

## Second Centennial News Release

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Batavia officially became a city on January 1, 1915 after having been an incorporated village since 1823. The transition involved a progression through several steps during 1914. During 2014, I will be recalling each of these events 100 years after their occurrence.

In the early 1900s, village leaders appointed a Charter Review Commission for the purpose of drawing up a city charter proposal. Despite several submissions to the State, the Commission's proposal consistently failed to gain the necessary State approval. The matter came to a head early in 1914. On this day, 100 years ago, the Village of Batavia Aldermen, the equivalent of today's City Council, unhappy with the Commission's work, offered a competing proposal.

One reason for the failure of the Commission's proposal to receive State approval had been lobbying by certain Village Aldermen against specific parts of the proposal that caused them displeasure. Those parts included the elimination of wards, the elimination of political parties, the election of councilmen solely at large, and the creation of a city manager position. Political pundits predicted that the Board of Aldermen's proposal would have none of these features.

The pundits were right. The Aldermen's charter proposal, made public 100 years ago today, not only retained wards, but increased them from five to six. It retained political affiliations, featured a strong mayor, and doubled Batavia's representation on the County's Board of Supervisors. It also had a particularly novel feature. Under the Aldermen's proposal, if at least 25% of the voters petitioned for enactment of a particular ordinance, the Common Council had to either adopt the ordinance or submit it to a vote by city residents.

In a move surprising some, the Aldermen promised to put their proposal to a straw vote of residents just six days hence. Next week, I will provide another news release, this time revealing the outcome of that vote.