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It's the end of the line for the iconic incandescent light bulb invented by Thomas Edison in 1879 as consumers increasingly choose more energy-efficient halogen and fluorescent lighting.

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Lights Out for U.S. Lamp Plant of Incandescent Bulbs

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:
Our final story here tonight has to do with the light bulb. And if you're anything like me, you're going to hang on to at least a few of those old school round light bulbs as long as you possibly can, even though the government has ordered that we all switch over to more efficient energy saving light bulbs, including those squiggly ones, by 2014. Those bulbs called CFLs give off a different light and they're tougher to dispose of. Well, tonight just before midnight, GE, our parent company, will shut down the last incandescent light bulb factory in the US. Two hundred jobs gone just like that, and they're not happy about it. It means what Thomas Edison started in 1879 is coming to an end. The story tonight from NBC's Mike Taibbi.

MIKE TAIBBI, reporting:
At the Winchester, Virginia lamp plant, production had plummeted from a billion light bulbs a year to 300,000, the handwriting on the wall. For employees like 35-year veteran Roy Kirby...

Mr. ROY KIRBY: You know that the end is going to come, you know. And but when it does come, it's a bitter pill to swallow.

TAIBBI: The end came faster for two reasons: the 2007 law phasing out all US production of incandescent bulbs except for specialty bulbs, like those used in some appliances; and the fact that consumers were changing their buying habits on their own, shifting to more energy efficient halogens and those squiggly compact fluorescents. So out with the old and in with the new.

Mr. MICHAEL PETRAS (GE Lighting CEO): If we're not responding to what our customers want, you know, there's no business here.

TAIBBI: And gone are the $30 an hour jobs employees like the Madigan brothers are finding impossible to replace.

Mr. WAYNE MADIGAN (Winchester Plant Employee): I mean, I'm taking a job that's paying half of what I was making.
Mr. DWAYNE MADIGAN (Winchester Plant Employee): If I've got to have a job, at least $20 to $22 an hour in order to pay our bills, you know, and to keep our home.

TAIBBI: This was a career for tens of thousands from the dawn of the 20th century, making the light bulbs that changed the way we lived, lighting America's homes and businesses and the entire modern industrial age. Now, Edison's transformative invention will go the way of the VCR, or the film camera, into obsolescence.

One employee heading toward retirement posed a question to us. He said, `Could you think of any other technology which has lasted more than a century and remained viable? It was a great run and I was part of it.' Roy Kirby can't quite let go.

Mr. KIRBY: You know, I'm going to have incandescent lamps in my house by, unless there's a light policeman that comes along and says, you know, `I'm going to pull all of them out of your house.'

TAIBBI: But the end, quietly, is at hand. Mike Taibbi, NBC News, Winchester, Virginia.