

# DC: The Savage Tale Of The First Standards War

## War of the currents

*the Men Who Invented Modern America. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA. ISBN 978-1-59691-834-4. McNichol, Tom (2006). AC/DC: The Savage Tale of the*

The war of the currents was a series of events surrounding the introduction of competing electric power transmission systems in the late 1880s and early 1890s. It grew out of two lighting systems developed in the late 1870s and early 1880s: arc lamp street lighting running on high-voltage alternating current (AC), and large-scale low-voltage direct current (DC) indoor incandescent lighting being marketed by Thomas Edison's company. In 1886, the Edison system was faced with new competition: an alternating current system initially introduced by George Westinghouse's company that used transformers to step down from a high voltage so AC could be used for indoor lighting. Using high voltage allowed an AC system to transmit power over longer distances from more efficient large central generating stations. As the use of AC spread rapidly with other companies deploying their own systems, the Edison Electric Light Company claimed in early 1888 that high voltages used in an alternating current system were hazardous, and that the design was inferior to, and infringed on the patents behind, their direct current system.

In the spring of 1888, a media furor arose over electrical fatalities caused by pole-mounted high-voltage AC lines, attributed to the greed and callousness of the arc lighting companies that operated them. In June of that year Harold P. Brown, a New York electrical engineer, claimed the AC-based lighting companies were putting the public at risk using high-voltage systems installed in a slipshod manner. Brown also claimed that alternating current was more dangerous than direct current and tried to prove this by publicly killing animals with both currents, with technical assistance from Edison Electric. The Edison company and Brown colluded further in their parallel goals to limit the use of AC with attempts to push through legislation to severely limit AC installations and voltages. Both also colluded with Westinghouse's chief AC rival, the Thomson-Houston Electric Company, to make sure the first electric chair was powered by a Westinghouse AC generator.

By the early 1890s, the war was winding down. Further deaths caused by AC lines in New York City forced electric companies to fix safety problems. Thomas Edison no longer controlled Edison Electric, and subsidiary companies were beginning to add AC to the systems they were building. Mergers reduced competition between companies, including the merger of Edison Electric with their largest competitor, Thomson-Houston, forming General Electric in 1892. Edison Electric's merger with their chief alternating current rival brought an end to the war of the currents and created a new company that now controlled three quarters of the US electrical business. Westinghouse won the bid to supply electrical power for the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 and won the major part of the contract to build Niagara Falls hydroelectric project later that year (partially splitting the contract with General Electric). DC commercial power distribution systems declined rapidly in numbers throughout the 20th century; the last DC utility in New York City was shut down in 2007.

## Electric chair

*Jan. 1, 1890; pg. 1. AC/DC: The Savage Tale of the First Standards War; By Tom McNichol &quot;Far Worse Than Hanging&quot; (PDF). The New York Times. August 7*

The electric chair is a specialized device used for capital punishment through electrocution. The condemned is strapped to a custom wooden chair and electrocuted via electrodes attached to the head and leg. Alfred P. Southwick, a Buffalo, New York dentist, conceived this execution method in 1881. It was developed over the next decade as a more humane alternative to conventional executions, particularly hanging. First used in 1890, the electric chair became a symbol of capital punishment in the United States.

The electric chair was also used extensively in the Philippines. It was initially thought to cause death through cerebral damage, but it was scientifically established in 1899 that death primarily results from ventricular fibrillation and cardiac arrest. Originally a common method of capital punishment in America, its use has declined with the adoption of lethal injection which was perceived as more humane. While some states retain electrocution as a legal execution method, it is often a secondary option based on the condemned's preference. Exceptions include South Carolina, where it is the primary method, and Louisiana, where the corrections secretary chooses the execution method, and Tennessee, where it can be used without prisoner input if lethal injection drugs are unavailable.

As of 2025, electrocution remains an option in states like Alabama, South Carolina and Florida, where inmates may choose lethal injection instead. Arkansas, Kentucky, and Tennessee offer the electric chair to those sentenced before a certain date. Inmates not selecting this method or convicted after the specified date face lethal injection. Arkansas currently has no death row inmates sentenced before their select date. These three states also authorize electrocution as an alternative if lethal injection is deemed unavailable.

