



Olmsted 200

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

Issue 104

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Olmsted Has Nurtured Inventors Since Its Early Years

No one realized it at the time, but January 22, 1842, was a significant day for Olmsted Falls. On that day 180 years ago this month, Asenath Kidney gave birth to a son, Edward, who would become perhaps the community's most notable inventor and entrepreneur. In the latter few decades of the 19th century, he founded and ran a factory filled with machines of his own creation that employed dozens of Olmsted residents. He also patented a water filter that seemed to be decades ahead of its time. For many years, he was one of the most highly regarded citizens of Olmsted Falls.



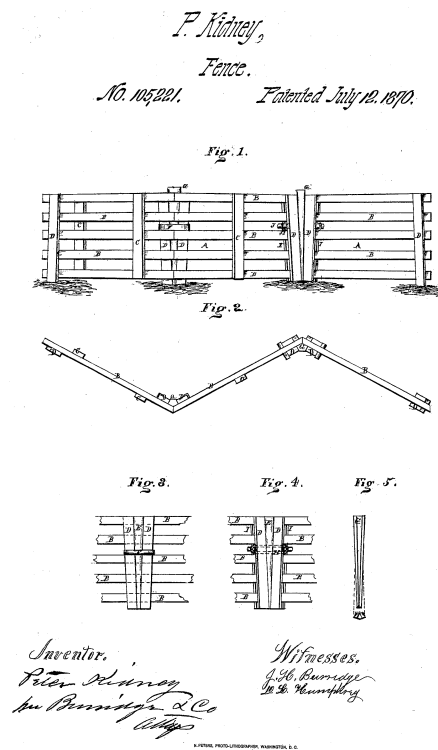
Peter and Asenath Kidney initially built a log cabin after they arrived in Olmsted from New York in the 1830s, but they replaced it with this house, seen in the 1800s and more recently, at 7601 River Road. Photos courtesy of Bruce Banks.

The full story of Edward Wade Kidney is coming up in *Olmsted 200*, but first comes the story of the inventor and entrepreneur who raised him and inspired him – his father, Peter Kidney. He built a machine shop in the section of Olmsted Township that

later became Olmsted Falls shortly after he and his wife, Asenath, arrived in 1833 (although his obituary many years later said they arrived in 1835). Walter Holzworth, in his 1966 book about Olmsted history called Peter Kidney's factory "probably the first in the township." He also said Peter and Edward Kidney together "stood out as the greatest industrialists and manufacturers in Olmsted Falls history. For nearly 75 years the enterprises were of prime importance" in Olmsted and were outranked only by the sandstone quarries at their peak.

Peter Kidney was born July 13, 1804, in Coeymans in Albany County, New York. As a youth, he worked as an apprentice in a tool-making factory, which served him well later. He married Asenath Serrow, a woman of French descent who was born in 1808 in Cato in Cayuga County, New York. While they still were in New York, their oldest child, Thomas H., was born in 1831, but he died in 1833, shortly after they arrived by covered

wagon in Olmsted. The Kidneys buried their son in Butternut Ridge Cemetery, which was the only public cemetery in Olmsted Township at the time. In 1855, after Turkeyfoot Cemetery (later called Chestnut Grove) was established, they moved his remains there.



This sketch, signed by Peter Kidney, illustrates the fence design for which he received a patent.

Mr. Vaughan to establish a factory to make wooden cheese boxes, buckets and measures. Kidney's obituary said he worked industriously "until age had dimmed his eye and subdued his strength."

According to Holzworth, Peter Kidney was attracted to Olmsted because it had fine quality sandstone that was good for sharpening tools. He bought land along Rocky River and next to a north-south trail, part of which became Bradford Road and then River Street and finally River Road. In addition to a home, he built a sawmill, a small grist mill and a shop that used a trip hammer to make sharp-edged tools. A trip hammer is a heavy, power-driven hammer that is raised and then allowed to fall by a tripping device. Kidney's trip hammer probably was powered by water from the river. Trip hammers can be used for fabricating objects out of various metals.

