

# Nikola Tesla's "Free Energy" Documents

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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 Canary 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.<sup>1</sup>

**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 Senor 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 utilizing 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.

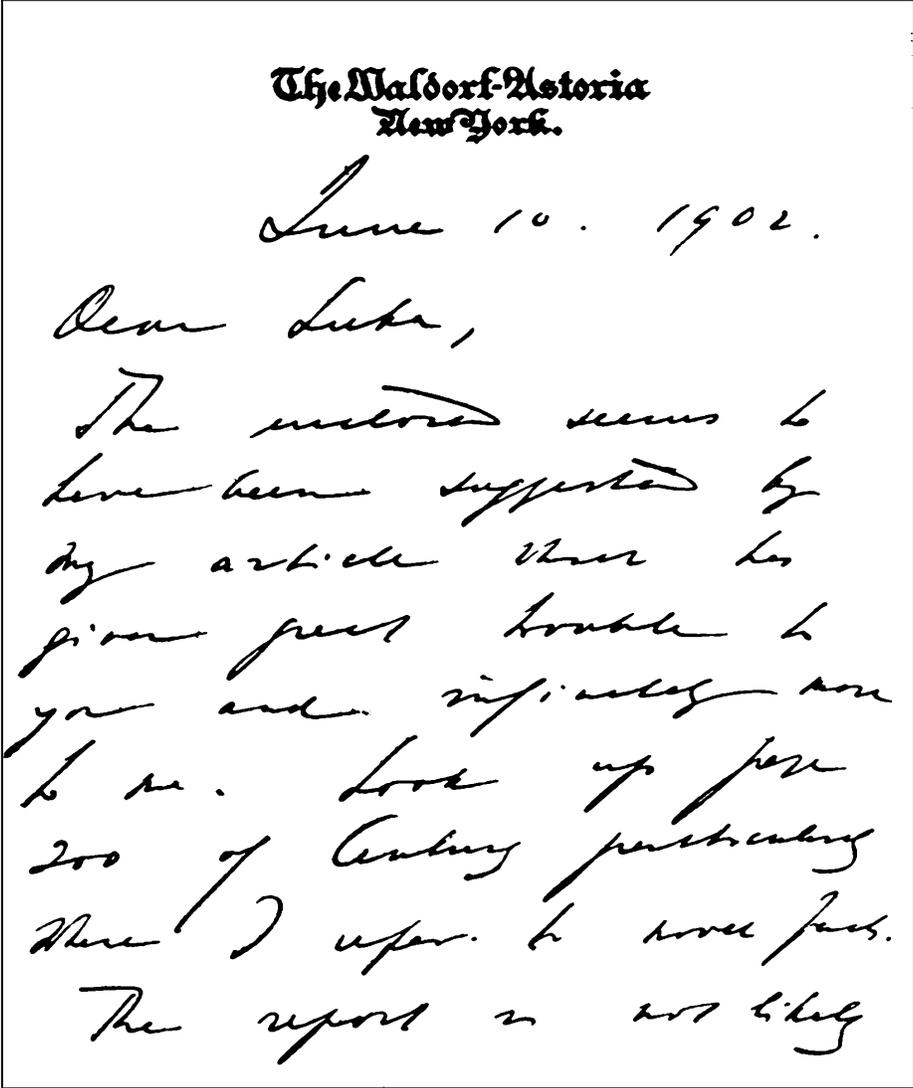
He intends shortly going to Madrid and Berlin to patent his inventions.

