Nikola Tesla's "Free Energy" Documents

Oliver Nichelson

While in college, Nikola Tesla claimed it should be possible to operate an electrical motor without sparking brushes. He was told by the professor that such a motor would require perpetual motion and was, therefore, impossible. In the 1880's he patented the alternating current generator, motor, and transformer we use today.

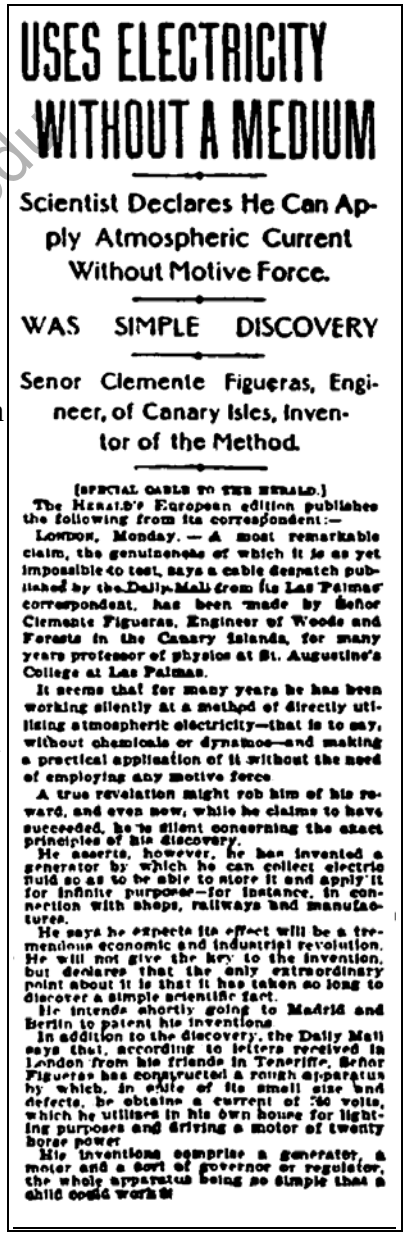
Ten years after virtually inventing modern electrical technology, Tesla claimed he developed a generator that would not "consume any fuel." Such a generator would not have a conventional source of energy such as oil, coal or falling water. This new generator would get energy from what he called the "ambient medium." He described this source in 1933:

> This new power for the driving of the world's machinery will be derived from the energy which operates the universe, the cosmic energy, whose central source for the earth is the sun and which is everywhere present in unlimited quantities.

For nearly 100 years researchers have sought the design for Tesla's "free energy" generator. Clues, in Tesla's own handwriting, to the nature of the device and how it operated have been uncovered.

On June 9th, 1902, both the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald* carried a story of a Clemente Figueras, a "woods and forest engineer," in the Carnary Islands who invented a device for generating electricity without burning any fuel. What became of Figueras and his fuelless generator is not known, but this announcement in the paper prompted Tesla to send a clipping of the *Herald* story in a letter to his friend Robert Underwood Johnson, editor of *Century* Magazine.

In this letter, a part of the Nikola Tesla Collection, at Columbia University Library, Tesla claimed he had already developed such a generator and to have revealed the underlying physical laws.[1]



USES ELECTRICITY WITHOUT A MEDIUM

Scientist Declares He Can Apply Atmospheric Current Without Motive Force.

WAS SIMPLE DISCOVERY

Senor Clemente Figueras, Engineer, of Canary Isles, Inventor of the Method.

[SPECIAL CABLE TO THE HERALD.]

The HERALD'S European edition publishes the following from its correspondent:—

LONDON, Monday. — A most remarkable claim, the genuineness of which it is as yet impossible to test, says a cable despatch published by the Daily Mail from its Las Palmas correspondent, has been made by Señor Clemente Figueras, Engineer of Woods and Forests in the Canary Islands, for many years professor of physics at St. Augustine's College at Las Palmas.

It seems that for many years he has been working silently at a method of directly utilising atmospheric electricity—that is to say, without chemicals or dynamos—and making a practical application of it without the need of employing any motive force.

A true revelation might rob him of his reward, and even now, while he claims to have succeeded, he is silent concerning the exact principles of his discovery.

He asserts, however, he has invented a generator by which he can collect electric fluid so as to be able to store it and apply it for infinite purposes—for instance, in connection with shops, railways and manufactures.

