

Eighth 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.

On this date, 100 years ago, the governor of New York, Martin H. Glynn, had before him a bill proposed by the Village of Batavia Aldermen and passed by the State legislature. It was a bill that would make Batavia the 54<sup>th</sup> city in the state. However, there was a question as to whether the governor would sign the bill. His predecessor, William Sulzer had vetoed a highly similar bill a year earlier because of opposition from Batavia's Charter Revision Commission. On the surface, the situation hadn't changed much. Members of the Commission still favored a city government run by a city manager and five non-partisan councilmen elected at large. The Aldermen's bill, approved by the State legislature and now on the governor's desk, provided for a mayor, six councilmen each elected from a city ward, and all seven affiliated with a political party.

However, there were two differences this year. One was that the Aldermen's bill had been amended to require a referendum vote by the residents of Batavia. If a majority voted against the Aldermen's bill, its provisions would not go into effect. A second difference was the existence of another bill moving through the legislature, the so-called Murtaugh Bill. Under this bill, residents of a city could petition for a change in the form of their city government; and if a majority of voters favored that change, it would go into effect. Among the options under the Murtaugh Bill was one that matched the form of government favored by Batavia's Charter Revision Commission. So, even if the Aldermen's bill was approved in the referendum, Batavians could later vote to change the form of Batavia's government to the one proposed by the Commission.

Under this new set of circumstances, the members of the Charter Revision Commission chose not to seek the governor's veto of the Aldermen's bill. And so, on April 15<sup>th</sup>, Governor Glynn signed it into law as Chapter 354 of the Laws of 1914. The next step would be the required referendum vote to be held on June 8<sup>th</sup>.

How did Batavians vote in the referendum? In seven weeks, I will let you know.