



Olmsted 200

Two Centuries and More History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township –
First Farmed in 1814 and Settled in 1815

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Olmsted Honored Its World War II Service Men and Women

Eighty years ago this month, the United States went from being a bystander to a participant in World War II. That resulted in big changes in the lives of residents of Olmsted Falls, Olmsted Township and West View, as well as other communities across the country.



This 1943 photo shared by Mike Gibson shows young Olmsted residents during a wartime paper drive. Their identities are not recorded, but Gibson believes they were friends of Jean Staten, his mother.

The event that drew the United States into the war was the surprise attack by Japanese forces on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941 – “a day which will live in infamy,” as President Franklin Roosevelt called it. A few hundred young men and women from the Olmsted community soon found themselves in far-flung locations around the globe, while those they left behind did what they could on the home front amid the rationing of food, fuel and many consumer goods.

“In 1930 people didn’t have the money to buy goods,” Walter Holzworth wrote in his 1966 book of Olmsted history. “In the 1940s they had the money but very little consumer goods to choose from. War bond drives absorbed some of the accumulated cash. Blood donations, Red Cross drives, Civil Defense, first aid, job control, man power allotment, rent control, and price control were all a part of everybody’s lives.”

A big Honor Roll sign erected along Columbia Road next to Fritz (Frederick) Kucklick’s furniture store bore the names of all the Olmsted Falls residents who served during the war. Stars followed the names of those who had died. The list of names reproduced in Holzworth’s book totals exactly 300. He wrote that the sign was erected in 1948, but Carolyn Petlowany, daughter of Fritz Kucklick, recalls that the sign was up during the war. Her recollection seems to be correct because photos of the sign provided by *Olmsted 200* readers Rick Adler and Mike Gibson show only a few of the names had stars following them, but several others with their names on the sign eventually died during the war.



These photos above of the World War II Honor Roll sign in downtown Olmsted Falls are courtesy of Rick Adler. He says one of the three men in the right photo is Charles Barnum, whose grocery store was across the street from the sign, and another is Charles Bonsey, who served as mayor of Olmsted Falls in the early 1940s. It’s not clear which ones are them, and the identities of the other man and the woman are unknown. Mike Gibson has shared a similar photo of the sign. He believes it was taken no earlier than 1945 because a star follows the name of Robert Bilsky, who was a good friend of his father and was killed in the Hertguen Forest in Belgium in November 1944. To the left is just the left side of Gibson’s photo, which captures a better view of the sign on the north side of Kucklick’s store. Otherwise, it is about the same as the other two photos above. In the mid-1950s, Fritz Kucklick expanded his store and eliminated the vacant lot where the Honor roll sign had stood.

“I was not yet in school when the war came,” Petlowany wrote. She noted that her cousin Richard Kucklick, her brother Tom Kucklick and her sister Virginia Kucklick all had their names on the Honor Roll sign.

The sign stood on a vacant lot between Kucklick's store and National City Bank. Petlowany said the lot ceased being vacant after her father built an addition to his store in about 1954 or 1955. That addition connected Kucklick's store to the bank building. Together, they make up the Columbia Road side of the Depositors Building, which now contains several shops that are part of Grand Pacific Junction.

After the war, the local chapter of Blue Star Mothers of America, an organization of women who had sons or daughters in the armed services, arranged to have a bronze plate attached to a grindstone and erected on the Village Green at the northeastern corner of Columbia Road and Water Street. It contains the names of 16 men and one woman from Olmsted Falls, Olmsted Township and West View who died during World War II: Robert Bislich, Robert Bilsky, Ernest Gable, Charles Harding, Martin Hodgson, Robert Haury, Charles Knuth, Charles Kubasek, Wayne Kile, George Kusinski, Luis Mliczek, Lester Sadler, Howard Smith, Paul Timke, Edwin Walker, Walter Zimba and Lois Wilson.



On the left is the bronze plate with the names of the 16 men and one woman from Olmsted who lost their lives in military service during World War II. It was attached to a locally quarried grindstone that stood on the Village Green at the corner of Columbia Road and Water Street for several decades. In 2019, the plate was reattached to a black granite marker and displayed next to a new marker dedicated to the Olmsted residents who lost their lives in the war in Vietnam. The grindstone was moved a bit farther north along the Columbia Road side of the Village Green.

