

A NEW STATUE FOR OHIO

Toledoans give their choices for the National Statuary Hall Collection in Washington

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After 120 years of hanging out in the U.S. Capitol in Washington, William Allen is finally getting the boot.

The little-known former Ohio governor and Congressman has been one of two statues there representing the state as part of the National Statuary Hall Collection. (The other is President James A. Garfield.)

Ohio lawmakers, however, have decided that his opposition to the Emancipation Proclamation means that he's not one of the best people to symbolize the state.

They've created a committee with the aim of finding a suitable replacement by March of next year.

State Rep. Mark Wagoner (R., Ottawa Hills), who is vice-chairman of the six-person committee, said the group will hear testimony from people all over the state to choose a new figure.

"We want to find somebody who represents and encapsulates what's great about Ohio," he said. "I think: leadership, fighting for equality. I think: innovation and, really, people who have done great things in trying times."

Each state is permitted two statues in the collection. Since legislation enacted in 2000 allowed states to replace statues, only one has been removed. It, too, was of an Ohioan — George Washington Glick, who was born near Fremont before becoming governor of Kansas, the state that enshrined him in the collection. He was replaced by a statue of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 2003.

Other replacements are being considered: Ronald Reagan in California, Helen Keller in Alabama.

Don Nieman, dean of the college of arts and sciences at Bowling Green State University and former chairman of its history department, said change is inevitable when it comes to our views of history and its personalities.

"In interpreting the past and interpreting figures from the past, our values come into play, and so our perspective on the past is something that's constantly changing," he said.

In the case of Allen, the decision to replace him probably is not just the result of a distaste for his views on slavery. (After all, Thomas Jefferson had slaves.)

It says something about who current Ohioans value and who they want future generations to remember, according to Charles Beatty Medina, assistant professor of history at the University of Toledo.

"He was apparently seen as very important at that time, and yet today there might be very few people who remember William Allen or exactly what his contribution was to Ohio history," he said.

Eventually, it will be the committee's job — after consulting with history buffs, teachers, students, and more — to recommend a replacement.

The subject of that new statue can come from anywhere in the state, but *The Blade* asked a variety of locals to think of who they might nominate from the Toledo area.

Here are a few of their suggestions.

Edward Drummond Libbey

Brought the glass industry to Toledo when he moved his business to town in 1888 and gave rise to a couple of modern-day Fortune 500 companies.



Founded Toledo Museum of Art and left millions to it in his estate.

"I think he and Michael Owens really had an impact on our community and the growth of our community and putting us on the map. Toledo has been known and is known as the Glass City. It was because of their moving here from outside and building those plants and that industry here. It's a combination of business and civic contributions to our community."

— Mark V'Soske, *president of the Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce*



Samuel 'Golden Rule' Jones

Toledo mayor from 1897 to 1904 and nationally known reformer who introduced profit-sharing and the eight-hour workday at his business.

"I think he really was a person who was before his time. He was able to concretely change the way some employers looked at their employees. Before this time, at least here in Toledo ... you could work 12 hours a day, seven days a week, and if you didn't like it, you went somewhere else. He instituted what we consider basically our standard work week. I think Golden Rule Jones is someone that we can be proud of."

— Michael Lora, *manager of the local history and genealogy department for the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library*

Art Tatum

A Toledo native born in 1909 who is widely hailed as one of the greatest jazz pianists who ever lived.

"Art Tatum thrived as a musician and built an international reputation for himself at a time when racism was very strong in our country. Art Tatum used his craft as a musician and his genius as an artist to supercede that and made, probably, I dare say, some of the greatest contributions to the national community as far as the arts — as much so or more than any person in Ohio's history. You put on top of that the fact that he was visually disabled, blind, and he still overcame these things to achieve the prominence he did."

— Mark Folk, *executive director of the Arts Commission of Greater Toledo*

James M. Ashley

Ohio Congressman from 1859-1869 who introduced the first proposition for a Constitutional amendment to abolish slavery.

"Someone who was the principal author of the 13th Amendment and who was representing Toledo when he authored it would be worth considering for such a high honor. ... I think he would be particularly appropriate when contrasted with William Allen."

— Barbara Floyd, *director of the Ward M. Canaday Center and university archivist at the University of Toledo*

Ella P. Stewart

The city's first African-American woman pharmacist and a civil rights activist who was born in 1891. Past president of the National Association of Colored Women who served on United Nations committees. - "She was held up as being the respected female African-American when that wasn't popular back in the early 1900s. She was a role model for African Americans and widely respected by whites also. ... When Duke Ellington and all the prominent African-Americans came to Toledo, they always stayed with her."

— Paul Hubbard, *interim president of the Greater Toledo Urban League*



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