

110 YEARS OF THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
MARCHING BAND

Script Ohio

1878-79

1958-89

TIME AND CHANGE



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Buckeye Battle Cry: Ohio University grad won campus song contest with football fight song

It's been 70 years since Frank Crumit's *Buckeye Battle Cry* won first prize in a campus song contest. Along with *Carmen Ohio* and *Across the Field*, it is one of OSU's most popular, enduring favorites.

OSUMB has used *Battle Cry* for 60 years as an integral part of the ramp entrance at each home football game and for down-the-field music, leading to *The Star Spangled Banner*. Traditionally it is played after touchdowns and field goals.

Crumit's lyrics epitomize a football fight song. The opening verse, in praise of the Ohio team, is the light-hearted chorus, "Drive, drive on down the field," sung at rallies, parades, sporting events, even concerts, often when the pigskin vocabulary is inappropriate.

OSU had entered the Big Ten in 1913, and University leaders were beginning to think big. With plans for the Ohio Stadium came a search for pep songs. By late 1918, when Bill Dougherty's *Across the Field* had only begun to catch on, somebody sponsored a contest for another.

Battle Cry didn't just happen. Frank Crumit was a proven composer of popular choruses and melodies, and an experienced, competent actor and entertainer

in his own right. His sister, Mary, had married George M. (Red) Trautman (OSU 1914), a perennial OSU sports fan, assistant OSU athletic director, and later minor league baseball mogul. They talked family and music and sports and Ohio State. Eventually, Crumit became a virtual adoptive OSU grad, a campus foster child, and a great admirer of Gustav Bruder's OSUMB. His radio schedule in later years permitted him to arrange his time to attend each Ohio State-Michigan game with his Columbus relatives, and he came regularly.

In the spring of 1919, Crumit, who was never a student at OSU, was encouraged by his sister and brother-in-law, Mary and George Trautman, to enter *Battle Cry* in the song competition. His entry won. Dedicated to the 1919 football team, it was published by the Boost Ohio Committee.

Crumit had hit the OSU jackpot, but nobody knew it then. *Battle Cry* was published by the OSU Association in the *OSU Songbook* of 1923, his credit misspelled as Crummit. The copyright would be worth millions, but he assigned the royalties to the Association. When he recorded it on a 78 Wax Victor label in 1925, number 19468, the OSU

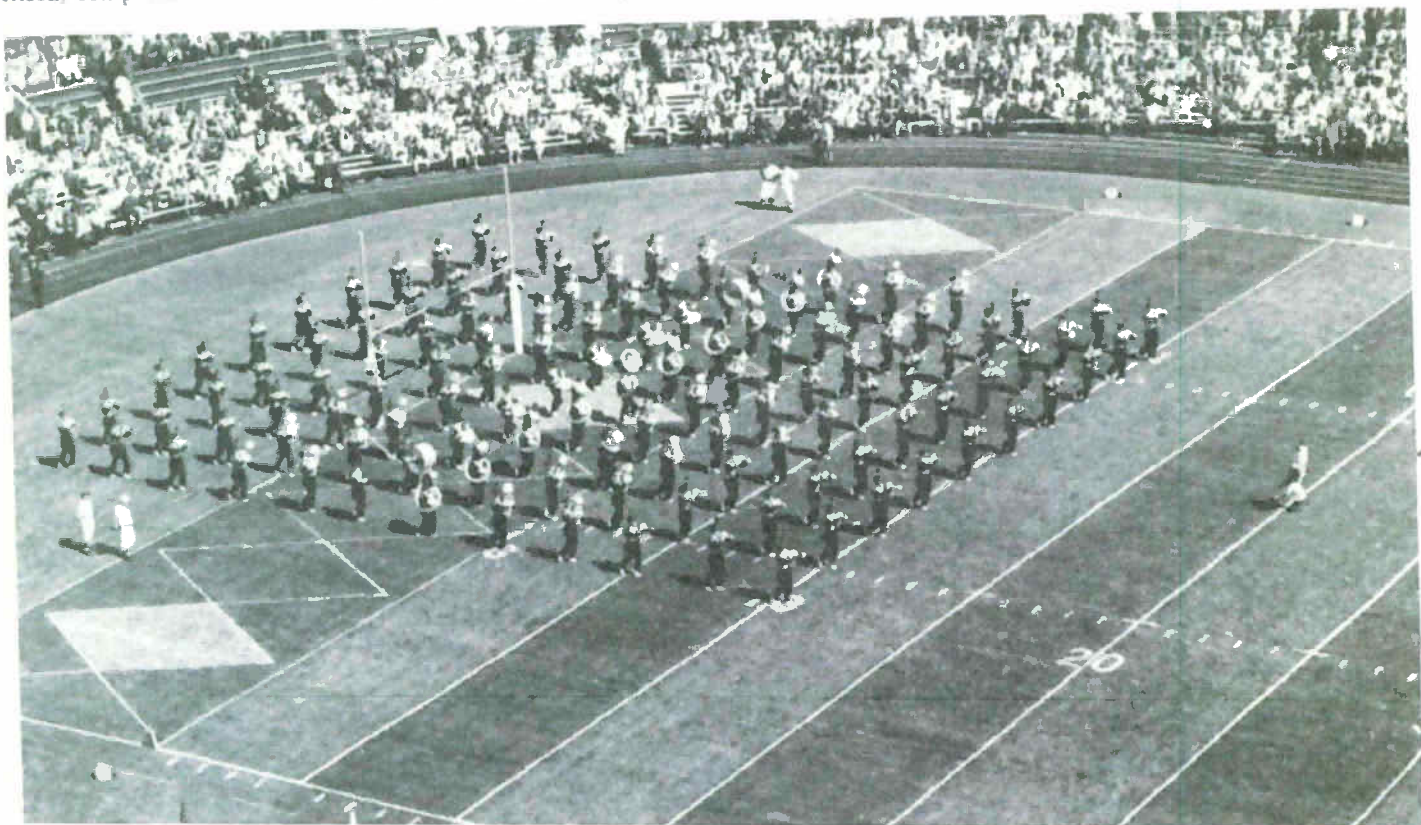
Monthly advertised *Battle Cry*, "made famous by 'Tubby' Essington with his strut at the head of the band on old Ohio Field in the thrilling Conference Championship game of 1920" (OSU 14, Michigan 7). The photo in the center of the *Monthly* ad showed bow-tied Crumit, the Ohio University graduate, with his ukelele. The University was officially pleased, and awarded him an unprecedented honorary Varsity O in 1924.