"Peter Kidney was a manufacturer at heart," Holzworth wrote. In addition to his sawmill, gristmill and tool-making shop, Kidney joined a

Like his son Edward, Peter Kidney was an inventor. In 1870, he received U.S. Patent Number 105,221 for a fence design.

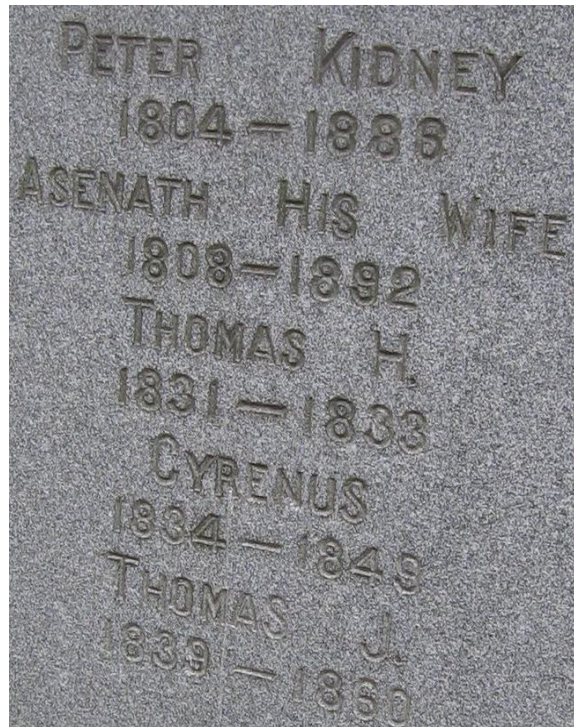
“Be it known that I, PETER KIDNEY, of Olmsted Falls, in the county of Cuyahoga and State of Ohio, have invented a certain new and useful Improvements in Farm-Fences,” he stated in the patent filing. “The nature of this invention relates to device for locking together the series of panels composing a fence, so that any one panel can be taken down and put up without disturbing the line of fence, as hereinafter more fully described.”

It’s not clear whether Kidney’s fence design ever was put into commercial production or whether he ever made any money off it. Either way, he might have inspired his son, who later received patents for his own inventions

According to Holzworth, Peter Kidney kept working even after he retired by making chairs in part of the building (now a home at 7835 Columbia Road) that Tom Stokes built in 1887 to store lumber on the first floor and provide a second-floor meeting hall for the Grand Army of the Republic veterans’ group. Maybe Kidney did make chairs somewhere in his later years, but it wasn’t there. Kidney died in 1886, a year before Stokes erected his building.

That’s not the only discrepancy in accounts of Kidney’s life. The Olmsted Falls column in the *Berea Advertiser* for October 16, 1885, included this item: “The celebration of the 56th anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. P. Kidney’s marriage was a complete surprise to the old people. Two easy chairs and a hanging lamp were left as souvenirs. Big time.” If that was their 56th anniversary, they would have gotten married in 1829. However, Peter Kidney’s obituary less than a year later said they had been married in 1831. But the obituary also said they moved to Olmsted in 1835, which was two years later than reported in other accounts.

The Kidneys had eight children, although the obituary and other accounts said six, apparently leaving out Thomas H., as well as another son, Cyrenus, who was born in 1834 and died at the age of 15 in 1849. Another son they named Thomas J. was born in 1839 and was killed at age 21 in 1860 by a boiler explosion. Edward, who was born in 1842, was the only son who lived a full life. The Kidneys’ four daughters included Cyrene, Mary, Josephine and Alice.



This headstone in the old Chestnut Grove (Turkeyfoot) Cemetery lists Peter and Asenath Kidney and three sons who died young.

Cyrene started teaching in Olmsted Falls in a wooden school building (which preceded the two-story brick building the village built on the Village Green in the 1870s) before she married Clayton Terrel of Ridgeville (now North Ridgeville).

Mary became the first woman to work as a telegrapher for the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway. She married George Wadsworth of Berea on November 3, 1876. He worked for the Western Union telegraph office in Cleveland. They eventually moved to Colorado.

Josephine, who was born in 1845, taught school for several years. She married Daniel Waite Vaughan. They lived for a while in Kansas but later returned to Ohio. Both died in 1925.