The electric chair remains an accepted alternative in Mississippi, and Oklahoma if other execution methods are ruled unconstitutional at the time of execution. A significant shift occurred on February 8, 2008, when the Nebraska Supreme Court ruled electric chair execution as "cruel and unusual punishment" under the state constitution. This decision ended electric chair executions in Nebraska, the last state to rely solely on this method.

Nikola Tesla

*of New York. Retrieved 15 July 2025. Cheney 2001, p. 33. Cheney, Uth & Glenn 1999, Preface. McNichol, Tom (2011). AC/DC: The Savage Tale of the First*

Nikola Tesla (10 July 1856 – 7 January 1943) was a Serbian-American engineer, futurist, and inventor. He is known for his contributions to the design of the modern alternating current (AC) electricity supply system.

Born and raised in the Austrian Empire, Tesla first studied engineering and physics in the 1870s without receiving a degree. He then gained practical experience in the early 1880s working in telephony and at Continental Edison in the new electric power industry. In 1884, he immigrated to the United States, where he became a naturalized citizen. He worked for a short time at the Edison Machine Works in New York City before he struck out on his own. With the help of partners to finance and market his ideas, Tesla set up laboratories and companies in New York to develop a range of electrical and mechanical devices. His AC induction motor and related polyphase AC patents, licensed by Westinghouse Electric in 1888, earned him a considerable amount of money and became the cornerstone of the polyphase system, which that company eventually marketed.

Attempting to develop inventions he could patent and market, Tesla conducted a range of experiments with mechanical oscillators/generators, electrical discharge tubes, and early X-ray imaging. He also built a wirelessly controlled boat, one of the first ever exhibited. Tesla became well known as an inventor and demonstrated his achievements to celebrities and wealthy patrons at his lab, and was noted for his showmanship at public lectures. Throughout the 1890s, Tesla pursued his ideas for wireless lighting and worldwide wireless electric power distribution in his high-voltage, high-frequency power experiments in New York and Colorado Springs. In 1893, he made pronouncements on the possibility of wireless communication with his devices. Tesla tried to put these ideas to practical use in his unfinished Wardenclyffe Tower project, an intercontinental wireless communication and power transmitter, but ran out of funding before he could complete it.

After Wardenclyffe, Tesla experimented with a series of inventions in the 1910s and 1920s with varying degrees of success. Having spent most of his money, Tesla lived in a series of New York hotels, leaving behind unpaid bills. He died in New York City in January 1943. Tesla's work fell into relative obscurity

following his death, until 1960, when the General Conference on Weights and Measures named the International System of Units (SI) measurement of magnetic flux density the tesla in his honor. There has been a resurgence in popular interest in Tesla since the 1990s. Time magazine included Tesla in their 100 Most Significant Figures in History list.

William Kemmler

*AC/DC: The Savage Tale of the First Standards War*, John Wiley & Sons, p. 120 Leyden, John G. (August 5, 1990). "Death in the Hot Seat a Century of Electrocutions"

William Francis Kemmler (May 9, 1860 – August 6, 1890) was an American murderer who was the first person executed by electric chair. He was convicted of murdering Matilda "Tillie" Ziegler, his common-law wife, a year earlier. Although electrocution had previously been successfully used to kill a horse, Kemmler's execution did not go smoothly.

Topsy (elephant)

– via *Library of Congress*. McNichol, Tom (2006). *AC/DC: The Savage Tale of the First Standards War*. USA: Jossey-Bass. ISBN 0-7879-8267-9. "BAD ELEPHANT"

Topsy (c. 1875 – January 4, 1903) was a female Asian elephant who was electrocuted at Coney Island, New York, in January 1903. Born in Southeast Asia around 1875, Topsy was secretly brought into the United States soon thereafter and added to the herd of performing elephants at the Forepaugh Circus, who fraudulently advertised her as the first elephant born in the United States. During her 25 years at Forepaugh, Topsy gained a reputation as a "bad" elephant and, after killing a spectator in 1902, was sold to Coney Island's Sea Lion Park. Sea Lion was leased out at the end of the 1902 season and during the construction of the park that took its place, Luna Park, Topsy was used in publicity stunts and also involved in several well-publicized incidents, attributed to the actions of either her drunken handler or the park's new publicity-hungry owners, Frederic Thompson and Elmer "Skip" Dundy.

