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Historical Minute presented at City Council -
Tim Childers/

Hello everyone. My name is Gabi Friedman, I am a senior at Summit High School, and in the next minute I intend to shed light on the life of one of Summit's most famous residents, Edwin Scott Votey. Born in 1856 in Ovid, NY, Mr. Votey took a particular liking to musical instruments as a child and at the age of twenty-one began selling organs throughout Western New York. By 1886, Votey had obtained several instrument patents and launched the personal production of organs and pipes through his newly established enterprise, The Votey Organ Company. Nearly a year after his company's birth, Votey invented the Pianola, or the "piano player." The Pianola was a large cabinet standing in front of the piano that was operated by suction from the pedals and produced a transcript of the music on perforated paper. By 1919, the Pianola started to outsell the piano in the United States, and pieces by many famous pianists had been transcribed on paper. In 1922, the original Pianola was donated to the Smithsonian Institution. Dr. Walter Hough, the curator in charge of the musical instruments department at the Smithsonian stated, "The invention of the Pianola has added so much happiness to humankind that we cannot fail to be thankful to its originators." The New York Times said that Votey was regarded as "the inventive genius of the automatic music industry," and has since become a near household name. After moving to Summit at the turn of the century, Mr. Votey became an active Summit citizen, living in the town for nearly thirty years. He served as president of the Summit Common Council from 1904 to 1905 and was the director of the Trust Company of Summit. His grandson, also named Edwin Votey, was a councilman from 1966 to 1974, and was an integral part of the creation of the municipal golf course and pool. It is safe to say that we can add Edwin Votey to the list of Summit residents that have contributed to human happiness and invention.