

Ninth 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, Batavians went to the polls to vote in a referendum on the proposed charter that would make Batavia a city. Earlier in the year, there had been two different proposals before the State legislature with one providing for a city government run by a city manager and five non-partisan councilmen elected at large. That proposal failed to gain sufficient support from assemblymen and senators. So, the proposal now before voters in Batavia was a second one which had passed the Assembly and the Senate and had been signed by the Governor. This second proposal featured a mayor, six city wards, and a council person from each ward, all with party affiliations.

Earlier in the year, a straw vote had been taken among Batavians on this second proposal, but many questions had been raised about the voting procedure. While the second proposal seemed to have voter support at that time, there was enough doubt about the matter to warrant voting again. Consequently, when the second proposal was passed by the Assembly and Senate, it had been amended to require a referendum on June 9th. If voters failed to again support the proposal at that time, Batavia would not become a city despite approval by the State legislature.

And so, on June 9th, Batavians once more went to the polls. The turnout was not very high, resulting in only a little more than half of the ballots normally cast in village elections. It was not clear what that might signify and it made some supporters of the second proposal a little nervous.

As it turned out, no one needed to worry. One-thousand and seven ballots were cast, with 795 yeas and 212 nays. Thus, after several years of discussion and debate, Batavia was finally going to become a city. All that remained was to elect the new government in upcoming December elections. In six months, I will issue a news release informing you of the resulting election returns.