He says he expects its effect will be a tremendous economic and industrial revolution. He will not give the key to the invention, but declares that the only extraordinary point about it is that it has taken so long to discover a simple scientific fact.

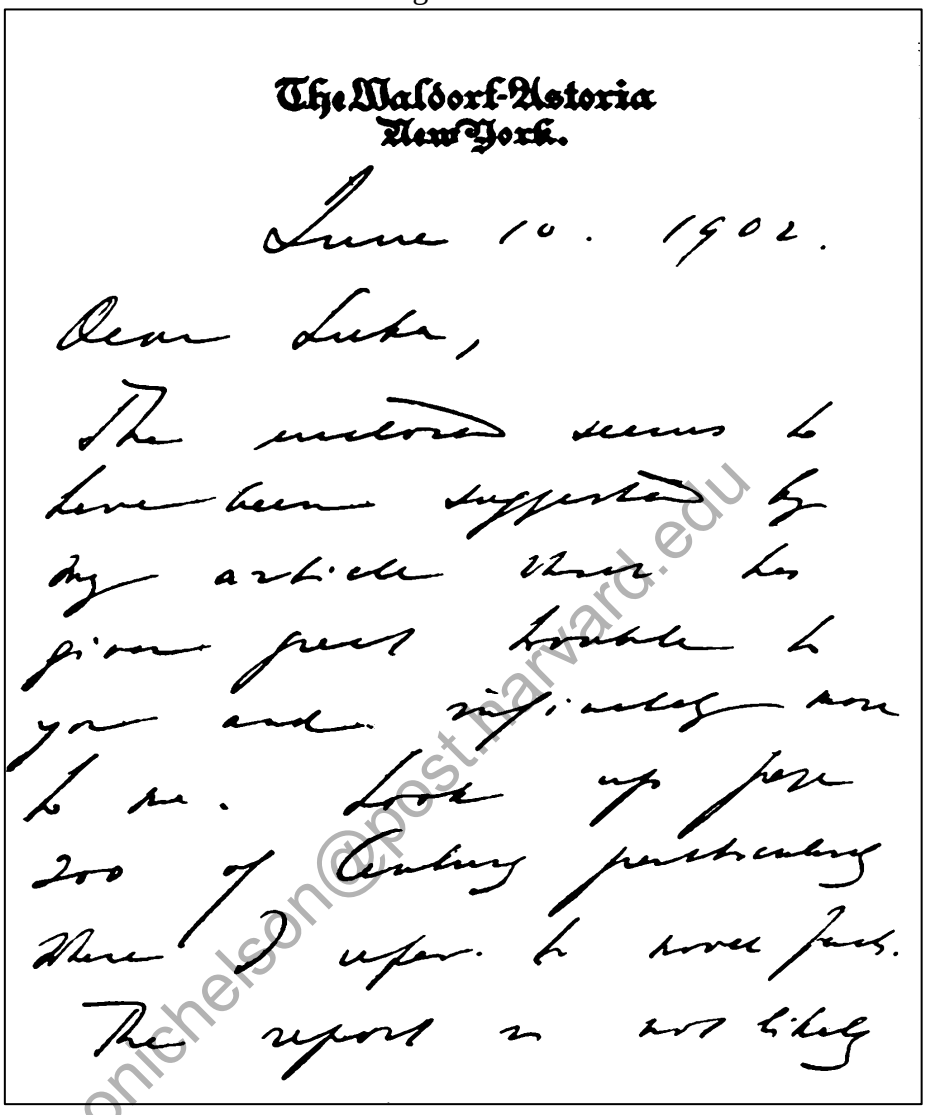
He intends shortly going to Madrid and Berlin to patent his inventions.

In addition to the discovery, the Daily Mail says that, according to letters received in London from his friends in Teneriffe, Señor Figueras has constructed a rough apparatus by which, in spite of its small size and defects, he obtains a current of 750 volts, which he utilises in his own house for lighting purposes and driving a motor of twenty horse power.

His inventions comprise a generator, a motor and a sort of governor or regulator, the whole apparatus being so simple that a child could work it.

Figure 1 *N.Y. Herald*, June 9, 1902

In the three-page letter Tesla states that he suggested such a generator in his *Century* magazine article, and that he has worked on such a design for sometime.


The Waldorf-Astoria
New York.

June 10. 1902.

Dear Luka,

The invention seems to have been suggested by my article which has given great trouble to you and infinitely more to me. Look up page 200 of Century particularly where I refer to novel facts. The report is not likely

Figure 2 Tesla to Johnson, June 10, 1902, page 1.