Alice Kidney apparently remained in Olmsted Falls and did not marry.



The funeral for Peter Kidney was held at the Congregational Church, where he and his family had been members. The date of this photo, courtesy of Mike Gibson, is unknown, but next to the church is the old Town Hall, which stood from 1883 to 1940.

The June 11, 1886, issue of the *Berea Advertiser* reported that Peter Kidney had died more than a week earlier on Thursday, June 3, at age 82 “of apoplexy, surrounded by his children and some of his many friends.” The funeral was held Sunday, June 6, at the Congregational Church, where the Kidneys had been members for many years.

“He was a kind and loving father and good citizen and no more can be said of man,” the obituary said.

Over the next several years, items about Asenath Kidney’s health, either good or bad, appeared from time to time in the *Advertiser*, although her first name never was mentioned, only her married name, as was the custom:

- May 1, 1891: “Mrs. P. Kidney is gaining in health.”
- March 25, 1892: “Mrs. Peter Kidney is in very poor health.”
- August 26, 1892: “Mrs. P. Kidney who has been very sick for the past three weeks, is slowly improving.”
- October 14, 1892: “Mrs. Peter Kidney’s health is improving.”

On December 22, 1893, the *Advertiser* reported that Mrs. Peter Kidney had died at home on December 7. The obituary referred to her as being “much esteemed” and said she was buried at Turkeyfoot the Sunday after her death.

By the time his parents passed away, Ed Kidney was one of the most prominent citizens of Olmsted Falls. He was known as an industrialist and a prolific inventor. His story will be told in the next issue of *Olmsted 200*.

Thanks go to David Kennedy for his help in researching this story.

Footbridge Photo Sparks a Mystery

For well more than eight decades, the stone bridge crossing Plum Creek not far from where the creek flows into Rocky River has been one of the most familiar – and photographed – sights in the park now known as David Fortier River Park in Olmsted Falls. Few people alive today can recall a time when the bridge wasn't there.

Thus, it has come as a surprise to many people that a wooden bridge once stood in almost the same location, but an old photograph proves that was the case. That photograph recently came into the possession of Dave Fenderbosch because it shows his mother, Beatrice, standing on the bridge with her nephew, Carl Martin.

“The Martins gave me this picture with my mother in it,” Fenderbosch said. “I had no idea the bridge was ever like that.”

Others to whom Fenderbosch has shown the photo have had the same reaction. That has led to speculation about when the wooden bridge was built and why it was built. The approximate time of the photo was easy for Fenderbosch to figure out.

“My cousin, Dick Martin, just turned 90,” he said this fall. “He was five years old in that picture, so that gives us 85 years.”

Therefore, the photo was taken in or about 1936. That was around when the Works Progress Administration, which was part of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs, was making the 19th century industrial site of quarries and mills into a 20th century park. The WPA repurposed many of the leftover quarried stones for use as steps, shelters and the stone bridge.

“I suspect it was a workmen's bridge when the WPA was doing work,” Fenderbosch said. “I think that was a temporary bridge.”

The wooden building on the bank north of Plum Creek apparently was a work shed or tool shed for the WPA, he said.



This stone bridge has stood in David Fortier River Park since the 1930s, but it was preceded briefly by a wooden bridge.



This photo, which apparently was taken in 1936, shows Dave Fenderbosch's mother, Beatrice, with her nephew, Carl Martin, on a wooden bridge over Plum Creek near where the stone bridge stands now. Photo courtesy of Dave Fenderbosch.

Jim Boddy, who has looked into the mystery of the wooden footbridge, has come to a similar conclusion after briefly speculating that Boy Scouts from Troop 201 might have built the bridge. He thought maybe the troop built it to transport materials over to the cabin the scouts built nearby. However, after Boddy acquired his own copy of the photo and had a chance to examine it carefully, he doubted the Boy Scouts could have built it, unless they had an engineer design it.

"Then again, Bill Maynard Jr. was an Eagle Scout by 1931, according to Bernice Offenburg's book [*Over the Years in Olmsted*], and he was on his way to becoming an engineer," Boddy wrote.

