



Tesla Science Center at Wardenclyffe
P. O. Box 552, Shoreham, NY 11786
www.teslasciencecenter.org • (631) 886-2632

Tesla Science Center at Wardenclyffe is a US 501c3 nonprofit organization with a mission to develop the site of Nikola Tesla's last remaining laboratory into a transformative global science center that embraces his bold spirit of invention, provides innovative learning experiences, fosters the advancement of new technologies, and preserves his legacy in the Tesla Museum.

Tesla – Part One by Rodo Sofranac

Born in Montenegro not far from Nikola Tesla's birthplace, Rodo Sofranac is a writer, educator, TSCW supporter, and board member of the American Slavic Association

Is it a car? Is it a battery? Is a gigafactory? Is it an international airport?

Well, yes. But long before his name was used by various commercial enterprises, Tesla was a person—a Slavic person.

Yes, that's right, Nikola Tesla was a person, a pioneer, a pauper, a genius. There is so much to say about Tesla, that one article can't do it justice. So, we'll take a least two. 😊

Do you enjoy electricity coming into your house? Think Nikola! Do you gaze at neon signs to find a store? Think Nikola! Do you like listening to great music or interesting talk on your radio? Think Nikola! Do you like using remote controls, like for the TV, or garage door openers, or even a drone? Think Nikola! Anybody NOT have a cell phone? Think and thank Nikola Tesla!

Many of us grew up with a communication device that was the size of a small refrigerator. "Rotary dialing" was not just something for a service organization. "Party lines" were not a group of people waiting to get into a birthday celebration. And genders were clearly divided between line "men" and female switchboard operators. So what does this have to do with Nikola Tesla? Well, during the evolution of wired communications, an idea that Tesla had over 125 years ago was bubbling and brewing. In 1893, Tesla was already proposing "wireless communications."

Nikola Tesla was a Serbian American inventor, electrical engineer, mechanical engineer, physicist, and futurist who is best known for his contributions to the design of the modern alternating current (AC) electricity supply system. But there was so, so much more.

Nikola Tesla was born an ethnic Serb in the village Smiljan, Lika county, in the Austrian Empire, present day Croatia, on 10 July 1856. His father, Milutin Tesla (1819–1879), was an Eastern Orthodox priest. Tesla's mother, Djuka Tesla (née Mandić; 1822–1892), whose father was also an Orthodox priest, had a talent for making home craft tools and mechanical appliances and the ability to memorize Serbian epic poems. Djuka never received a formal education. Tesla credited his eidetic (sometimes erroneously labeled "photographic") memory and creative abilities to his mother's genetics and influence.

Although both his mother and father wanted Nikola to be a priest, after a serious illness as a teen, his parents allowed him to follow his own interests. Within a few years of attending polytechnical schools and minor jobs, Tesla started to outline the principle of an induction motor. His work at the Continental Edison Company in France exposed his bosses to Tesla's talents, and Tesla to his idol, Thomas Edison. In 1883, he privately built a prototype of the induction motor and ran it successfully. Unable to interest anyone in Europe in promoting this radical device, Tesla accepted an offer to work for Thomas Edison in New York. His childhood dream, to come to America and harness the power of Niagara Falls, continued to come to fruition.

Next newsletter: Part Two of "Tesla." You'll read about Edison, Westinghouse, Marconi, Hertz, Wardenclyffe, and American humor. Plug in, and you'll get a charge out of this!