Buckeye Battle Cry was a source of special joy to Frank Crumit:

I have had the fun of writing quite a few songs in my time, but none gave me the pleasure this one did ... He listed it among his compositions, and years later bragged about it to a disc jockey friend. In a letter of 1934, he recounted the first time he heard the song used, at Ann Arbor in 1929 (OSU 7, Michigan 0):

"When the band started the chorus, a tear or two oozed out of each eye. That was one of the great thrills of my life and I had the same reaction at the Illinois game last fall (in 1933) (OSU 7-0)."

Recognized in the ceremonies at the 1936 homecoming game (OSU 21, Michigan 0), he sang *Battle Cry* and other fa-



It is not unique that the words and music of this all-time OSU musical favorite were written by a composer from another university. This twist is matched by Yale's trademark *Whiffenpoof Song*, the music for which was written by Columbus' own Judge Tod B. Galloway (1962-1935), a graduate of Amherst, Class of 1886.

Buckeye Battle Cry was originally published in two-step time, in the easily singable key of G. By the middle '30's, maybe sooner, it was raised to A-flat, presumably to add greater brassy brilliance to the band arrangement. Richard Heine also produced a little-used novelty waltz arrangement, mostly used for laughs.

Crumit also wrote *Round on the Ends and High in the Middle* (1931), for Ohio University, his own alma mater. The student body noticed the clever lesson in cadent orthography, incorporated it into the college songbook, *Ohio University Songs* (1938), along with another of his nostalgic tunes, *O-H And I-O* (1931). But his Ohio University version of *Round and High* was not the same as OSUMB's old song (1922) of the same name; both the melody and the words are different.

Crumit married Julia Sanderson, a Broadway stage star, in 1927, after they finished a Broadway musical together. They retired, they said, to their house at 154 Colony Road, Longmeadow Massachusetts, on the Boston Post Road, near Springfield. He tried peddling securities, but that left her out. Even though he did well, he got bored and quit. Radio was coming in big; the beckoning pull was strong. They came back together in 1929, in radio, known as "The Singing Sweethearts." Their style, sweet simple and unsophisticated, attracted a weekly audience of 15 million for two series, the *Blackstone Cigar* program, and *Battle of the Sexes*, an early version of the participation quiz program. *Battle*, the second longest running show on radio at the time, next to *Amos 'n Andy*, ran five years until Crumit's death in 1943.

Newspapers and magazines, including the *OSU Monthly* and his own Phi Delta national fraternity house organ, published eulogies.

An eulogist called him "God's ambassador of good cheer" and described his entertainment of the men of the armed services during World War II.

"Frank would walk out here on the stage with his little ukelele and a smile that went right to the heart. There was a wave of affection that swept from Frank to the boys and from the boys right back to Frank. He was not just an actor on the stage; it was Frank and his boys sitting around a campfire ... moments of good cheer ..."



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