

ALMA MATER

Far Above Cayuga's Waters

Archibald Croswell Weeks 1872
and Wilmot Moses Smith 1874

H. S. Thompson

Con spirito

f

Far a-bove Ca - yu - ga's wa - ters, With its waves of blue,
Far a-bove the bus - y hum-ming Of the bus - tling town,

Piano

f

Detailed description: This system contains the first two lines of the song. The vocal line is in a soprano clef with a key signature of three flats and a 4/4 time signature. The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first line of music is marked with a forte 'f' dynamic. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

Stands our no - ble al - ma ma - ter, Glo - ri - ous to view.
Reared a - gainst the arch of heav - en, Looks she proud - ly down.

Detailed description: This system contains the next two lines of the song. The musical notation continues from the previous system, with the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

Refrain

Lift the cho - rus, speed it on - ward, Loud her prais - es tell;

Detailed description: This system contains the refrain of the song. The musical notation continues from the previous system, with the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

1.

Hail to thee, our al - ma ma - ter! Hail, all hail, Cor - nell!

Detailed description: This system contains the first ending of the song. The musical notation continues from the previous system, with the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The system ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

2.

al - ma ma - ter! Hail, all hail, Cor - nell!

ALMA MATER

The best-known Cornell song and one of the most popular of all American college songs, the ALMA MATER is set to the music of “Annie Lisle,” a popular song written in 1857 by H. S. Thompson, a Boston minstrel-musician. “Annie Lisle” is a ballad about a virtuous young lady destined for tragedy—a genre related to Edgar Allan Poe’s “Annabel Lee” and “Lenore.” A newspaper editorial at the time observed that “Annie Lisle” and similar songs “swept the country like a prairie fire.” In a letter to the university librarian dated January 18, 1887, Archibald C. Weeks 1872 explains the origin of the text “Far Above Cayuga’s Waters”:

It was composed about 1870, under the following circumstances. Mr. W. M. Smith '74 (now district attorney of Suffolk County) and I roomed together in the Woodruff Block on Tioga Street. The blending of our voices, he, tenor, I, bass, pleased us exceedingly in the music of “Annie Lisle.” I proposed that we adapt a college song to the music and suggested the first two lines of the first verse; he responded with the third and fourth, I with the fifth and sixth, and he with the seventh and eighth. The chorus was the result of mutual suggestion.

