

Comments from David K. McClurkin, Beachwood OH, after reading the information on the Statuary Selection Process:

I read with interest your recent article, "Washington Research History Class Promotes Candidacy of Civil War Congressman Ashley for Statuary Hall in U.S. Capitol," and am impressed with the case made for Congressman Ashley. I am writing to suggest that your members and viewers, given their focus on Civil War matters, should be provided a broader perspective on nominees that had significant roles in the run up and conduct of the Civil War. Here are a few remarks I would make to them if you care to post it as a comment to your story:

Some believe that our Civil War is the most dramatic and traumatic occurrence in our history; that its scale and impact outweigh even the Revolution; and that we cannot ignore our history. I agree.

With the Civil War Sesquicentennial commemoration starting next year, it seems appropriate that Ohio is at last removing the statue of Governor William Allen from the U. S. Capitol. Three of the bipartisan National Statuary Collection Study Committee's nominees played significant roles during the same Civil War period that Allen was doing his mischief. Let's look at them in order of the committee vote tally for the three as shown in Brooke Hayner's article:

Harriet Beecher Stowe - Her most notable work is Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852), the book that changed how Americans viewed the institution of slavery. After living 18 years in Cincinnati working with the Underground Railroad conductors and interviewing slaves and their families, she wrote her best-selling book that galvanized the abolition movement and contributed to the outbreak of the war.

James M. Ashley - As discussed in the article above, he was a U.S. Congressman from Toledo that served from 1858 to 1868. He fought to stop legislation in Congress to permanently legalize slavery in 1861, nine years after Stowe's book. His determination in late 1863 to support an amendment to abolish slavery throughout the entire United States culminated in its passage in early 1865.

Ulysses S. Grant - He graduated from West Point in 1843. In March 1864, 13 years after Stowe's book, Grant traveled to Washington, D.C. and met President Lincoln for the first time. Lincoln promoted Grant and named him commander of all Union forces. The rest is well-known history. He topped off his career of service as 18th U. S. President (1869-1877).

Although any one of these three could credibly stand for Ohio in Statuary Hall, one candidate stands out dramatically for being anti-slavery from the getgo. Her life work is the polar opposite of Governor Allen and makes the clearest possible statement of how Ohio values freedom from slavery.

That woman is Harriet Beecher Stowe. Her early and effective activism and advocacy in 1852 got the country moving toward the goal of freedom for all. Fighting and winning the war and gaining the Constitutional guarantee against slavery would have surely been delayed but for her.

Thank you.

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