

## HAIL TO THE CRIMSON, HAIL TO THE GOLD

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East Batavia and West Batavia were united in a new school district in April 1911 through the efforts of Superintendent Hugh A. Bone.

The very few extant records suggest that many Batavia High School traditions started during the merger process, which actually began in September 1909, when one superintendent had charge of both districts. No doubt such traditions as athletics, school colors, music—including school songs—and school publications became an important part of the unifying process.

Bone reported in 1913 that the first school paper, the *Batavia School and Home Bulletin*, which premiered on 14 September 1910, “grew out of the need of some sort of authoritative means of communication between the school and the homes. Its purpose from the beginning has been serious, and in order to reach every house in Batavia, it was distributed gratis to every home by carrier.”

The *Bulletin* served its purpose and ceased publication in 1913. It was succeeded in October 1926 by *The Batavia Spectator*, which celebrated its 85th volume during the 2010–2011 school year.

The earliest known reference to Batavia High School’s official colors appeared in the pages of the school paper for 15 March 1911, in “What Made Batavia Famous?” a poem by Edith N. Abernethy, a junior:—

*Its our team that made us famous,  
Not windmills we claimed of old.  
Its our team that made us famous  
Clad in sweaters of “Crimson and Gold.”*

This 32-line poem, which celebrated Batavia’s 1911 basketball team and near-championship season—just one year before Batavia won the Illinois State High School Basketball Tournament in 1912—was also a paean to unification. Consider the final quatrain:—

*And its not the East and West Side,  
Neither could do it alone,  
Its the combination of both schools  
Which we owe to Mr. Bone.*

The title of this article was taken from the opening lines of the song, “Hail Alma Mater,” sung to the tune of “Alma Mater” (University of Illinois):—

*Hail to the Crimson  
Hail to the Gold  
Hail Alma Mater  
Ever so true.  
We love no other  
So let our motto be  
Victory! Batavia! Our High School.*

This long-forgotten Batavia song—the inspiration for which is still sung at every Fighting Illini home game—was found on a mimeographed sheet of songs and yells discovered with a group of Batavia High School documents dated 1925–1930s.

