

Weld Carter, a Thomas Edison aide

By Kenan Heise

Weld Saunders Carter, 88, a teacher of economics, was in his youth personal mathematician to inventor Thomas Alva Edison. He was associated for 15 years with the Henry George School of Social Science and served as executive secretary of the Committee on Taxation, Resources and Economic Development, an academic organization.

A memorial gathering for Mr. Carter, a resident of Fox Lake, will be held in the spring. He died Feb. 4 in Northern Illinois Medical Center, McHenry.

A native of East Orange, N.J., Mr. Carter attended Princeton University for 2½ years. He then took a competitive examination advertised in New York newspapers to become mathematician for Edison, whose laboratory was in West Orange. He served in that position for 1½ years until Edison retired to Florida. Inventions in which he assisted included the alkaline storage battery and the disc type of phonograph.

"He used to love to talk about working for Edison," his wife, Jessie, said. "There was always a long line of people waiting to see Edison. This included his employees, checking on their progress. It also once included Edison's son, Charles, who served as governor of New Jersey. My husband would be in the line about once a week. Each time, Edison would remember exactly where they had been the last time they talked."

Mr. Carter went into industrial sales and farming in Lancaster County, Pa.

He then read the book, "Progress and Poverty," written around 1879 by Henry George, an economist known for his single-tax theory.

"It was a great revelation to my husband," Mr. Carter's wife said. "He felt that George's theory applied to an agricultural economy and needed to be adapted to an urban one. He thought land must be a common inheritance and everyone should have access to it if we are going to end poverty, injustice and war. He felt taxation on land, rather than on improvements on it, would help rid the world of injustice."

Mr. Carter became a teacher at the Henry George School of Social Science in New Jersey and later education director of its Commerce and Industry division in Chicago.

Survivors, besides his wife, include a son, Weld Jr.; three granddaughters; a great-grandson; and a sister.