Today, the best known of those is Charles Harding. That's thanks to his sisters, Amelia and Clara Harding, who made substantial contributions for the covered, wooden bridge on Main Street in Olmsted Falls and the football stadium at Olmsted Fall High School in Olmsted Township in return for naming them after him, ensuring that his name would live on.



Harding was a fourth-generation Olmsted Falls resident, the second member of Boy Scout Troop 201 to become an Eagle Scout and a fullback on the high school football team. He graduated from Olmsted Falls High School in 1933 and then attended Baldwin-Wallace College. He was 29 when he died

Charles Harding died in 1944 in Europe.

on August 3, 1944, from wounds he received in the Battle of Normandy while serving as a captain with the U.S. Army's 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion. He was buried at Sunset Memorial Park.

The stories of Olmsted's other veterans surely could fill a book if we had them available. The only difference is that information about their experiences is not as publicly accessible as that of Harding. Some of their stories might have died with them; others might still be in the hands of their relatives.

Oregon resident Mike Gibson, who spent most of his childhood and adolescence in Olmsted Falls, shares a view of the war years through the photos his mother, Jean Staten, saved and his grandmother passed down to him.



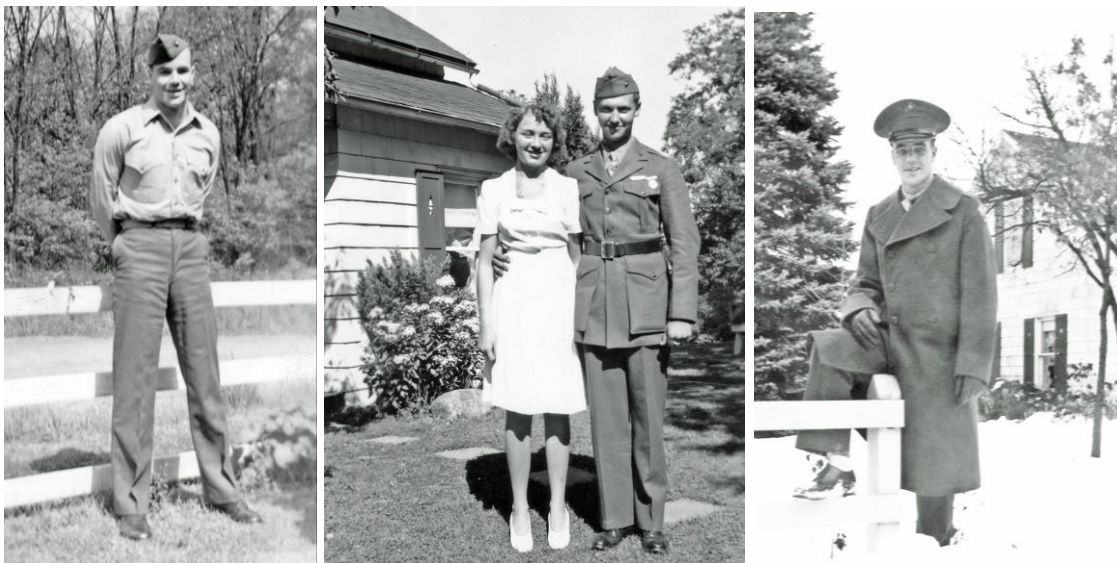
This photo shows the Staten house at 7435 River Road. Mike Gibson believes it was taken in 1944 or later because the living room was added to it during World War II.

“My mother died before my grandmother did,” he wrote in an email. “My grandmother, Helen Staten, lived at 7435 River Road (the “Bradford House”) from 1934 to 1991. My mother grew up there. I lived there from 1947 to 1950 while dad went to Case on the GI Bill. When I inherited my grandmother's boxes of photos in 1991, there was a cigar box of photos that had belonged to my high school-age mother. Some of the photos even have the pinholes where my mother must have mounted them on a corkboard.”



On the left is Bill Gibson during one of his wartime visits to see his future wife, Helen Staten, at the Staten home at 7435 River Road in Olmsted Falls. On the right is Bill Gibson's friend, John Imhoff.

Throughout World War II, servicemen would drop by for visits at the Statens' house in Olmsted Falls while they were home on leave. Gibson can identify his father, Bill Gibson, in one of those photos and his father's friend, John Imhoff, in another photo, but he has no idea who the rest of them are other than friends of his mother and her family. The rest are unknown to him.



These are other servicemen (and a female friend) who visited Jean Staten during World War II. Her son, Mike Gibson, does not know their identities.



