



Gouverneur High School graduation courtesy of Gouverneur Tribune-Press.



Reflections of a River Rat:

Another chorus of alma maters

By Jim Holleran

This will feel like a bit like a football official's announcement. "Upon further review ..."

A few weeks ago, we visited the school fight song of defunct St. Mary's Academy in Ogdensburg, and learned Morristown and Hammond had alma maters. Those schools weren't alone. You can find Canton's school song in old yearbooks. Lisbon has an alma mater too. (See breakouts).



Although alma maters have faded from student life at most North Country schools, one major exception remains at Gouverneur. You'll find the Wildcats senior class singing its alma mater at graduation this coming June, as senior classes have done for years. It's a tradition that might date to 1908 when student Ryland Hewitt penned the lyrics.

“I graduated in 1988 from Gouverneur High School and we sang it then,” remember GHS principal Cory Wood. “I remember that in sixth grade at our Moving Up ceremony we sang it as well.”

Gouverneur has managed to prolong a tradition that seems to be preserved only by big-time college sports programs. As a Gouverneur graduate and school leader, Wood has developed a fondness for the song and its singers.

“I know this may sound like a cliché, but each graduating class is special,” Wood said. “From my position on the stage when we do the changing of the tassel, I get to see where the students have come to. Literally, their next step off the stage is the next step into adulthood. It is really a nice spot to be at this point in the students' lives.”

Wood’s understanding was that words or themes for “Dear Old G.H.S.” were lifted from a couple of songs; one of them was entitled “Watch on the Rhine.” The lyrics were set to an air called “Nellie Gray.” GHS music teacher Jenelle Yeoman re-arranged the music a few years back, Wood said, adding “some new elements but still respecting the original” that first appeared in the student publication ECHO in February 1908.

Wood has heard the song performed several ways – acapella, taped music

Dear Old G.H.S.

(To the air of "Nellie Gray")

by Ryland Hewitt, Class of 1909

I. 'Mong the hills of old St. Lawrence
Stands the school we love so well,
Where we spent so many bright and happy days;
Its fond memories will linger
In our hearts to cheer and bless,
As we toil along life's rough and rugged ways.

Chorus:

Then her praises we will sing
'Till the echoes round us ring,
And we'll sing them with a will forever more;
For we're singing of the glories
Of our dear old G.H.S.,
May they echo from the mountains to the shore.

II. We shall meet both pain and pleasure
In this world of care and woe,
But we'll conquer every foe along our way;
And our lives will be the stronger
For the trials of long ago,
Which we met with in our dear old high school days.
(Chorus)

III. When we are set a drifting
On the world's cold dreary tide,
And the evening shadows gently o'er us roll;
We will like to sit and think about
The sons we stood beside,
When we struggled for the purple and the the gold.
(Chorus)

and a piano accompanist. Often, chamber singers lead the song and about 110 students join in.

"There are several moments in each graduation that I find to be powerful," Wood said. "If we are able to conduct our outdoor graduation on the St. Lawrence County Fairgrounds grandstand, when the senior class marches out to the stage remains a great moment. The line stretches the entire length of the field and two by two the class takes the stage. The other moment that I find to be powerful is the moment that the group is announced as the graduating class. Lastly is the moment above when the class exits the stage and they are on their way to the rest of their lives."

I found words to the school songs at Canton and Hammond, and Morristown alumnus Lois Langtry explained how cheerleaders led the alma mater from the center of the basketball court during halftime.



Paul Middlemiss, Ed Carvill, Mike Cryderman, Wayne Moore, Steve Robinson, Mike Backus, Dean Moore, Carl Tyler, Ted Moore, Mr. Jon Coon, Coach; Managers, Frank Albiani, Raymond Smithers.

Lisbon alumnus Mike Backus, a 1970 graduate, fondly recalled the ritual before varsity basketball games when Golden Knights cheerleaders faced the stage that displayed a blue and gold school flag and the U.S. flag. They led the crowd in the alma mater, then lapsed into “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

"I think it died out after that era," Backus recalled, but his memory was strong enough that he could sing the tune that was printed in the 1971 edition of the school yearbook, *The Echo*. He remains a dual threat – he can sell cars and sing on key.

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Kathy Jordan
Joanne Carvill
Diane Carvill
Janet Recore
Carol Winters
Bonnie McClear
Delia Mathews

Varsity Cheerleaders

Lisbon Central Alma Mater

Lyrics by Robert Mayne;

Arranged by Jonathan L. Hunkins

Through the halls of Lisbon Central,
Pass the students, ever faithful.
With them go our standards ever
Loyal to our school.

Praise the Lisbon Central,
Praise the Blue and Gold.
Honor serving, ever giving
Loyalty and courage.

Win or lose
It's Gold and Blue
Let's fight to the end
With spirit pledging.

Honor to our Alma Mater,
Lisbon Central School.

Hammond High School Alma Mater

By Miss Bertha McClelland

There are many schools in the North Country
Hammond High, oh! Hammond High!
Each has its band of students free
Hammond High, oh! Hammond High!
Of all these schools, to us the prize
The first and greatest in our eyes
Is this, our Alma Mater wise
Hammond High, oh! Hammond High!

I

We love your Scarlet and your Brown
Hammond High, oh! Hammond High!
We long to bring you fair renown
Hammond High, oh! Hammond High!
For you we'll toil, for you we'll fight
For you we'll ever do what's right
We'll work and play with all our might
Hammond High, oh! Hammond High!

Your Scarlet stands for courage fine
Hammond High, oh! Hammond High!
Your Brown means strength, oh school of mine
Hammond High, oh! Hammond High!
In school and sports each day we'll try
To praise you, ere we say goodbye
Hammond High, oh! Hammond High!

Canton High School Class Song of 1931

Author unknown

When we leave dear Canton High School
To go forth with purpose true,
We will think of Alma Mater
In whatever way we do.
Although tasks are yet before us,
We regret that we must part,
And leave our school mates loyal
As the memories fill our hearts.

Proud are we of our dear colors,
For they're silver and dark blue,
And we'll wave them high forever
While our hearts beat strong and true.
When from these halls we've wandered
And our present tasks are done,
We will think of Canton High School
And the Class of '31.

Four short years we've been together
'Mid the scenes we love so well,
Happy days we'll all remember,
Within walls with mystic spell.
But today we journey onward,
Leaving Alma Mater dear
And old familiar faces,
For the goal we've sought is near.

Morristown Alma Mater

author unknown

High up over St. Lawrence
On the banks above,
Stands the school we honor;
Stands the school we love.
Students, teachers, and classes,
There our thoughts are bright
Of the school we cherish,
Home of Green and White.

Looking over the river
Where our country ends
Then we long to be back
Back among our friends.
All the good times we had there
Make our hearts seem light,
Morristown, we love thee,
Home of Green and White.