

Albion Alma Mater Celebrates 100 Years!

Al-bi-on, may thy sons ne'er forget thee,
And to thy name we ever will be loyal.
And through all our days,
We will sing thy praise,
In times of victory or in times of toil.
We'll cheer for Al-bi-on.
And our cheers will re-echo,
As high above the sea our colors fly!
One - Two - Three -
Great big cheers for thee,
Dear old Albion!

This year marks the 100th anniversary of our own Albion Alma Mater. Have you ever wondered who wrote the lyrics to our alma mater? Who created that catchy tune that has withstood the test of time? The December edition of the 1914 Albion High School Chevron sheds some light on these questions. It contains a poem written by Nellie Mahoney, class of 1916. In the poem she states the high school principal, Frank R. Wassung, wrote the tune but she doesn't mention who wrote the lyrics. Could she have written them? Here is a copy of the poem from the Chevron:

One day our principal,
While strolling down the street,
Received an inspiration
Which would or favor meet.
He rushed off to the school,
And on the piano played;
until by some good fortune
A wonderful tune he made.
When our artist heard this air,
She set to work directly
To write some charming words,
To match this tune correctly.
When it was completed;
What a wonderful song we heard!
By its beauty, so elated,
We were left without a word.
Much praise should then be given
To their efforts, brave,
Which gave us such a song
As to make the pupils rave.

~Nellie Mahoney '16

Principal Wassung left Albion High School in 1914 and took a position at Norwich as principal and then superintendent. Later, he was named superintendent of Garden City Central School in Long Island. He had a distinguished career. He was one of 12 school superintendents chosen by General Douglas MacArthur's Post WWII staff to travel to Occupied Japan as an educational administration officer, reviewing Japan's educational system.

While in Norwich, Mr. Wassung helped develop two statewide organizations that are still used by many NYS schools. The first is NYSPHSAA (New York State Public High School Athletic Association), which brought consistency to player eligibility rules and developed guidelines for conducting state tournaments. NYSPHSAA is the association that promotes the scholar athlete program. Many of our Albion High School athletes are also scholar athletes and our school has been named a school of distinction multiple times. To become a school of distinction, every varsity level team for the entire school year (all three seasons) must qualify for scholar athlete status.

The second organization Mr. Wassung helped create (in 1932) is Pupil Benefits Plan, Inc. This organization offers insurance to more than 360 NYS public school districts and covers 650,000 students in case of injury during school and extra-curricular events. Their website offers a brief history that gives credit to the creation of Pupil Benefits to Frank Wassung and Robert Wegner from Roslyn, NY. The idea took shape as a result of a discussion they had with a doctor related to an injured student athlete.

A recent phone call to Mr. Wassung's son, John, was informative. He said his father learned to play the piano by ear. The family would play records for him and he would go over to the piano and play the song with ease. He wasn't surprised that his father wrote the tune to our Alma Mater. John Wassung will be 90 years old next year. How fortunate to connect with him and learn a little bit about his father, the man who wrote a tune that has been sung for 100 years by over 10,000 Albion graduates.