

Thomas Alva Edison

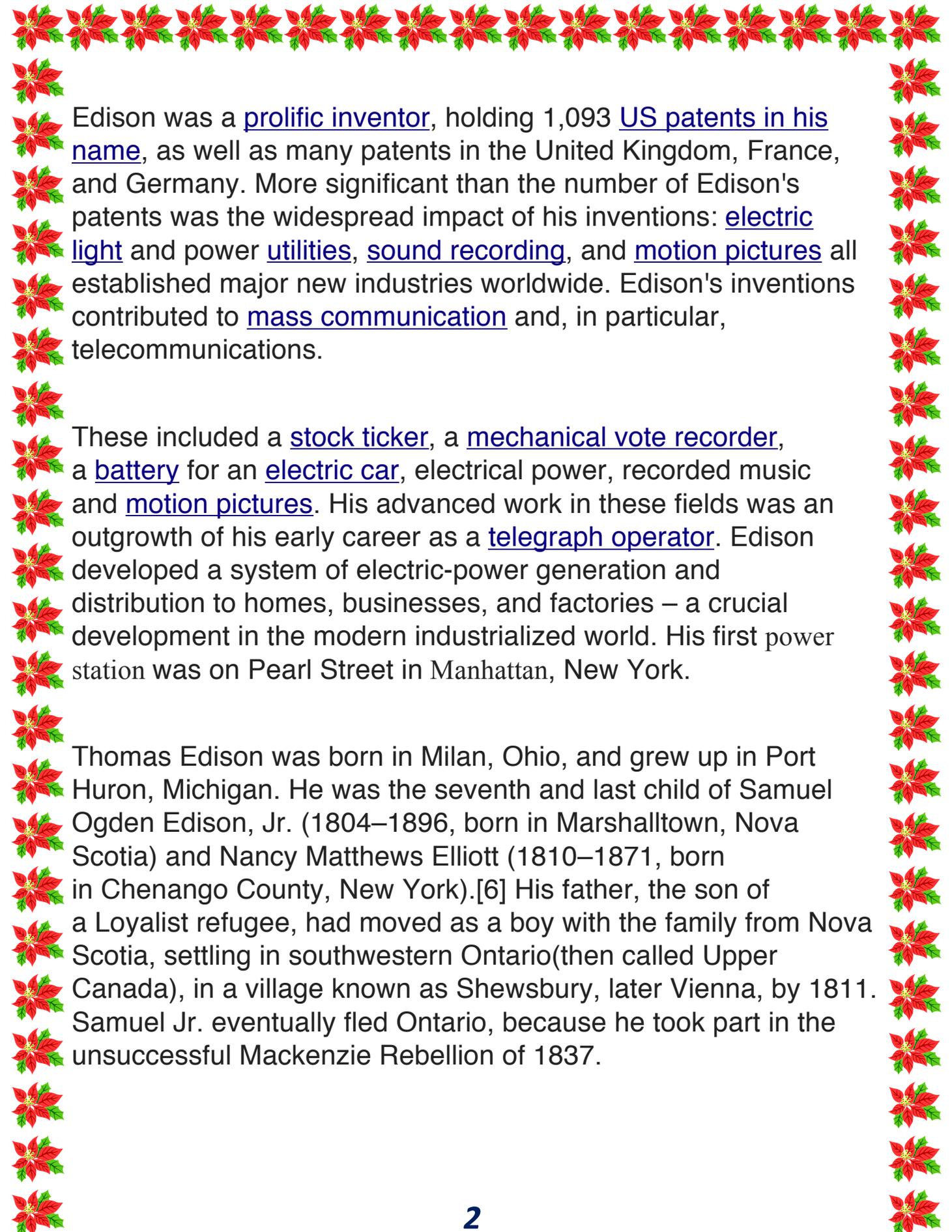
Compiled by D. A. Sharpe

Thomas Alva Edison (February 11, 1847 – October 18, 1931) was an American inventor and businessman, who has been described as America's greatest inventor.

[Edison is the sixth cousin](#), twice removed, to United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who is my half eighth cousin.

He developed many devices that greatly influenced life around the world, including the [phonograph \(first demonstrated November 29, 1877\)](#), the [motion picture camera](#), and the long-lasting, practical electric [light bulb](#). It was demonstrated in Menlo Park on December 31, 1879. Dubbed "The Wizard of Menlo Park", he was one of the first inventors to apply the principles of [mass production](#) and large-scale teamwork to the process of invention, and because of that, he is often credited with the creation of the first industrial [research laboratory](#).