The text of the letter reads:

June 10, 1902

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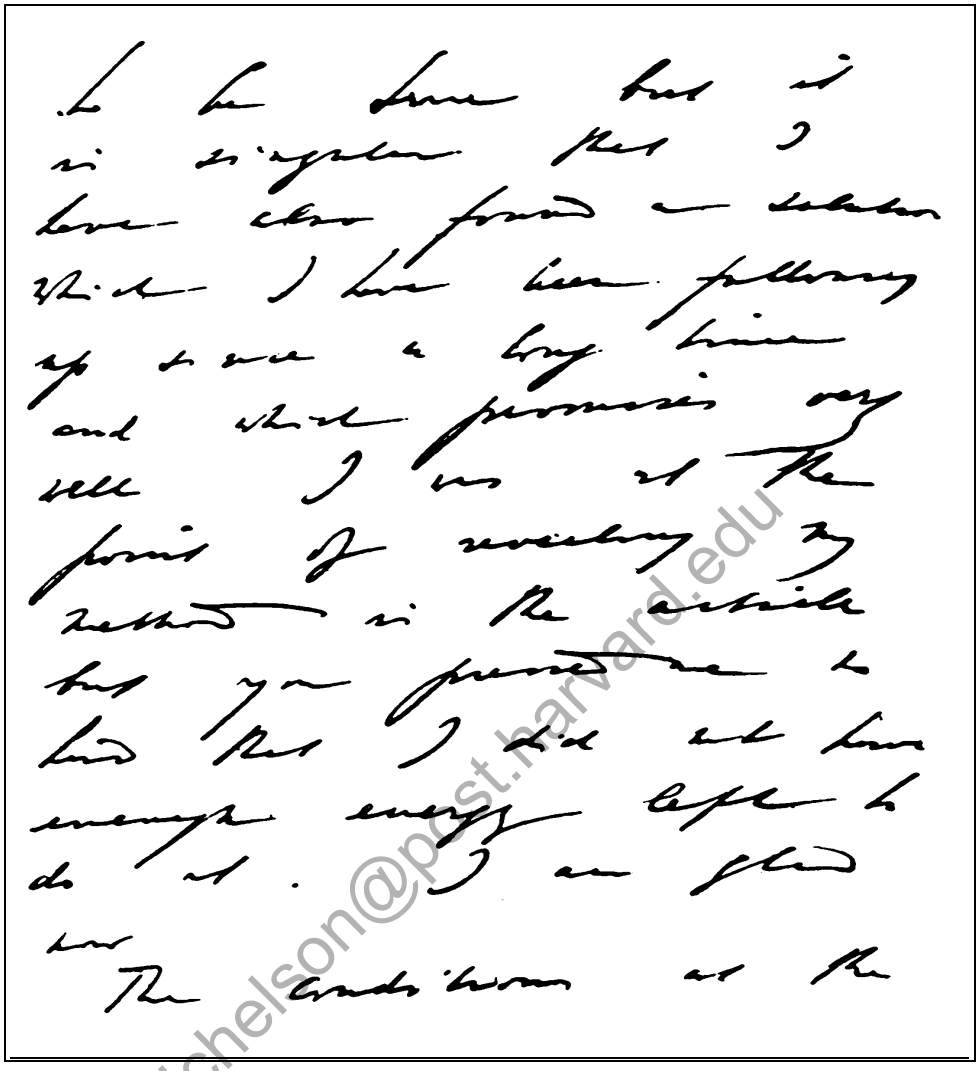

Figure 3 Tesla to Johnson, page 2.

to be true but it
is singular that I
have also found a solution
which I have been following
up since a long time
and which promises very
well. I was at the
point of revealing my
method in the article
but you pressed[?] me to
find[?] that I did not have
enough energy left to
do it. I am glad
now.
The conditions at the

