



Olmsted 200

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

Issue 127

December 1, 2023

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Library Restaurant Readies for “Circulation”

Olmsted Falls has many buildings that have been repurposed multiple times over the decades, and some have been moved from place to place. Good examples of that can be found in Grand Pacific Junction, including the Grand Pacific Hotel, the Carriage House and the old jail.



This photo, which hangs on the wall inside the new restaurant, shows the building as many people remember it as the community’s library.

Another building that has been situated in at least three places and repurposed at least as many times has been nearing completion of its latest renovation this fall. It’s the building at 7928 Main Street. Many people remember it as the Olmsted Falls Branch of the Cuyahoga County Public Library. It served as that from mid-1955 until February 2013, when the new library opened along Mapleway Drive. However, the building began in 1834 as the home of settler Newton P. Loomis, who built it farther south and on the other side of what is now Columbia Road. Later, it was moved a bit north to

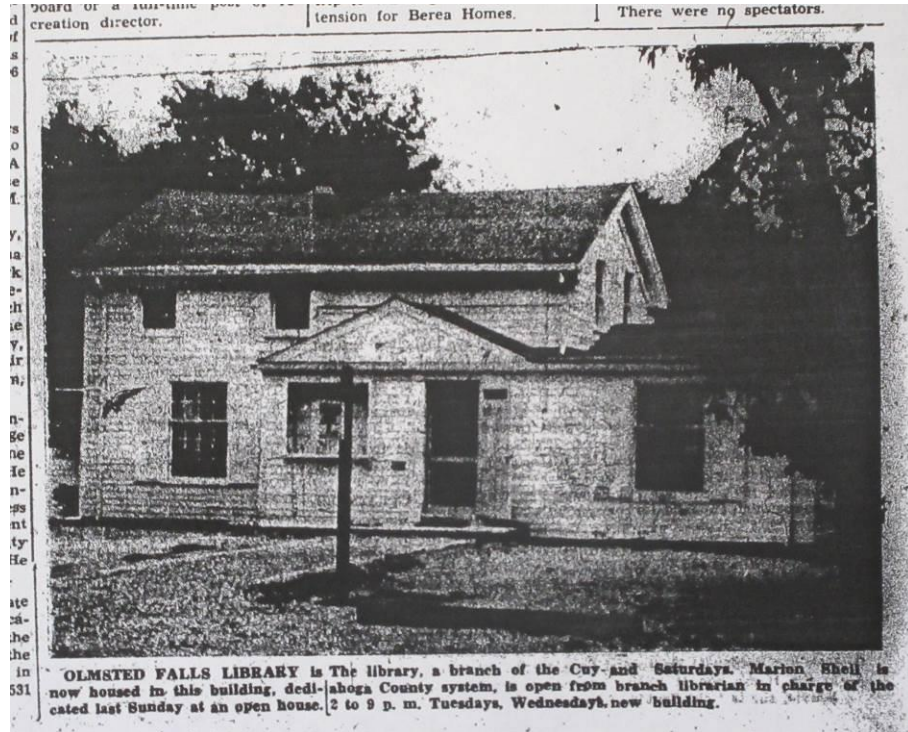
where the parking lot by the Olmsted Community Church is now. When the current church building was constructed, the church donated the former Loomis home to the

community for use as a library. That's when it was moved to the west side of Main Street.

The *Berea Enterprise* heralded that development on May 28, 1954, with a story with this headline:

"Olmsted Falls Gets a Library." After noting that the community had long been hampered by

lack of space for a public library, it said a "church-council-library agreement" was about to change that.



This is the photo the Berea Enterprise ran in its June 10, 1955, edition, shortly after the former Loomis house was moved to the west side of Main Street to serve as the community's library, replacing a library that had been housed in the Village Hall.

The newspaper reported: "Community Church donates a two story home now standing at Columbia and Main Streets, council agreed to donate \$1000 and a location, and the county library will help with moving and remodeling. When completed it will have a usable basement and two floors."

A few weeks later, on June 11, 1954, the *Enterprise* reported that the county library system was asking the county for its biggest budget ever, \$1.5 million, a \$475,000 increase over its previous budget request. It also said the county budget commission was mandated by law to approve the library's request.

The newspaper indicated the reason for the larger budget was that the county library system had changed its policy on branch libraries: "Up to now, communities served had to provide their own buildings. Now, the county board will build their own on a site provided by the locality served."

Further, the *Enterprise* reported, the library system planned to use \$65,000 of its proposed budget to remodel the Maple Heights library and "\$10,000 to remodel a house in Olmsted Falls for a branch."