Jean Staten is on the left in these two photos in which she's having fun with friends during the war. Her mother, Helen Staten, is on the right in the left photo. Mike Gibson believes his grandfather, Wilbur Staten, took the photos. He adds that his grandfather got him started on his own love of photography.



Mike Gibson believes servicemen sent these photos to his mother from various locations during World War II, but he doesn't know their identities. The photos have pinholes where his mother apparently inserted thumbtacks to attach them to a bulletin board. The man on the left was in the Marines, the guy in the middle of the group of three in the second photo was in the Coast Guard, the one in the third photo was in the Navy, and the one on the right was in the Army.

The photos Mike Gibson inherited from his mother and grandmother also include one of his father's uncle, Alexander Harold Gibson, who was the grandson of Joseph Gibson, who rebuilt the dam for Damp's Mill after the original dam was destroyed by a flood in 1883. He also was a first cousin of Chet and Bruce Atkinson. He was born on the Gibson farm, which was on the west side of Columbia Road across from Nobottom Road where the Donauschwabens' Lenau Park now is located. Harold Gibson, as he was known, served in both World War I and World War II and rose to the rank of major. During World War II, he was based at Blackland Field in Waco, Texas. Thus, he was not an Olmsted Falls resident at that time, so his name did not appear on the Honor Roll sign in Olmsted Falls, but he eventually was buried at the old Chestnut Grove Cemetery (also known as Turkeyfoot).



Alexander Harold Gibson, who was born and buried in Olmsted, served in both World War I and World War II. This photo is from 1944, when he was a major.

These photos offer just glimpses into Olmsted life during World War II. They merely hint at many stories from that time, including some we might never know.



These are unidentified friends of Jean Staten attending a high school football game during World War II

However, Walter Holzworth's 1966 Olmsted history book includes one other story about a time when it seemed to some people as though the war might have come to the home front. On the afternoon of July 9, 1942, just seven months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, some people in southwestern Cuyahoga County became alarmed after two men, who looked as though they might be east Asians, pulled up in a Buick sedan to a Middleburg Heights home and asked if they could stay overnight. Somehow, fear then spread that they might have intended to

sabotage Illuminating Company equipment south of Berea.

Shortly after Olmsted Falls Police Chief Donald Shirer received the alert, men with shotguns and rifles began guarding street corners around the village, stopping every car that came by. An all-night vigil turned up nothing. However, Lt. Col. Norbert Manly, assistant chief of intelligence for the Fifth Army Corps in Columbus, commended the Olmsted Falls Police Department "for its instant action in civil defense," Holzworth wrote.

Thanks go to Mike Gibson, Rick Adler and Carolyn Petlowany for sharing photos and information for this story.

Photos Show How Olmsted Has Changed

In addition to the World War II photos in the story above, Carolyn Petlowany and Mike Gibson have shared a few photos that illustrate changes that have occurred in Olmsted scenes over the last several decades.

The most interesting is a photo of a photo Petlowany took with her cell phone in 2017 at Mary's Hair Salon, which is in the former Joseph Peltz house in Grand Pacific Junction. It was one of several old photos on display at the shop at the time. Petlowany helped identify some of the people in the photos.



This photo Carolyn Petlowany took of a photo displayed in Mary's Hair Salon in 2017 provides an aerial view from the 1950s or the 1960s of the buildings that decades later would become Grand Pacific Junction and the backsides of buildings on the east side of Columbia Road that no longer exist.

The photo Petlowany copied by taking another photo of it provides a rare aerial view of the area that became the main part of Grand Pacific Junction as it looked in either the late 1950s or the 1960s. It could not have been earlier because it shows the addition Petlowany's father, Fritz Kucklick, built for his furniture store that filled the vacant lot that had stood between his store and the National City Bank building. It also shows a separate building behind the furniture store before it was connected to the store by a later addition that resulted in the current L-shape of the Depositors Building.

Other buildings can be seen as they looked long before they became part of Grand Pacific Junction. The Grand Pacific Hotel building, when it still was Simmerers'

Hardware, had only two dormers on top on its south side. Clint Williams later restored two other dormers on that side and balanced them with four on the north side. Behind the hardware store, the buildings along Mill Street labeled by Williams as the Warehouse and the Granary can be seen without the other buildings Williams moved in next to them.