Thompson and Dundy's end-of-the-year plans to advertise the opening of their new park, by euthanizing Topsy in a public hanging and charging admission to see the spectacle, were prevented by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The event was instead limited to invited guests and press only. Thompson and Dundy agreed to use a more sure method of strangling the elephant with large ropes tied to a steam-powered winch, with both poison and electrocution planned as backup, a measure supported by the ASPCA. On January 4, 1903, in front of a small crowd of invited reporters and guests, Topsy was fed carrots laced with 460 grams of potassium cyanide, electrocuted and strangled, the electrocution being the final cause of death. Among the invited press that day was a crew from Edison Studios who filmed the event. Their film of the electrocution part was released to be viewed in coin-operated kinetoscopes under the title *Electrocuting an Elephant*. It is probably the first filmed death of an animal in history.

The story of Topsy fell into obscurity for the next 70 years but has become more prominent in popular culture, partly because the film of the event still exists. In popular culture, Thompson and Dundy's killing of Topsy has switched attribution, with claims it was an anti-alternating current demonstration organized by Thomas A. Edison during the war of the currents. Edison was never at Luna Park and the electrocution of Topsy took place ten years after the war of currents.

In the Next Room (or The Vibrator Play)

Maines. Ruhl cites Maines's book, *AC/DC: The Savage Tale of the First Standards War* (Tom McNichol) and *A Social History of Wet Nursing in America* (Janet Golden)

*In the Next Room (or The Vibrator Play)* is a 2009 play by Sarah Ruhl, published by Samuel French. It concerns the early history of the vibrator, when doctors allegedly used it as a clinical device to bring women

to orgasm as treatment for "hysteria." Other themes include Victorian ignorance of female sexual desire, motherhood, breastfeeding, and jealousy. The play was nominated for three 2010 Tony Awards.

Franklin's electrostatic machine

*Group. ISBN 978-0-7876-4372-0. McNichol, Tom (2006). AC/DC: The Savage Tale of the First Standards War. John Wiley & Sons. ISBN 978-1-118-04702-6. Morgan,*

Franklin's electrostatic machine is a high-voltage static electricity-generating device used by Benjamin Franklin in the mid-18th century for research into electrical phenomena. Its key components are a glass globe which turned on an axis via a crank, a cloth pad in contact with the spinning globe, a set of metal needles to conduct away the charge developed on the globe by its friction with the pad, and a Leyden jar – a high-voltage capacitor – to accumulate the charge. Franklin's experiments with the machine eventually led to new theories about electricity and inventing the lightning rod.

Doc Savage

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Doc Savage is a fictional character of the competent man hero type, who first appeared in American pulp magazines during the 1930s and 1940s. Real name Clark Savage Jr., he is a polymathic scientist, explorer, detective, and warrior who "rights wrongs and punishes evildoers." He was created by publisher Henry W. Ralston and editor John L. Nanovic at Street & Smith Publications, with additional material contributed by the series' main writer, Lester Dent. Doc Savage stories were published under the Kenneth Robeson name. The illustrations were by Walter Baumhofer, Paul Orban, Emery Clarke, Modest Stein, and Robert G. Harris.

The heroic-adventure character would go on to appear in other media, including radio, film, and comic books, with his adventures reprinted for modern-day audiences in a series of paperback books, which had sold over 20 million copies by 1979. Into the 21st century, Doc Savage has remained a nostalgic icon in the U.S., referenced in novels and popular culture. Longtime Marvel Comics editor Stan Lee credited Doc Savage as being the forerunner to modern superheroes.

List of Doc Savage novels

*comprehensive list of the books written about the fictional character Doc Savage originally published in American pulp magazines during the 1930s and 1940s*

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List of DC Comics imprints

*non-superpowered DC heroes to the mix. The First Wave fictional universe is a part of the DC Multiverse and was launched in the Batman/Doc Savage one-shot, by writer*

DC Comics has published a number of other imprints and lines of comics over the years.

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