One year later, on Sunday, June 5, 1955, the new Olmsted Falls branch of the library held a dedication ceremony and an open house. The *Enterprise* reported the library would be open from 2:00 to 9:00 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays with a librarian named Marion – Marion Sheil.



Now, the building is getting ready for a new opening. Longtime readers of *Olmsted 200* might recall that developer Josh Lorek and others acquired the building in 2017 with a plan to turn it into a library-themed steakhouse. Their original intention, which Lorek said at the time was “pretty ambitious,” was to have the restaurant ready to open in the spring of 2018, but they ran into a series of snags, including the COVID-19 pandemic, that delayed the project. However, by this fall, Lorek was busy putting the finishing touches on the building.

According to Josh Lorek, this photo on one wall inside the new restaurant shows what the building looked like in the early 20th century, when it was still a residence and before it was moved and repurposed as a library. It is one bit of evidence that the building has undergone many changes over the decades.



On the left, with paintbrush in hand, Josh Lorek was busy this fall working toward finishing renovation work on the building. Above, stacks of books mounted on the wall between photos play off the building’s history as a library.

The building looks quite different from the way it looked as a library, but as a library, it already looked much different than it did originally. No photo, drawing or painting of the way the building originally looked is known to exist, but one photo on the wall inside the renovated building shows how it looked in the 20th century before it was moved and turned into a library. Other photos on the walls show how the building looked at other times in its history.

In addition to those photos of the building and photos of other places around the community, the new restaurant plays off its library theme by displaying stacks of books high on the walls.



On the left is the bar on the main level of the restaurant. It is near the center of the building, so it probably is not far from where the former library's circulation desk was once located. On the right is the bar on the lower level. It has a counter with windows that open to serve people on the patio behind the building.

Other features include bars on the main level and the lower level. The lower-level bar has a counter with windows that open to the outdoor patio in the back.



On the left, the wall in one dining room displays a photo of the building when it served as a library and a mid-20th century photo of people sitting on rocks along the west branch of Rocky River sometime after the river was dammed in 1930 to form what was called the community's "swimming pool." Wooden chairs sit ready for diners to visit the restaurant. On the right is another photo of the building from an unspecified time.

This May 2023 photo of the rear of the building shows the patio. It is bordered by sandstone blocks that came from a barn that was dismantled near Amherst. In the shadow under the awning is the window that opens to the bar on the lower level. The parking lot connects to the Dan Waugh Nature Trail through David Fortier River Park.



Early in the renovation project, Lorek, who grew up on Water Street, and his colleagues used old flooring from a barn that was dismantled near Amherst to serve as new flooring for the restaurant. He said that was to give it an “older vibe with a modern flair.” They used sandstone blocks from the barn to line the perimeter of the patio. That sandstone is like the sandstone that was quarried nearby in what is now David Fortier River Park.



These are two views of the former library building at 7928 Main Street in Olmsted Falls the way it looked in late October 2023 as work to convert it into a restaurant neared completion.

Feathers Got Ruffled in Township Cockfight

Parts of Olmsted Township are still more rural than most of Cuyahoga County, which is considered Ohio’s most urban county, but the township is nowhere near as rural as it was several decades ago. One example of how rural it was is a story that appeared 85 years ago this month in the *Berea Enterprise* on December 16, 1938. The headline was: “Cockfight in Olmsted Raided.” Here is what it said:

A cockfight in a barn in Olmsted Township, at the corner of No Bottom Rd. and Lewis Rd. came to a premature end before 100

disappointed customers Sunday afternoon when Chief County Humane Agent Henry L. Leffingwell and six deputies raided the place.

Arnold Probst, who said he was the proprietor, was arrested on the charge of promoting the outlawed sport. It was the first similar raid in this county in six years.

The barn is located in a remote part of the township. Electric lights had been installed around the pit, and benches were in place to seat 100 spectators or more. Concession stands were running when the raiders made their appearance.

Fourteen gamecocks, including two engaged in battle, were found on the premises. They were released to the custody of their trainer. Leffingwell appropriated as evidence a pair of spurs, a roll of twine, a hacksaw, a bar of resin, a pair of shears, and other paraphernalia.

None of the customers was arrested. Most of them were from the vicinity of Elyria and Lorain, it was reported. Among the number were doctors, lawyers, a former judge, and a retired lake captain, Leffingwell said.

Constable Weidner of Olmsted township said he had no knowledge of the raid and did not learn about it until the next day.