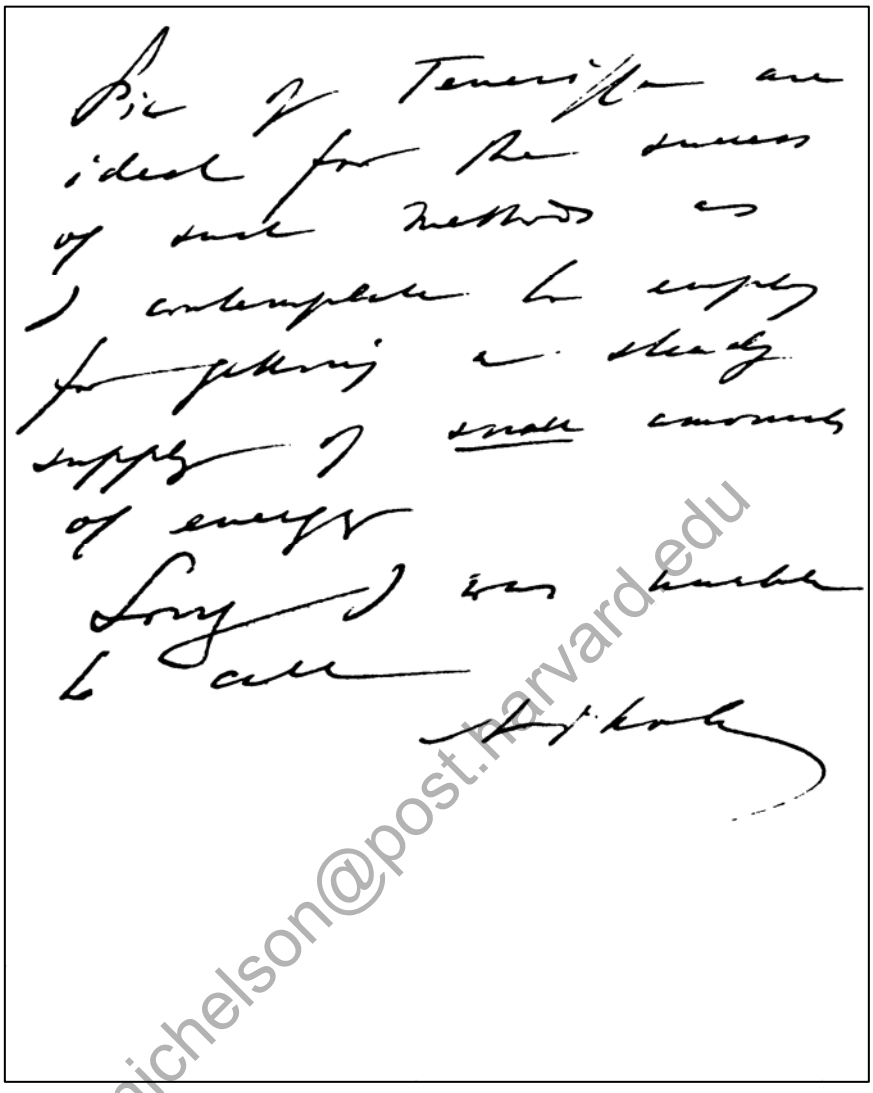

Figure 4 Tesla to Johnson, page 3.

Pic of Teneriffe are
ideal for the success
of such methods as
I contemplate to employ
for getting a steady
supply of small ^{3} ***amounts***
of energy.

Sorry I was unable
to call.

Nikola

Tesla once called the June 1900 *Century* article the most important he had written. The "novel facts" citation mentioned in the letter is found on page 200 of the article in the first column, next to the last paragraph, first sentence.[4] Discussion of the "novel facts" just precedes the article's subsection dealing with a "'Self-Acting' Machine...Capable...of Deriving Energy From the Medium."

A careful examination of the article reveals the inventor believed his design for an electrical generator which is its own prime mover, that is, does not "consume any fuel," would not violate the energy conservation principle. Tesla believed, rather, that his design transformed one form of energy into another[5].

Notes

[1]The Tesla-Johnson letter and *Herald* clipping are used with permission of the Nikola Tesla Collection, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York City.

[2] The nickname Tesla gave to Johnson refers to "Luka Filipov...a legendary Serbian hero he admired..." Margaret Cheney, *Tesla: Man Out of Time*, Dell, 1983, pg. 83.

[3] Underlined in the manuscript. Tesla's attitude was that any amount of power less than that needed for a good sized city was "small."

[4] The page numbering in the original article differs from the reproduction in the Belgrade *Lectures, Patent, Articles*. In the reproduction, page 200 of the magazine corresponds to pages A-138 and A-139.

[5] An analysis of the inventions intended by Tesla in this letter is found in: Oliver Nichelson, "Nikola Tesla's Later Energy Designs," IECEC, 26th Proceedings, Am. Nuclear Society, Vol. 4, pp. 439-444, 1991.