"On page 32 of the 1939 Olmsted Falls Homecoming booklet, they mention that the Boy Scout cabin was built using cables across Plum Creek to transport building materials. Not sure where I heard that the Scouts built a foot bridge."



The photo on the left from an old postcard shows the Boy Scout cabin, as well as a shelter and restroom built by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s. The photo on the right shows a more recent view of the same seen without the Boy Scout cabin, which burned down in the 1960s, in David Fortier River Park.

Thus, it seems most likely that the footbridge and the wooden shed were built by the WPA. If anyone has more certain information about it, please share it with *Olmsted 200*.

As best as can be determined by *Olmsted 200* and others, the location of the wooden footbridge apparently was several feet closer to Inscription Rock (also called Initial Rock) than the current stone bridge. Boddy, accompanied by frequent *Olmsted 200* contributor David Kennedy, went to the site in mid-December with three cameras and a tripod to try to take a new photo of the scene from the same angle as the 1930s photo.



On December 17, Boddy sent the resulting photo (and another that is very similar), along with these notes about their attempts to match key features in both photos:

This is how the scene where the wooden bridge once stood looks today. Photo courtesy of Jim Boddy.

- 1- The large tree trunk on the left side appears to be a Poplar, which is fast growing and unlikely to be in the 1936 photo. But it appears to be close and is sitting on stumps that may be from the original clump of trees.*
- 2- The full arch of the bridge in the original photo is nearly visible, which places the camera at the south end of the current footbridge or along the south bank. We believe the current bridge may have been near completion at the time.*
- 3- In the 1936 photo, a young Sycamore tree, with white bark, is protruding from the north bank of Plum Creek and curves upward from lower left to upper right ending near the peak of the bridge's arch.*
- 4- Today, a large Sycamore with the same curvature and in the same location exists. It does lean further to the right but the weight of the tree no doubt has caused this. We believe it is the same tree.*
- 5- We tried to locate the exposed rock-like objects at the base of the clump of trees on the left in the 1936 photo. It's difficult to find a "match." I did brush leaves away from one of the rocks, but we are still unsure.*

Boddy added, "I should mention that it is most likely that the old bridge was located this side of the tree trunk on the left and maybe the other end is right where the tree is on the right."



This is another recent view of where the wooden bridge once stood. Note the bent sycamore on the left.

Further, he said, the tripod gave him the ability to compare the digital images of his cameras to the earlier photo. “We’re pretty close for the ‘Then and Now’ shot,” Boddy concluded.

Kennedy, who studied trees in college, wrote that he is surprised that the sycamore tree with the bent trunk is still there 85 years later. He said he wants to return to look at the exposed roots and trunk.

“It’s amazing that it hasn’t fallen or been washed down into the river,” Kennedy wrote.

The fact that the tree is still there and the fact that the wooden bridge once was there are two examples of how old photos can reveal bits of history that might otherwise have been lost. *Olmsted 200* welcomes photos that tell such stories.

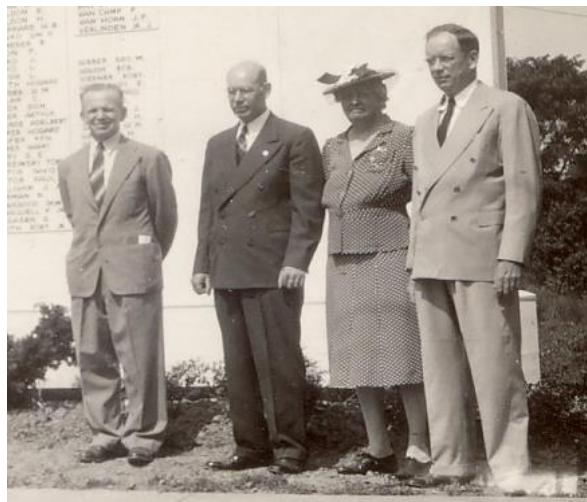
Thanks go to Dave Fenderbosch, Jim Boddy and David Kennedy for their help with this story.

Readers Add to Last Month’s Stories

The stories in Issue 103 of *Olmsted 200* from last month about the World War II Honor Roll in Olmsted Falls and old photos showing downtown Olmsted Falls buildings on both sides of Columbia Road prompted many responses from readers. Among them was Jamie Hecker, whose photos and information about her childhood home were featured in Issue 99 from August. She identified two of the individuals standing by the Honor Roll in one photo.

