



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of American History*  
*Kenneth E. Behring Center*

## Guide to the Brooklyn Edison Company, Edison Wonder House Records

NMAH.AC.1237

Alison Oswald

2011

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# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Arrangement.....	3
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Names and Subjects .....	3
Container Listing .....	4

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
<b>Title:</b>	Brooklyn Edison Company, Edison Wonder House Records
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAH.AC.1237
<b>Date:</b>	1936
<b>Extent:</b>	0.15 Cubic feet ((1 box))
<b>Creator:</b>	Brooklyn Edison Company Hall, Gretchen T.
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Summary:</b>	The collection consists of newspaper clippings, a guidebook titled <i>Edison Wonder House</i> , and photographs documenting the Edison Wonder House, a demonstration home created by the Brooklyn Edison Company in 1936 to showcase the wonders of electricity.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Gretchen T. Hall in 2011.

### Related Materials

#### **Materials in the Archives Center**

Reddy Kilowatt Records (AC0913)

Louisan E. Mamer Rural Electrification Administration Papers (AC0862)

#### **Materials in the National Museum of American History, Division of Work and Industry**

Brooklyn Edison Company Collection, 1926-1935

Collection contains annual reports of the Mechanical Engineering Department of the Brooklyn Edison Company, photographs, drawings, and graphs; and a 1926 pamphlet on the Hell Gate and Sherman Creek Generating Stations of the United Electric Light and Power Company.

### Processing Information

Collection processed by Alison Oswald, archivist, July, 2011.

### Preferred Citation

Brooklyn Edison Company Collection, 1936-1937, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

## Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

## Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning intellectual property rights. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

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## Biographical / Historical

The Edison Electric Illuminating Company of Brooklyn was founded in 1887 to provide electricity to the homes and businesses of Brooklyn. It merged in 1919 with Kings County Electric Light and Power Company to form Brooklyn Edison. Brooklyn Edison merged with Consolidated Edison and other companies between 1936 and 1960.

In the early 1930s, the Brooklyn Edison Company created a 10 room house called the Edison Wonder House in the lobby of its showroom at Pearl Street in Brooklyn, New York. The house demonstrated the possibilities of electricity in the home. The demonstration home was not intended to be copied, but to provide future homeowners with ideas. Some special features of the house included lighting that was a sight saver, unusual clocks, a built-in aquarium, and a magic door that opened through the operation of an electrical eye.

The architect of the Wonder House was Albert Hart Hopkins of Buffalo, New York. Hopkins practiced architecture with Edward B. Green and Sons in Buffalo.

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## Scope and Contents

The collection consists of newspaper clippings, a guidebook titled *Edison Wonder House*, and photographs documenting the Edison Wonder House, a demonstration home created by the Brooklyn Edison Company in 1936 to showcase the wonders of electricity.

There are ten 8" x 10" black-and-white photographs that depict the interior of the Wonder House. All of the photographs were taken by the Brooklyn Edison Company, Inc., with the exception of one which was taken by the General Electric Company. There is one 11" x 17" photograph that depicts the hostesses/ guides/ who conducted tours explaining the features of the home. The photograph is annotated with the names of all sixteen women.

The guide titled *The Edison Wonder House*, details by home section (entrance, bathroom, kitchen, living room, and so on) the comforts of electricity. Included is a supplemental insert listing the cooperating firms that provided the building materials and accessories. The stick figure Reddy Kilowatt features prominently in the guide. Reddy Kilowatt was a cartoon figure trademark created in 1926 by Ashton B. Collins, Sr. More than 150 investor-owned electric utilities in the United States and at least twelve foreign countries licensed the use of the Reddy Kilowatt trademark.

## Arrangement

The collection is arranged topically.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

### Subjects:

- Electric apparatus and appliances
- Electric lighting
- Electricity

### Types of Materials:

- Articles -- 20th century
- Guidebooks -- 1930-1940
- Photographs -- 20th century

### Names:

- Hall, Gretchen T.

## Container Listing

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|-----------------|--|
| Box 1, Folder 1 | Newspaper clippings, , 1936 and undated                      |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | <i>Guide to the Edison Wonder House</i> , circa 1936         |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | Edison Wonder House photographs (interior views), circa 1936 |
| Box 1, Folder 4 | Edison Wonder House photograph (hostesses), circa 1936       |