

August 3, 2009

Senator Mark Wagoner,  
Chairman of the Statuary Committee  
Senate Building  
Room #129, First Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Senator Wagoner,

I am sure at this point that many people have urged you to select Thomas Edison for one of Ohio's spots in the Statuary Hall. Others can speak to the size, scope and impacts of his many accomplishments and service to his country.

However, I would like you to know how special a place his birthplace in Milan was for him, his wife, his daughter and all of his descendants. Because it was particularly important to Mina and Madeline to preserve the story of his early years and where he came from, they formed and supported the Edison Birthplace Association in Milan.

I think I speak for them when I say that his early years in Ohio, from the warehouses and canal behind his home, to his attempt to solve the mystery of hatching eggs by sitting on them, and more, formed the base for all that followed. When I think of him, I think of the many adversities that he overcame in growing up. He had scarlet fever at an early age, which impacted his hearing and might have indirectly led to the home schooling he got from his mother. It may have been that loss of hearing that in later years helped him focus on inventing the phonograph, one of his favorite inventions.

Like many children, he was curious, sometimes to a fault, but persevered in experimenting, asking, and learning. It was in Milan, and the vibrant atmosphere of the day, where he started a journey from humble beginnings to greatness.

For us, the role model he represents for all Americans, and particularly children, may be one of his most important legacies. Several years ago when I spoke to the children at Edison Elementary School in Dayton, and relayed some of the stories of his early years, I could see in their eyes and afterwards talking to them, how important it was to them to see where a great man started, and that it wasn't so very far from where they were themselves. The many accomplishments of his life were only possible because of the character, confidence, curiosity and work ethic that began and were molded during his youth in Milan.

I sincerely hope that your selection will shine a light on the son of Ohio who said in his later years "My desire is to do everything within my power to further free the people from drudgery, and create the largest possible measure of happiness, and prosperity." One who led by example, assembled great teams of people and successfully challenged them to constantly look for a better way.

Sincerely,

J Heywood E Sloane  
Great-grandson of Thomas A. Edison  
Trustee of Edison Birthplace Association, Inc.