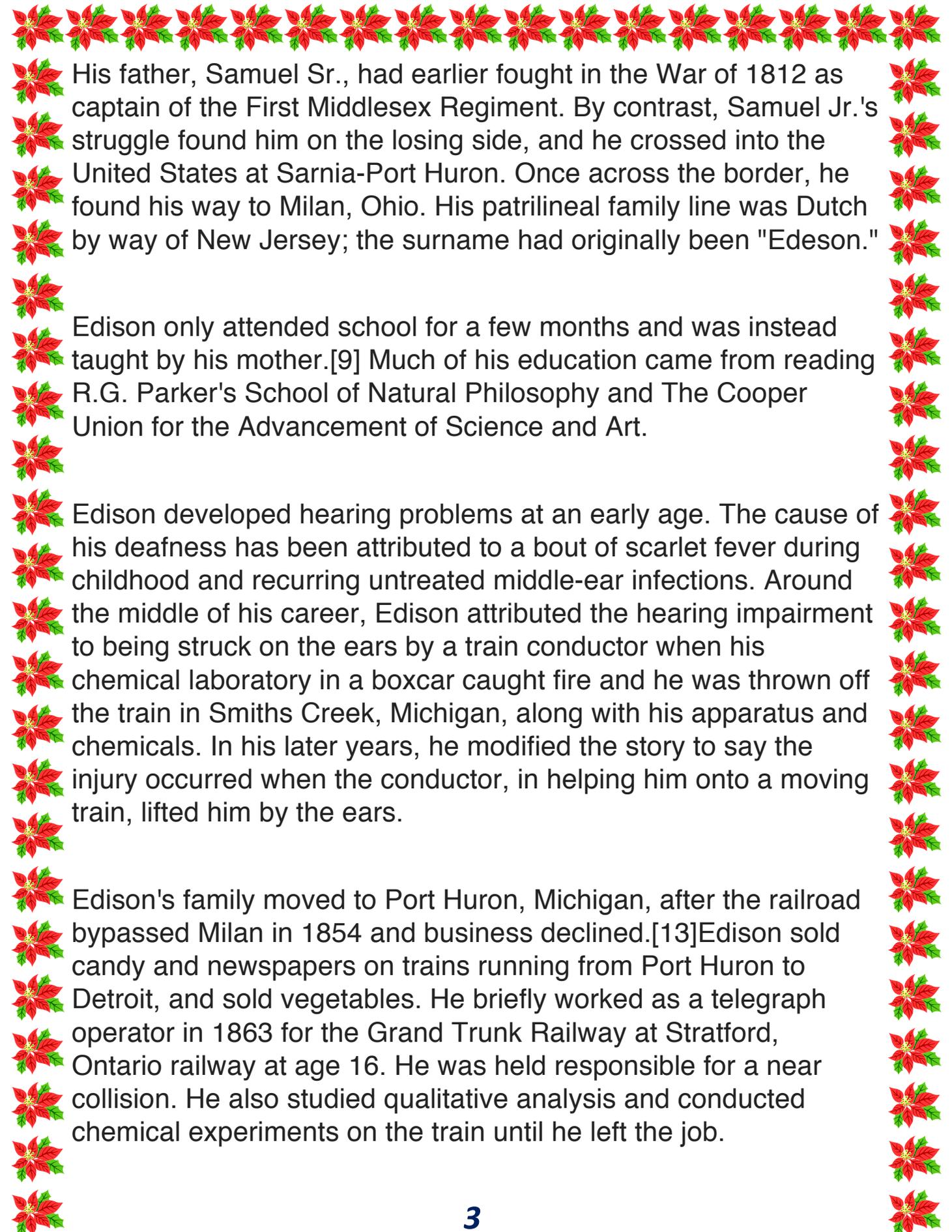
Thomas A. Edison, one of the premiere inventors in American History, is the sixth cousin, twice removed, to United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt, my half eighth cousin. So again we see [indirect relationship with very interesting](#) personalities of our historic American stage.



Edison was a [prolific inventor](#), holding 1,093 [US patents in his name](#), as well as many patents in the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. More significant than the number of Edison's patents was the widespread impact of his inventions: [electric light](#) and power [utilities](#), [sound recording](#), and [motion pictures](#) all established major new industries worldwide. Edison's inventions contributed to [mass communication](#) and, in particular, telecommunications.

These included a [stock ticker](#), a [mechanical vote recorder](#), a [battery](#) for an [electric car](#), electrical power, recorded music and [motion pictures](#). His advanced work in these fields was an outgrowth of his early career as a [telegraph operator](#). Edison developed a system of electric-power generation and distribution to homes, businesses, and factories – a crucial development in the modern industrialized world. His first power station was on Pearl Street in Manhattan, New York.