In addition to the discovery, the Daily Mail says that, according to letters received in London from his friends in Tenerife, Senor Figueras has constructed a rough apparatus by which, in spite of its small size and defects, he obtains a current of 30 volts which he utilizes 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  
Dear Luka,<sup>2</sup>

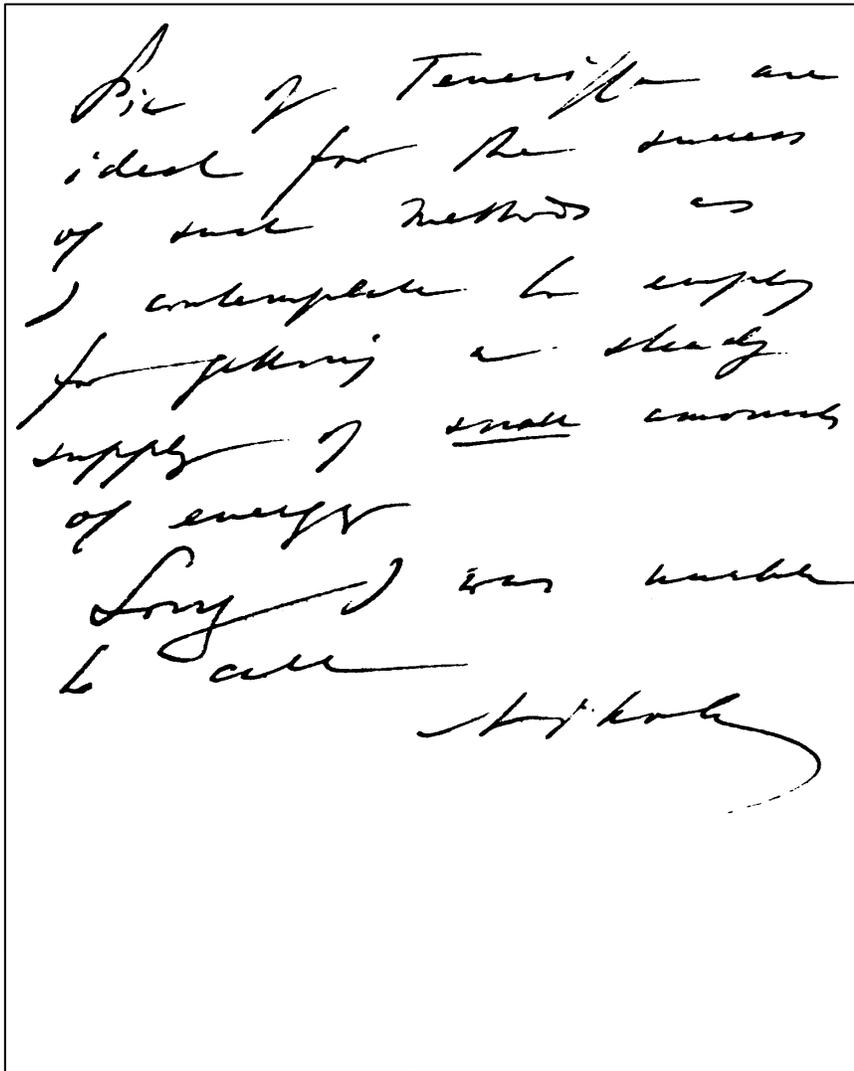
*The invention seems to have been suggested by my article which has given great trouble to you and infinitely more to me. Look up page 200 of *Century* particularly where I refer to novel facts.*

*The report is not likely*

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 so  
hard that I did not have  
enough energy left to  
do it. I am glad  
now.  
The conditions at the

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  
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but you pressed me so  
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enough energy left to  
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now.  
The conditions at the*

A handwritten note in cursive script, enclosed in a rectangular border. The text is written in black ink on a white background. The handwriting is fluid and somewhat slanted. The note discusses the suitability of the island of Tenerife for certain energy methods and expresses an apology for being unable to call. The signature 'Nikola' is written at the bottom right of the note.

Pic of Teneriffe are  
ideal for the success  
of such methods as  
I contemplate to employ  
for getting a steady  
supply of small amounts  
of energy.  
Sorry I was unable  
to call  
Nikola

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<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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<sup>5</sup>.

### **Notes**

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<sup>1</sup>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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

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

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

### **Acknowledgements**

Luca Forattini deciphered the important passage where Tesla writes that he was pressed so hard to finish the article that he did not describe his design for the self-acting machine that derived energy from the medium.

The Rare Book Department staff at Brigham Young University's Harold B. Lee Library assisted with understanding segments of the letter.