Petlowany recalled that her brother, Bill Kucklick, who took over the furniture store from their father, bought the property next to the store from Roy and Luanna Swaisgood. Roy Swaisgood had operated a blueprint shop in the small building at the end of driveway. When Clint Williams created Grand Pacific Junction, he moved that building closer to the former livery stable that now contains Clementine's and named it the Carriage House.

Unfortunately, when *Olmsted 200* contacted the shop's owner, Mary Sekerak, in 2021, in the hope of getting a better copy of that aerial photo, she no longer had any of the photos. She explained that they belonged to a woman whose grandmother had lived in the house at one time. But after the shop exhibited the photos for a while, the woman came back one day to reclaim them. Sekerak didn't have the woman's contact information anymore. She said it either became discarded or was misplaced after an electrical fire that started in the cellar and caused smoke damage throughout the building in 2020. (If anyone has a better copy of this photo, please contact *Olmsted 200*.)

The photo Petlowany shared also shows the backs of buildings on the east side of Columbia Road. On the right is Barnum's Supermarket, which burned down in the 1960s. Others include Kaufmann's Delicatessen and a drugstore that went by a few different names over the years.



This photo, which once appeared on a postcard, shows long-gone buildings on the east side of Columbia Road in downtown Olmsted Falls in the 1940s.

Another photo that once appeared on a postcard shows the fronts of those buildings. (Independently, Petlowany received a copy from another *Olmsted 200* reader, Rick Neldon, who posted it on Facebook.) At the time of the photo, the drugstore was Baluk's Pharmacy.

“Andy Baluk and his family lived in the upstairs apartment in that building,” Petlowany wrote. “Before Baluk’s it was Maynard’s Drugstore and after Baluk’s it was Scott’s Drugstore.”

Mike Gibson has provided two other views from about the same vantage point, which was at the corner of Mill Street and Columbia Road looking across Columbia Road. On the left is one he took in 2013, well after Mill River Plaza replaced older building on the east side of the road. On the right is one he believes was taken on a winter day in about 1942. He notes that a gas pump, which stood in front of Simmerer & Sons’ Hardware, (out of the picture to the left) is on the left side of the photo, but Gibson, who was born in 1947, doesn’t remember seeing gas pumps at the Simmerers’ store.



Taken from the corner of Mill Street and Columbia Road, these photos from Mike Gibson show the buildings on the east side of the road as they looked in 2013, left, and 1942, right.

Another photo from Gibson shows a man standing by Olmsted Falls High School’s football field in about 1942. What is notable about it is how plain the field was with simple chalk yard lines. As shown in last month’s issue, the field did not have permanent spectator stands. Instead, the stands were assembled for each football season and removed for the rest of the year.



A man stands next to Olmsted Falls High School’s football field in about 1942 in this photo shared by Mike Gibson.

Compare that view of the old football field to photos of the current OFHS field, as seen on October 29, 2021, when the Bulldogs hosted the Valley Forge Patriots in the first round of playoffs. (Fortunately, Olmsted Falls won that game and a subsequent game the following week at Barberton, but the Bulldogs were unable to get past Avon in the third round of the playoffs on November 12 in Strongsville.)



These photos from the Bulldogs' playoff game against the Valley Forge Patriots on October 29, 2021, show the field and spectator stands for Olmsted Falls High School football games are much more elaborate than those at the former high school.

Restaurants Renew Uses for Old Olmsted Falls Buildings

One reason Olmsted Falls still has many historic buildings is that they have been



Bistro on the Falls now operates in the 1830 Waring Homestead.

repurposed and continue to be used. Empty old buildings tend to fall into disrepair and then get torn down. That's what happened to John Hall's 1880 barn along John Road. The Renaissance, which owns the property, had the barn removed in 2014 to the dismay of many Olmsted residents.

Thus, it's welcome news that two old buildings in downtown Olmsted Falls that have served as restaurants in recent years will continue

to do so under new owners. One is the house built in about 1830 by William Waring. (More on its history can be found in Issue 99 of *Olmsted 200* from August 2021.) Beginning in 2005, the house became a French restaurant, Le Bistro du Beaujolais, under ownership of Georges and Claudie d'Arras, but it closed a couple of years ago after they returned to France.

The current owner of the building is Marcello Fadul, who speaks proudly of his Brazilian-Lebanese heritage. He has operated other, larger restaurants in Cleveland, including Crop Bistro in Ohio City and Brasa Grill and then Cello's Grill in the same location in the Warehouse District. In October, he opened Bistro on the Falls in the Waring Homestead and spoke hopefully of becoming an Olmsted Falls resident if he could buy a



Marcello Fadul opened Bistro on the Falls in October.

particular historic house he had his eye on.



