

Guy Bartlett, News Bureau
General Electric Company
Schenectady, New York

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DEATH OF E. W. RICE, JR.

Edwin Wilbur Rice, Jr., 73, honorary chairman of the board of directors of the General Electric Company, died at his home in Schenectady, N.Y., November 25 after a long illness. He was one of the pioneers of electrical development in the United States, and in association with the late Charles A. Coffin played a conspicuous part in the building of General Electric. He was largely instrumental in adding to the company's technical staff the late Charles P. Steinmetz; he encouraged the investigation by the company of the Curtis steam turbine and gave it a fair trial through a period of uncertainty until it became the foundation of a vast electric power system development; and he was chiefly responsible for the establishment of the famous General Electric research laboratory, having recommended that step to the directors in 1900.

Born in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, on May 6, 1862, he moved to Philadelphia where, as a school boy in 1876 he came into contact with Professor Elihu Thomson, then a teacher in Boys' Central High School. His natural fondness for mechanics and later for electricity was quickly developed by this association and when, in 1880, the professor gave up teaching to go into electrical manufacturing, as scientist and inventor, young Rice gladly accepted an opportunity to become his assistant. He went to New

Britain, Connecticut, and for three years was with Thomson in the American Electric Company there and in Philadelphia, engaged in the manufacture of arc lamps and dynamos. In 1883 he went with the professor to Lynn, Massachusetts, upon the organization of the Thomson-Houston Company, when a majority interest of the American Electric Company was purchased by the former concern. At the age of 22 he was made plant superintendent and had this full responsibility until the consolidation of Thomson-Houston and Edison General Electric in 1892 to form the present General Electric Company.

In the new company Mr. Rice was first made technical director, and in 1896 vice president in charge of manufacturing and engineering. He eventually became senior vice president and in 1913 he succeeded Mr. Coffin as president of the company. In 1922, after nine years of service in that office, he was succeeded by Gerard Swope, and was made honorary chairman of the board.

He contributed much through organization methods, improved factory routine, technical development, and engineering and scientific inventions to the pre-eminence attained by General Electric, having more than a hundred patents to his credit. Their range is so wide as to embrace practically the entire field of electrical operations because in his position he consulted with the entire engineering staff and assisted in every form of engineering development which was going forward over a long period. The salient inventive achievements of his career included systems of distribution, particularly the cellular system of separating buses and circuits; synchronous converters,

including as a fundamental development the application of such apparatus to the design of unified distribution networks; protective devices; arc lamps; incandescent lamps; oil switches of high capacity which overcame a serious limiting factor in the development of electrical systems on an extensive and economical plan; regulating systems and apparatus; both alternating- and direct-current generators and motors; train control systems; and transformers. He indorsed and promoted many modern forms of industrial organization and methods of advancing employees' welfare, and practically created the company policy of employees representation and the recognition of the shop workers' part in the success of the corporation.

Mr. Rice's home since 1894 was in Schenectady, where he was a trustee of Union College. He held A.B. and A.M. degrees from Central High School, Philadelphia; an honorary A.M. from Harvard, 1903; a D.Sc. from Union University, 1906; a D.Eng., from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1917; and a D.Sc. from the University of Pennsylvania. He was a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, and was decorated with the Third Order of the Rising Sun by the Emperor of Japan in 1917. Mr. Rice was president of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers in 1917, from which organization he received in 1931 the Edison Medal "for his contributions to the development of electrical systems and his encouragement of scientific research in industry."

He was a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers, England, of the English Institution of Electrical Engineers, and of the Society of Illuminating Engineers. He was a director of the General Electric Company, the International General Elec-

tric Company, Electric Bond and Share Company, British Thomson-Houston Company, Ltd., the Schenectady Trust Company, the Detroit Edison Company, and for many years of the Radio Corporation of America.

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Please send a glossy print of Photo 512553, a portrait of the late E. W. Rice, Jr.

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