The man on the far-left side was Charles Barnum, whose grocery was across the street from the Honor Roll. The man to the immediate right was Charles Bonsey, who served as mayor during the early 1940s. No one has yet identified the woman and the other man in the photo.

When Hecker was asked her reaction to learning the house that her grandparents, Edward and Kathryn



This enlargement of a portion of a World War II Honor Roll photo shows, from left, Charles Barnum, Mayor Charles Bonsey, and an unidentified woman and man. Photo courtesy of Rick Adler.

Graf, once owned at 8134 Columbia Road has become home to a new restaurant, Bistro on the Falls, after serving as a French restaurant, Le Bistro du Beaujolais, for many years, she said she is glad.

“I went once a long time ago while it was the French restaurant,” Hecker wrote. “It was interesting to see the remodel. Odd to be eating in what I knew was the bedroom. I’d like to get back again. I am just glad it hasn’t been torn down. But it’s also sad to see change. It was a great house with many memories. I talked with the then owner when I went. He asked if I thought it had been haunted. He thought so. I never felt that.”

Another reader who responded to last month’s issue was David Shirer, the son of Donald Shirer, who was police chief in 1942. That was when some people became afraid Japanese saboteurs might be at large in southwestern Cuyahoga County based on a report that people who looked like eastern Asians had stopped by a house in Middleburg Heights. Olmsted Falls soon had men with guns on guard at many street corners.

“Of course, how could I not remember the night of the big scare when it was thought that Japanese terrorists were loose in the land,” Shirer wrote. “It, and my dad’s part in it, was the object of discussion for weeks.”

Referring to the photos of each side of Columbia Road, he said the buildings on the east side, going from south to north, included “a house and a barber shop operated by Rudy (?), Maynard’s Drug, a residence (and after WW2 a dentist office), Fairbank’s delicatessen, and then Barnum’s grocery.”



This is the hill behind Wilbur and Helen Statens’ house at 7435 River Road that many kids found good for sledding. Photo courtesy of the Statens’ grandson, Mike Gibson.

Shirer added that after the railroad replaced the manual crossing gates with automated gates sometime after World War II, Helen Staten, as he recalled, “operated a boutique from the watchman’s shanty.” She was the grandmother of Mike Gibson who provided many of the World War II era photos in Issue 103 and can be seen in one.

“Also about the Statens’, behind their house on River Rd. was a neat hill going down to the river where during the winter they allowed the village kids to sled and toboggan as long as they were careful and didn’t slam into the large pine trees at the bottom,” Shirer wrote.

After Gibson read Shirer’s comments, he added more information and provided two photos of the sledding hill.

“My grandfather, Wilbur Staten, had a brother who also lived on River Road in the 1950s,” Gibson wrote. “The brother’s name was Arthur Staten. The Art Staten home was on River Road closer to Water Street. It was Art’s wife, Mini, who ran the shop by the railroad tracks. I have a vague memory of that shop. BTW – To us Gibsons, she was ‘Auntie Mina.’”

Gibson said he has several photos of the sledding hill behind his grandparents’ home. “One was taken by Grandfather Wilbur in 1954,” he wrote. “He always put that darn picket fence up in the winter so we wouldn’t make tracks through his spring flower beds. David Shirer has a good memory! It was never fun to hit a pine tree at the bottom. It was also great fun to see how close to that black walnut tree in the middle of the hill we could come with our sleds. I have an odd memory of 1991. My brother and I inherited [the house on] River Road but put it on the market since I lived in California at the time and my brother was/is in Twin Falls, Idaho. A man came by and offered us thousands of dollars if he could cut that black walnut tree down for fine lumber. We politely threw him out!”



This is a warm weather view of the sledding hill looking up the hill toward the back of the Statens’ River Road house. Photo courtesy of Mike Gibson.