Thomas Edison was born in Milan, Ohio, and grew up in Port Huron, Michigan. He was the seventh and last child of Samuel Ogden Edison, Jr. (1804–1896, born in Marshalltown, Nova Scotia) and Nancy Matthews Elliott (1810–1871, born in Chenango County, New York).[6] His father, the son of a Loyalist refugee, had moved as a boy with the family from Nova Scotia, settling in southwestern Ontario(then called Upper Canada), in a village known as Shewsbury, later Vienna, by 1811. Samuel Jr. eventually fled Ontario, because he took part in the unsuccessful Mackenzie Rebellion of 1837.

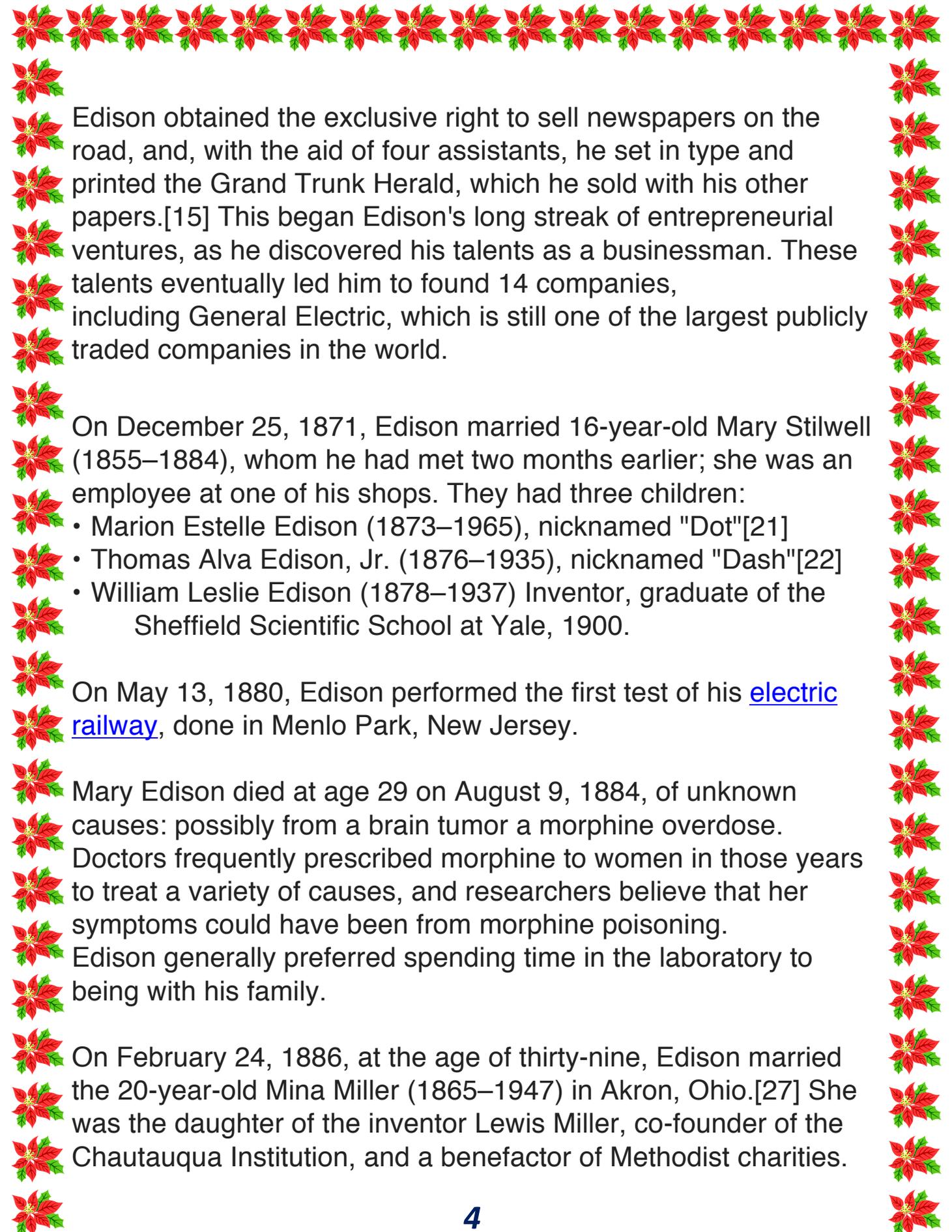
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His father, Samuel Sr., had earlier fought in the War of 1812 as captain of the First Middlesex Regiment. By contrast, Samuel Jr.'s struggle found him on the losing side, and he crossed into the United States at Sarnia-Port Huron. Once across the border, he found his way to Milan, Ohio. His patrilineal family line was Dutch by way of New Jersey; the surname had originally been "Edeson."

