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From the Annals of the World History

Elisha Otis

(August 3, 1811 - April 8, 1861)



Elisha Otis was born on August 3 1811, in Halifax, Vermont, the youngest of six children. At the age of twenty, Elisha Otis moved to Troy, New York, and worked as a wagon driver. In 1834, he married Susan A. Houghton and had two sons with her. Unfortunately his Susan Otis died, leaving Otis a young widower with two small children.

In 1845, Elisha Otis moved to Albany, New York after marrying his second wife, Elizabeth A. Boyd. Otis found a job as a master mechanic for Otis Tingley & Company making bedsteads. It was here that Otis first began inventing and among his first inventions were: a railway safety brake, rail turners for speeding the making of rails for four-poster beds, and an improved turbine wheel.

In 1852, Elisha Otis moved to Yonkers, New York, to work for the bedstead firm of Maize & Burns. It was the owner of the company, Josiah Maize that inspired Elisha Otis to start designing elevators, Maize needed a new hoisting device to lift heavy equipment to the upper floor of his factory.

For Josiah Maize, Elisha Otis invented an "Improvement in Hoisting Apparatus Elevator Brake" and demonstrated his new invention to the public in 1854, at the Crystal Palace Exposition in New York. During the demonstration, Elisha Otis hoisted the elevator car to the top of the building, then deliberately cut the elevator hoisting cables, however, instead of crashing, the elevator car was stopped because of the brakes that Otis had invented.

Elisha Otis died of diphtheria on April 8th, 1861, in Yonkers, New York.

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