

Draft to New York
City Board of
Aldermen

New York, Dec. 18th^a 1880.

PRIVATE.

Dear Sir:

I shall be very glad to see you, with other members of the City Government, at Menlo Park on Monday evening at ~~at~~ ^{o'clock}, Decem 20th^b to witness an exhibition of Electric Lighting and also the various operations connected therewith^c which are being carried on in my Laboratory and shops, ~~with a view to make a perfect~~ in the production of a^d light, adapted to ordinary domestic & commercial^e use.¹

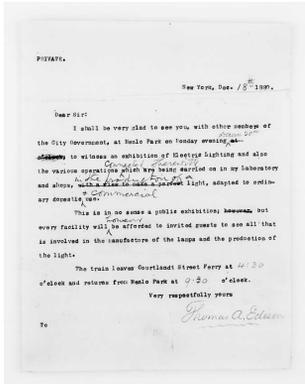
This is in no sense a public exhibition; ~~however~~, but every facility will however^f be afforded to invited guests to see all that is involved in the manufacture of the lamps and the production of the light.

The train leaves Courtlandt Street Ferry at 4:30^a o'clock and returns from Menlo Park at 9:30^a o'clock. Very respectfully yours

Thomas A. Edison

TL, NjWOE, DF (*TAEM* 54:123; *TAED* D8023ZBR). Insertions, interlineations, and signature written in an unknown hand. ^aInserted by hand. ^b“Decem 20th” interlined above. ^c“connected therewith” interlined above. ^d“in the production of a” interlined above. ^e“& commercial” interlined above. ^fInterlined above.

1. Edison hosted this demonstration for about forty city officials, including the aldermen, in order to convince them to support the Edison Electric Light Company's efforts to obtain a franchise giving it rights of way to install electrical mains under New York City streets (William Carman to Calvin Goddard and Goddard to Carman, both 20 Dec. 1880; DF [*TAEM* 54:125; *TAED* D8023ZBS, D8023ZBT]); see Doc. 2039 n. 2). According to newspaper reports city officials included Board of Aldermen president John J. Morris, Superintendent of Gas and Lamps S. McCormick, Park Commissioners Green and Lane, Excise Commissioner Mitchell, and aldermen McClave, Jacobus, Strack, Wade, Kirk, Fink, and Slevin. Also present were Grosvenor Lowrey, Tracy Edson, Sherburne Eaton, Calvin Goddard, and Nathan Miller of the Edison Electric Light Co., as well as Ernest Biedermann, J. C. Henderson, Ma-



This cartoon depicting the visit of the New York City aldermen to Menlo Park appeared in the 21 December 1880 New York Truth.



for Robert Taylor, a Mr. S. C. Wilson, and a Mr. G. Salvyera of Paris (“Aldermen at Menlo Park,” *New York Truth*, 21 Dec. 1880; “The Wizard of Menlo Park,” *New York Herald*, 21 Dec. 1880; Cat.1241, Items 1557, 1558; Batchelor [TAEM 94:623; TAED MBSB21557X, MBSB21558X]; see also Jehl 1937–41, 779–85). After demonstrating his system and explaining its working, Edison provided the visitors a lavish banquet catered by Delmonico with a menu selected by Grosvenor Lowrey. Charles Mott noted in his diary entry for 20 December, “In the evening, by invitation, the Alderman of New York City were here to see the working of the lamp and system and to partake of both solid and fluid refreshments. The room of Laboratory was illuminated with 37 lamps and presented a fine appearance, in all about 239 lamps were illuminated. The boys had their racket at Davis’s [Hotel]— Part of whom celebrated at their own expense” (Mott Journal N-80-07-10:258, Lab. [TAEM 37:431; TAED N117:129]).

Edison increased the number of outdoor lamps by early January for a more public exhibition. The 22 January *Scientific American* reported that five hundred lamps had been placed in lines extending from the laboratory “half a mile to right and left, the entire area under illumination being, from the slope of the land, easily visible from the central station. The lamps are in a circuit comprising seven miles and three-quarters of wire, and are supplied by a current generated by nine dynamo-electric machines driven by one engine. . . . Simply as an exhibition of perfect illumination under perfect control, covering a vast area, this array of lamps presents a most remarkable and delightful sight, and is alone well worthy of a trip to Menlo Park.” “Electric Illumination at Menlo Park,” *Sci. Am.* 44 (1881): 44.