Living with Olmsted’s Railroad Tracks Long Has Been Trying

Many current and past residents of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township have been frustrated by the challenges of living with railroad crossings passing through their communities, such as having stopped trains block those crossings for long periods, as has happened several times recently. That’s why overpasses were built along Fitch and Stearns roads to eliminate crossings along the Norfolk Southern tracks and an underpass was built along Columbia Road to eliminate a crossing along the CSX tracks, but other grade-level crossings remain.

Imagine what a challenge it would be if the level of the tracks was different from the level of the road. That seems to have been the case 150 years ago for a while after the railroad, then the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway, partially rebuilt the bridge over Rocky River in downtown Olmsted Falls. This awkwardly worded item in the January 26, 1872, Olmsted column in Berea’s *Grindstone City Advertiser* indicated what the situation was at that time: “The railroad company are progressing slowly with the work of raising the track to the level of the new railroad bridge. When completed, and

Columbia street of need [raised] to the level of the new track, the look of our village will be very much improved.”

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include a story about the entrepreneur and inventor, Edward Kidney, and other stories about the history of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township.

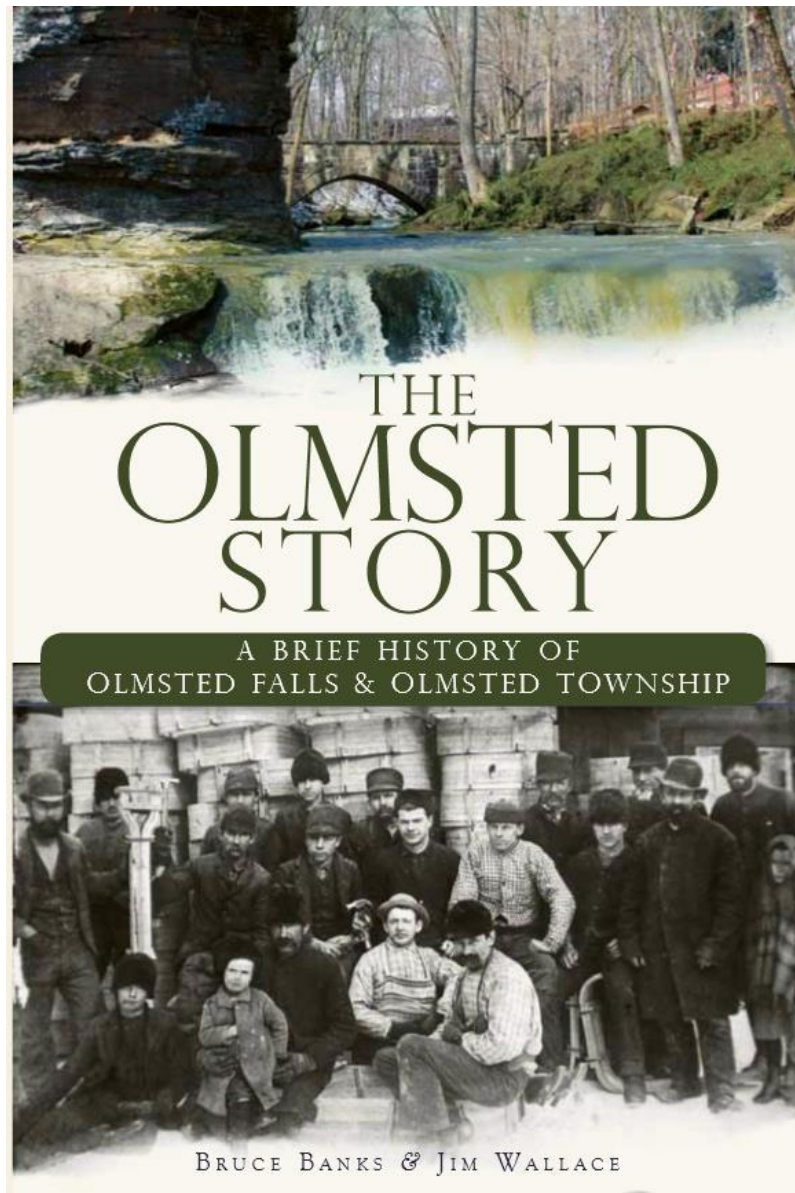
If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: wallacestar@hotmail.com. *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, Oregon, Washington, 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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