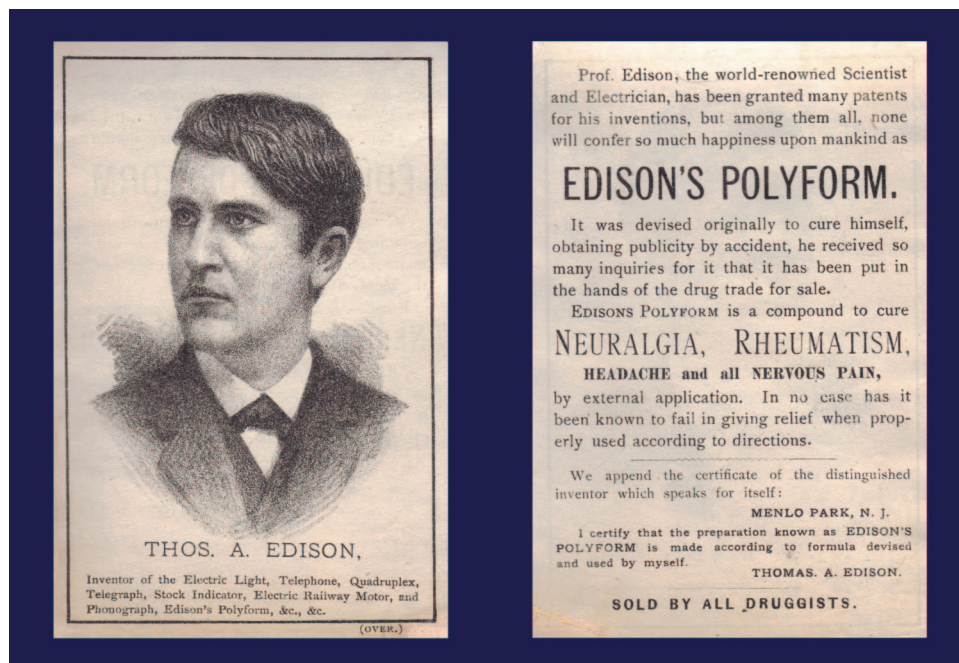


Edison's Polyform



In 1879 in New York, the Menlo Park Manufacturing Company was incorporated to market Polyform, a topical analgesic formulated by young Thomas Alva Edison (1847–1931) (*left*). Though “devised originally to cure himself,” Polyform was released to the public by Edison as a “compound to cure neuralgia, rheumatism, headache and all nervous pain, by external application.” Within 5 years, the company moved to Boston and eventually reorganized. Of all of Edison’s inventions, “none will confer so much happiness upon mankind” as Polyform — or so the reorganized company promised (*right*). The public did not buy the promise . . . or the product, and Edison himself finally blocked further advertising. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.)

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