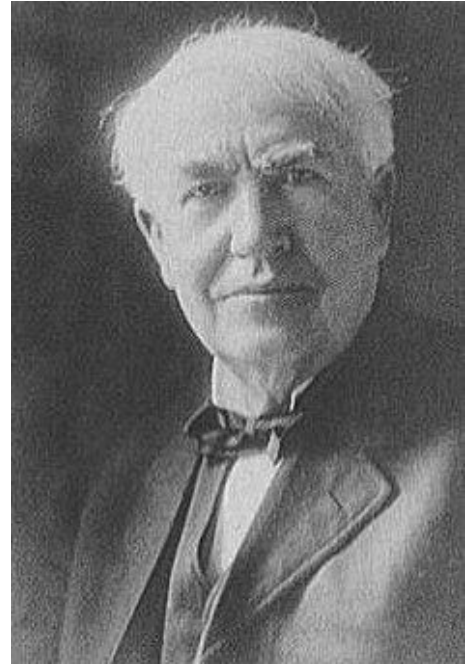


THOMAS ALVA EDISON

Inducted 2003

Not many people think of Loyalist Connections going back to America, but one such prominent Loyalist descendant is the great inventor, Thomas Alva Edison. Edison was born in Milan, Erie County, Ohio, on February 11, 1847, son of Samuel and Nancy (Elliott) Edison. On the paternal side he descended from Dutch ancestors, who came from Amsterdam to the new world in 1737, and settled in New York where John Edison, the great-grandfather of Thomas was a banker. His maternal ancestry was Scotch.

Thomas attended school for a few months only, but was an apt scholar, showing preference for historical and scientific subjects. In 1854 his father removed to Port Huron, Michigan, where at the age of twelve the son engaged in various commercial enterprises, working himself as newsboy on a train running to Detroit. He occupied his leisure hours while in Detroit in reading and in studying qualitative analysis, making his experiments in a baggage car of the Grand Trunk railway, in which he also established a miniature printing-office, where he set up and printed *The Weekly Herald*. He later worked in the various



larger cities of the United States and Canada, devoting himself to the study of electrical science. At this time he invented, while working in New Orleans, La., the automatic repeater, and in 1864 he conceived the idea which he afterward perfected of the system of telegraphy. While in Boston, he continued his experiments, but not till 1872, after he had been in New York City for one year, did he put his duplex telegraph in practical operation. He was made superintendent of the Gold & Stock telegraph company through an incident demonstrating his skill. He afterward invented the printing telegraph for stock quotations and sold his patent to the company for \$40,000. He worked in Newark, N.J., till 1876, making about fifty separate inventions and improvements in telegraphic communication. He then removed his works and laboratory to Menlo Park, devoting his whole time to scientific research, especially of his incandescent light, to electric motors for street cars and to the construction of the telephone, experiments with which led him to the invention of the phonograph. At Paris in 1881 his electrical display included lighting by incandescent lamps, the disc dynamo-electric machine, the microtosi-meter, the oderscope and the electro-monograph. He made a similar display at the Crystal Palace, London, and in various exhibitions in America. Having outgrown the laboratory at Menlo Park, he moved to Llewellyn Park, N.J., where he erected an extensive private laboratory, the largest in the world. In 1889 the Edison general electric company was formed with a capital stock of \$12,000,000, controlling the Edison patents.

His principal inventions include: The duplex and quadruplex telegraph, sending various messages in opposite directions over the same wire, which he sold to the Western Union telegraph company for \$30,000, and which the company reported had up to 1879 saved them over \$14,000,000; the quadruple autographic, harmonic, multiplex, automatic and phonoplex telegraphs; telegraphing from moving trains without the use of a special wire; the carbon rheostat; the pressure or carbon relay; the Edison dynamo; the pyro-magnetic motor; the pyro-magnetic generator; the simeter; the odo-roscope; the Edison microphone; the incandescent lamp; the Edison meter; the weight volt-meter; the Edison electric pen; the Edison mimeograph; the Edison vote recorder; the magnetic ore-separator; the magnetic bridge; the dead-beat galvanometer; the phonometer; the Edison-Sims torpedo beat; the phonograph; telephone

transmitters; the electro-motograph; the motograph receiver; the telephonograph; the magnaphone; the check battery; the kineto-scope; the vitoscope, and the fluoscope. By 1896, on the lists in the patent office at Washington, 600 inventions were credited to his name.

On a personal note, he was married twice, in 1871 to Mary Stillwell, and in 1886 to Mina Miller. Edison died on October 18, 1931 in West Orange New Jersey and was buried in Rosedale Cemetery. Below is his Loyalist ancestry.

Generation No. 2: Samuel Ogden Edison, father of Thomas Alva Edison, was born August 16, 1804 in Marshalltown, Annapolis, Nova Scotia; died February 16, 1896 in Norwalk, Huron Co., Ontario. He was the son of Capt. Samuel Ogden Edison and Nancy Simpson. He married Nancy Elliott September 12, 1828 in Vienna, Elgin Co., Upper Canada. Nancy Elliott, mother of Thomas, born January 04, 1810 in Chenango Co., New York, was a schoolteacher and the daughter of Ebenezer Matthews Elliott, who was a Captain in George Washington's army. While in Upper Canada, Samuel became involved in a political struggle - the Mackenzie Rebellion. Upon the failure of this rebellion, he was forced to flee across the border to the United States. After innumerable dangers and hardships, Samuel finally reached the town of Milan, Ohio, where he decided to settle. In Milan, Samuel established himself as a manufacturer of roof shingles and sent for Nancy and their five children to join him, including, Thomas Alva Edison.

Generation No. 3: Capt. Samuel Ogden Edison, born March 05, 1767 in Acquackamok, Essex Co., New Jersey; died March 27, 1865 in Vienna, Elgin Co., Canada West. He was the son of John Edison, U.E. and Sarah Ogden. He married Nancy Simpson November 14, 1792 in Digby County, Nova Scotia. Nancy Simpson, was born October 1769; died September 26, 1864 in Vienna, Elgin Co., Canada West. Samuel moved from Nova Scotia to Vienna, Upper Canada in 1811 and served as a Captain during the war of 1812 with the First Middlesex Militia, and in 1823 appears as a Captain in the 2nd Middlesex Militia. They had several children including their sixth son, Samuel Edison.

Generation No. 4: John Edison, United Empire Loyalist, born about 1727 in Holland and settled in America. He married Sarah Ogden October 10, 1765. Sarah Ogden, was born about 1745 in Orange, New Jersey, the daughter of Samuel Ogden and Phoebe Baldwin. John Edison settled in colonial times in New Jersey and farmed a large tract of land near West Orange, where his great-grandson would eventually end up as an inventor. John Edison barely escaped the hangman's noose at the time of the revolution. He had been imprisoned as a Tory sympathizer, and records of New Jersey indicated he was from Essex County and was held for high treason in 1777. By some unrecorded means his wife Sarah managed to rescue him. Ordered from America, they fled to Nova Scotia, settling near Digby. The Edison connection to Vienna, Ontario begins with John Edison, a United Empire Loyalist. In 1811, already an old man, he and several of his married children and their families trail-blazed into the largely unsettled area above Lake Erie, known as the Talbot Settlement. Their family included Samuel Ogden Edison.