Edison only attended school for a few months and was instead taught by his mother.[9] Much of his education came from reading R.G. Parker's School of Natural Philosophy and The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art.

Edison developed hearing problems at an early age. The cause of his deafness has been attributed to a bout of scarlet fever during childhood and recurring untreated middle-ear infections. Around the middle of his career, Edison attributed the hearing impairment to being struck on the ears by a train conductor when his chemical laboratory in a boxcar caught fire and he was thrown off the train in Smiths Creek, Michigan, along with his apparatus and chemicals. In his later years, he modified the story to say the injury occurred when the conductor, in helping him onto a moving train, lifted him by the ears.

Edison's family moved to Port Huron, Michigan, after the railroad bypassed Milan in 1854 and business declined.[13] Edison sold candy and newspapers on trains running from Port Huron to Detroit, and sold vegetables. He briefly worked as a telegraph operator in 1863 for the Grand Trunk Railway at Stratford, Ontario railway at age 16. He was held responsible for a near collision. He also studied qualitative analysis and conducted chemical experiments on the train until he left the job.

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Edison obtained the exclusive right to sell newspapers on the road, and, with the aid of four assistants, he set in type and printed the Grand Trunk Herald, which he sold with his other papers.[15] This began Edison's long streak of entrepreneurial ventures, as he discovered his talents as a businessman. These talents eventually led him to found 14 companies, including General Electric, which is still one of the largest publicly traded companies in the world.

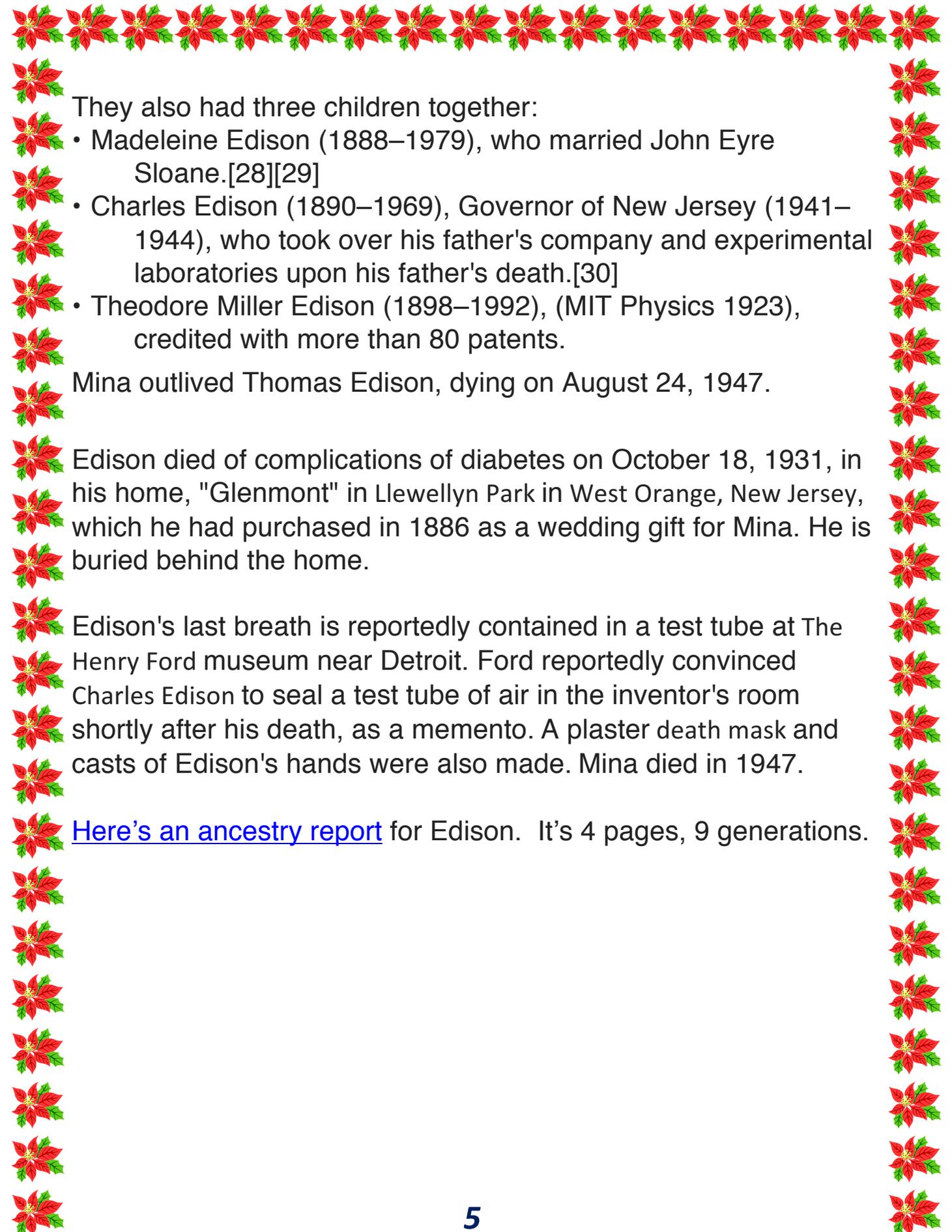
On December 25, 1871, Edison married 16-year-old Mary Stilwell (1855–1884), whom he had met two months earlier; she was an employee at one of his shops. They had three children:

