



George Westinghouse  
1846-1914

In the battle of the currents of the 1880s, ac won over dc because of the fabulous inventions of Nikola Tesla, the availability of transformers to step up and step down the ac voltages, and the genius of George Westinghouse. Westinghouse had already made his fortune in 1869 with the invention of the air brake for railroad trains. He was shrewd enough to use his wealth to hire Tesla and to buy the patent from Lucien Gaulard and John D. Gibbs for their newly developed practical transformer.

Westinghouse was born in Central Bridge, New York, the son of a prosperous machine factory owner. He served in the Union army and navy during the Civil War and then attended Union College before striking out on his own. By the time he was 40 years old, he had formed the Westinghouse Air Brake Company, developed a system of pipes to conduct natural gas safely into homes, and invented the gas meter. He organized the Westinghouse Electric Company in 1886, which he used as a base to advocate successfully the ac system. Westinghouse was one of America's greatest inventors and one of the true giants of United States industry.

(Source: D. Johnson, J. Johnson and J. Hilborn, *Electric Circuit Analysis*, Prentice-Hall, 1989)