plant, which won praise from Scientific American for its automation and other advanced manufacturing techniques. When Westinghouse moved into electricity, the differences with Edison in inventive style and objectives continued to be apparent. For a discussion of the differences between Westinghouse and Edison, see pp. 251–304; for an article detailing the importance of lamp manufacture to General Electric, see pp. 305–334.

(Lamp factory photograph courtesy of U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Edison National Historic Site; interior of Westinghouse Air Brake Company foundry reproduced from Scientific American, 14 June 1890.)

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CONTENTS

ARTICLES

Steven W. Usselman From Novelty to Utility: George Westinghouse and the Business of Innovation during the Age of Edison • 251

Leonard S. Reich Lighting the Path to Profit: GE's Control of the Electric Lamp Industry, 1892–1941 • 305

Stephen H. Haber Business Enterprise and the Great Depression in Brazil: A Study of Profits and Losses in Textile Manufacturing • 335

EDITOR'S CORNER • 364

BOOK REVIEWS

Judith A. Adams, *The American Amusement Park Industry: A History of Technology and Thrills*. Reviewed by Cindy S. Aron • 380

Gary Dean Best, *Pride, Prejudice, and Politics: Roosevelt versus Recovery, 1933–1938*. Reviewed by Louis Ferleger • 388

W. Bernard Carlson, *Innovation as a Social Process: Elihu Thomson and the Rise of General Electric, 1870–1900*. Reviewed by Keith A. Nier • 376

Serge Chassagne, *Le coton et ses patrons: France, 1760–1840*. Reviewed by Katrina Honeyman • 416

Isaac Cohen, *American Management and British Labor: A Comparative Study of the Cotton Spinning Industry*. Reviewed by D. A. Farnie • 409

Carolyn C. Cooper, *Shaping Invention: Thomas Blanchard's Machinery and Patent Management in Nineteenth-Century America*. Reviewed by Ross Thomson • 374

Michael A. Cusumano, *Japan's Software Factories: A Challenge to U.S. Management*. Reviewed by Martin Fransman • 432

Graeme W. Dean, *Frank L. Clarke*, and *O. Finley Graves*, eds., *Replacement Costs and Accounting Reform in Post-World War I Germany*. Reviewed by R. H. Parker • 420

- Yorck Dietrich*, *Die Mannesmannröhren-Werke 1888 bis 1920: Organisation und Unternehmensführung unter der Gründerfamilie, Bankiers und Managern*. *Reviewed by* Harm G. Schröter • 421
- Jeffery M. Dorwart*, *Eberstadt and Forrestal: A National Security Partnership, 1909–1949*. *Reviewed by* Robert D. Cuff • 386
- Davis Dyer* and *David B. Sicilia*, *Labors of a Modern Hercules: The Evolution of a Chemical Company*. *Reviewed by* Donald R. Stabile • 384
- Barry Eichengreen*, *Golden Fetters: The Gold Standard and the Great Depression, 1919–1939*. *Reviewed by* Lawrence H. Officer • 407
- Robin L. Einhorn*, *Property Rules: Political Economy in Chicago, 1833–1872*. *Reviewed by* Louis Cain • 371
- Robert L. Frost*, *Alternating Currents: Nationalized Power in France, 1946–1970*. *Reviewed by* Herrick Chapman • 418
- Howard F. Gospel*, ed., *Industrial Training and Technological Innovation: A Comparative and Historical Study*. *Reviewed by* David Lindenfeld • 428
- Jack High*, ed., *Regulation: Economic Theory and History*. *Reviewed by* Gary D. Libecap • 393
- Louisa Schell Hoberman*, *Mexico's Merchant Elite, 1590–1660: Silver, State, and Society*. *Reviewed by* John E. Kicza • 398
- John N. Ingham*, *Making Iron and Steel: Independent Mills in Pittsburgh, 1820–1920*. *Reviewed by* Patricia O'Brien • 378
- David J. Jeremy*, ed., *International Technology Transfer: Europe, Japan and the USA, 1700–1914*. *Reviewed by* Steven W. Usselman • 405
- Geoffrey Jones* and *Maurice W. Kirby*, eds., *Competitiveness and the State: Government and Business in Twentieth-Century Britain*. *Reviewed by* Roger Middleton • 411
- Diane B. Kunz*, *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis*. *Reviewed by* Robert L. Tignor • 413
- Kenneth Lipartito* and *Joseph Pratt*, *Baker & Botts in the Development of Modern Houston*. *Reviewed by* Thomas Palay • 389
- Barbara Molony*, *Technology and Investment: The Prewar Japanese Chemical Industry*. *Reviewed by* Janet Hunter • 430

- Martha L. Olney*, *Buy Now Pay Later: Advertising, Credit, and Consumer Durables in the 1920s*.
Reviewed by Sue M. Bowden • 382
- Thomas C. Owen*, *The Corporation under Russian Law, 1800–1917: A Study in Tsarist Economic Policy*.
Reviewed by John P. McKay • 426
- Jean-Pierre Potier*, *Piero Sraffa—Unorthodox Economist (1898–1983): A Biographical Essay*.
Reviewed by Michael A. Bernstein • 402
- Harm G. Schröter* and *Clemens A. Wurm*, eds., *Politik, Wirtschaft und Internationale Beziehungen: Studien zu Ihrem Verhältnis in der Zeit zwischen den Weltkriegen*.
Reviewed by Raymond G. Stokes • 423
- Thomas Alan Schwartz*, *America's Germany: John J. McCloy and the Federal Republic of Germany*.
Reviewed by Hubert P. H. Nusteling • 424
- Loren Schweninger*, *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790–1915*. *Reviewed by* Peter Rachleff • 367
- Arthur A. Sloane*, *Hoffa*. *Reviewed by* Joe McCartin • 396
- Theodore Steinberg*, *Nature Incorporated: Industrialization and the Waters of New England*. *Reviewed by* Donald J. Pisani • 369
- Alan Stone*, *Public Service Liberalism: Telecommunications and Transitions in Public Policy*. *Reviewed by* Kenneth Lipartito • 391
- Carl E. Swanson*, *Predators and Prizes: American Privateering and Imperial Warfare, 1739–1748*. *Reviewed by* Nancy F. Koehn • 400

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