A sign, left, outside the restaurant again identifies it as the Waring Homestead, built in 1830. Above, the interior still shows some of the building's original beams.

The Waring Homestead offers a more intimate atmosphere than his previous restaurants with about 3,800 square feet of space. It can seat 56 individuals for dining plus six more at the bar and more on the patio when the weather is nice. Fadul calls his fare “old-school fine dining” with a Continental menu, which includes steak, pasta and seafood. Befitting the building’s history of almost two centuries, he has filled it with antiques.



This old horseshoe was found on the restaurant's grounds.



Marcello Fadul has used his own antiques to decorate the bistro.

In late October, just a few weeks after opening Bistro on the Falls, Fadul showed off an old horseshoe found on the grounds. He planned to clean it up and then hang it in the restaurant as a good luck charm. He expressed surprise when he learned that one of the early stories about the house is that a horse once entered one door and exited another.

The Waring Homestead was one of just a few historic buildings in downtown Olmsted Falls that Clint Williams never acquired for Grand Pacific Junction. By contrast, the other restaurant with new owners has been part of Grand Pacific Junction for three decades.

Clementine's Victorian Restaurant has operated since 1999 in a former livery stable in the middle of Grand Pacific Junction. When it first opened eight years earlier, the restaurant was located at 25561 Mill Street in the building that has housed the Cutting Garden floral shop in recent years. Doris Rundle and Anne Klintworth opened Clementine's on the day after Thanksgiving in 1991 to sell pastries from their commercial bakery, A Bit of New York in Hinckley, along with teas and coffee in a Victorian setting. The menu expanded when they moved Clementine's to the current location.



Clementine's shares the former livery stable building Falls Ice Cream in Grand Pacific Junction.

In 2001, Klintworth retired, and Cheryl Novak took over as Rundle's partner. Recently, they reached an agreement to turn over Clementine's to new, younger owners, Mike Marich and Gabby Colcord.

In Grand Pacific Junction brochures, Clint Williams listed the year of construction of the livery stable – the building Clementine's shares with Falls Ice Cream – as 1898, but that was just an educated guess. The stable seems to have been built either in the last few years of the 1800s or first few years of the 1900s by Joseph Peltz and Philip Simmerer when they still jointly ran the hardware store that Simmerer eventually took over with his sons. Williams said that the building was leaning a bit to the east when he acquired it in 1989, so if he hadn't restored it, it might not have survived to the 21st century. (For more on the history of the former livery stable, see Issue 28 of *Olmsted 200* from September 2015.)

Woodlot Sale Meant a Lot a Century and a Half Ago

On December 8, 1871, 150 years ago this month, the West View column in Berea's *Grindstone City Advertiser* reported a noteworthy property transaction. It said that brothers Levi and Sylvester Alcott had bought "a significant piece of woodland from the Estep & Nicola farm." About one year earlier, the Alcotts had become operators of the sawmill at the falls along Plum Creek in the center of Olmsted Falls. Their new woodland farther south gave them the raw materials they needed for their sawmill.

The West View columnist reported seeing one of the Alcotts (whichever was nicknamed "Deacon") "returning from the city a day or two since, with a cross-cut saw, axes, etc. May he meet with as great success in felling trees, as in making a quick sale." The Alcotts did have success. They operated their sawmill another dozen years and

brought in Tom Stokes as a partner. In 1883, Stokes took sole ownership and operated it into the 20th century.

Another reason the sale of the woodland to the Alcotts is noteworthy is that it tells the fate of at least part of the 800 to 900 acres of Olmsted Township land purchased earlier in 1871 by Felix Nicola and Ethan Estep somewhere between Olmsted Falls and West View with the intention of creating a housing development, as told in Issue 94 of *Olmsted 200* from March. Perhaps it was harder to create a housing development in 1871 than it is today, so Nicola and Estep sold off a big chunk of their land to the Alcotts. However, if the Alcotts cleared the trees from the property, that could have made the land more suitable for housing, although it's unclear if that was the result..

Nicola also was the sheriff of Cuyahoga County in 1866, when the murder of Rosa Colvin a few miles west of Olmsted Falls made national news. That story also was told in Issue 94.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will begin a series of stories about Olmsted's inventors and entrepreneurs and contain more stories about the history of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township.