- Marion Estelle Edison (1873–1965), nicknamed "Dot"[21]
- Thomas Alva Edison, Jr. (1876–1935), nicknamed "Dash"[22]
- William Leslie Edison (1878–1937) Inventor, graduate of the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale, 1900.

On May 13, 1880, Edison performed the first test of his [electric railway](#), done in Menlo Park, New Jersey.

Mary Edison died at age 29 on August 9, 1884, of unknown causes: possibly from a brain tumor a morphine overdose. Doctors frequently prescribed morphine to women in those years to treat a variety of causes, and researchers believe that her symptoms could have been from morphine poisoning. Edison generally preferred spending time in the laboratory to being with his family.

On February 24, 1886, at the age of thirty-nine, Edison married the 20-year-old Mina Miller (1865–1947) in Akron, Ohio.[27] She was the daughter of the inventor Lewis Miller, co-founder of the Chautauqua Institution, and a benefactor of Methodist charities.

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They also had three children together:

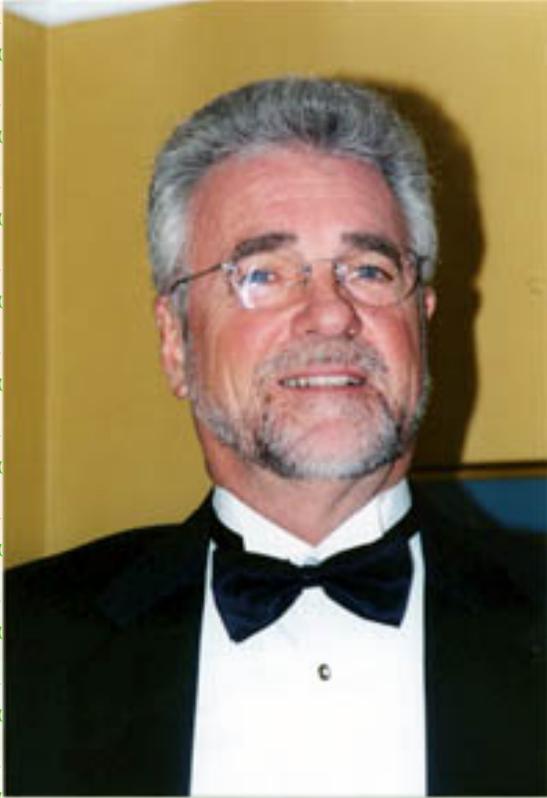
- Madeleine Edison (1888–1979), who married John Eyre Sloane.[28][29]
- Charles Edison (1890–1969), Governor of New Jersey (1941–1944), who took over his father's company and experimental laboratories upon his father's death.[30]
- Theodore Miller Edison (1898–1992), (MIT Physics 1923), credited with more than 80 patents.

Mina outlived Thomas Edison, dying on August 24, 1947.

Edison died of complications of diabetes on October 18, 1931, in his home, "Glenmont" in Llewellyn Park in West Orange, New Jersey, which he had purchased in 1886 as a wedding gift for Mina. He is buried behind the home.

Edison's last breath is reportedly contained in a test tube at The Henry Ford museum near Detroit. Ford reportedly convinced Charles Edison to seal a test tube of air in the inventor's room shortly after his death, as a memento. A plaster death mask and casts of Edison's hands were also made. Mina died in 1947.

[Here's an ancestry report](#) for Edison. It's 4 pages, 9 generations.



Compiled by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D.A. Sharpe', written in a cursive style.

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