If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: wallacestar@hotmail.com. *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Michigan, Wisconsin, New York, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Maine, as well as overseas in the Netherlands, Germany and Japan.

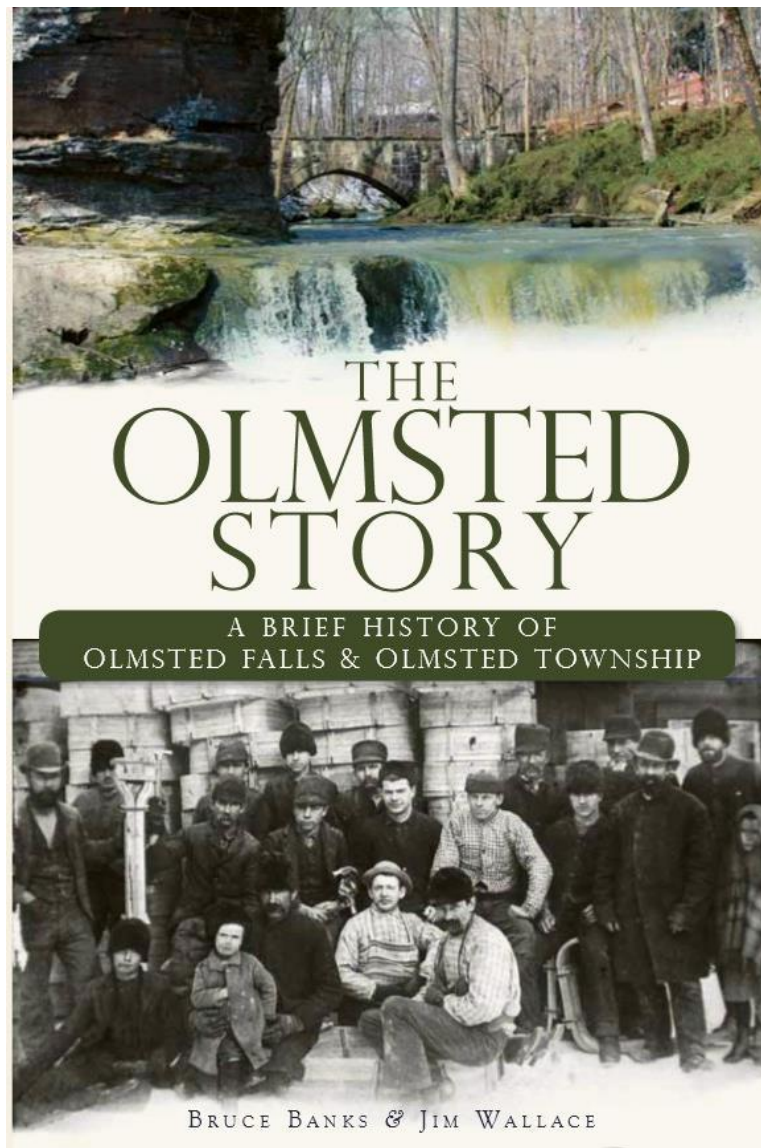
Your questions and comments about *Olmsted 200* are welcome. Perhaps there is something about Olmsted's history that you would like to have pulled out of *Olmsted 200*'s extensive archives. Or perhaps you have information or photos about the community's history that you would like to share.

If you have missed any of the past issues of *Olmsted 200* or want to share them with someone else, all of them can be found on Olmsted Township's website. Go to <http://olmstedtownship.org/newsletters/>. A list of *Olmsted 200* issues is on the right side. Click on the number of the issue you want to read. All of the issues of *Olmsted 200* also are available on the website of the City of Olmsted Falls. Find them at: http://www.olmstedfalls.org/olmsted_falls_history/index.php. A link to *Olmsted 200* can be found on the left side of the page.

Except where otherwise noted, all articles in *Olmsted 200* are written by Jim Wallace. Thanks go to Mary Louise King for help in proofreading and editing many

issues. Thanks also go to David Kennedy for frequently contributing research and insight for some stories. Written contributions and photos, as well as comments and questions about items in this newsletter, will be considered for publication. Send any correspondence by email to: wallacestar@hotmail.com.

Olmsted 200 is written, researched and edited by Jim Wallace, who is solely responsible for its content. He is co-author (with Bruce Banks) of ***The Olmsted Story: A Brief History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township***, published in 2010 by The History Press of Charleston, S.C. ***The Olmsted Story*** is available at Angelina's Pizza in Olmsted Falls and the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.



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