It's not clear what happened to the proprietor, Arnold Probst, after his arrest, but it likely wasn't much. Even to this day, the penalties for cockfighting in Ohio are mild. According to the Akron law firm Holland & Muirden, cockfighting is considered only a fourth-degree misdemeanor, although dogfighting is treated as a felony.

In the 21st century, the Ohio Department of Agriculture says it works with local law enforcement, prosecutors and others to investigate cases of animal fighting, including dogfighting and cockfighting. The department's enforcement agents get involved in about a dozen animal fighting cases each year.



This sign along Lewis Road indicates that this part of the township still has a rural character but it features horses rather than pugnacious poultry. The sign is not far from where county deputies and the humane officer shut down a cockfight in the middle of December in 1938.

Honored Alumnus Captures Old Olmsted's Essence



This photo of Bruce Shylo was taken after he was inducted into the hall of fame for distinguished alumni of OFHS.

A community's story is told in many ways through historical records and various artifacts that survive over the years. It also is told in the recollections of its present and past residents.

One reason many people take an interest in Olmsted history is that Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township occupy a special place in the hearts of those who grew up in the twin communities. One of those persons who recently expressed those sentiments well is Bruce Shylo. He graduated from Olmsted Falls High School in 1967 and was among the latest group of inductees into the OFHS Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame on October 26 in a ceremony at Lenau Park, the Donauschwaben German-American Cultural Center.

Here is a slightly edited version of what he said after being introduced by his wife, Karen:

Going to school in Olmsted Falls offered many opportunities, both for learning "stuff" and to learn from role models. Teachers cared about us and took an interest in us. Among them was Bob Venefra.... He was my chemistry teacher and football coach. Glenn Hutchinson, our senior class advisor, was the epitome of what it meant to be gentleman, kind and patient. And Amelia Harding has shown us over the years what it means to care for and give back to one's community.

Growing up in Olmsted Falls during a kinder, gentler era also bestowed many advantages. I spent hours playing by the river turning over rocks looking for crayfish or walking to the Village Green to cool off in the wading pool. This may not have been my proudest moment, but as someone who didn't enjoy attending Sunday School, my younger brother and I would go in the front door of the OF Community Church and exit through the back door, taking our offering money to Scott's Drugstore where we would get a phosphate or fountain root beer and peanut butter crackers, check out the comic books, then head down to the river and skip stones until we heard the peal of the church bells indicating that Church was over. We would then hustle back up to the Church and mingle with the exiting attendees with no one the wiser.

To this day, Karen knows that this is the time of year when I tell my story of riding my bike up to the old high school to see if there was a pick-up football game in progress. I cycled along Bagley Road, past Lynway and Olmway Drives with the scent of fall in the air as fathers raked leaves with their radios tuned to the Browns' game.

Like many graduating high school seniors, I couldn't wait to leave the "hick" town where I grew up and spread my wings. It was only later that I realized what a magical time and place it was to grow up in Olmsted Falls, close to parks, Lake Erie, Cleveland, professional sports, and music venues. (Does anyone remember the Hullabaloo Clubs, Columbia Ballroom and Corral?) Olmsted Falls also embodied the adage that "it takes a village" to raise its young. Parents kept an eye on not just their own children but neighbors' and friends' kids as well. The police kept us safe, mainly from ourselves and our own foolishness. The schools and parents were partners and supported each other.

My point with these reflections is that Olmsted Falls...the place and its people have been instrumental in shaping and helping me become more of what I could be.

Shylo said in an email to *Olmsted 200* that it was hard for him to decide which memories to include and which ones to leave out. He wrote, "Some that didn't make the cut included: the traditional junior/senior apple fight; Friday night 'Canteen' in the Fellowship Hall of the Community Church; Barnum's Grocery Store (located on Columbia Road by the railroad tracks before it burned down); the community congregating in the field behind the old Falls Elementary/Jr. High School to watch 4th of July fireworks; and more."

Such are the memories that endear many current and former Olmsted residents to their hometown.

Among the accomplishments for which he was honored, Shylo co-founded The Shylo Group with his wife, Karen. It is a global consultancy firm dedicated to helping organizations build high-performance cultures. Previously, he served as chief learning officer for several Fortune 500 companies. Shylo earned a doctorate in adult education and organizational development from The Ohio State University.

Former Police Chief's Son Recalls Bonsey and Village Hall



The last time an Olmsted Heritage Days parade was held in August 2019, it went past the Bonsey Building.

The story in Issue 126 of *Olmsted 200* about Charles Bonsey, the early 1940s mayor of Olmsted Falls, stirred memories for some readers. Four decades ago, in the 1980s, Olmsted Falls honored Bonsey for his role in getting federal help to ensure the completion of what was the new Village Hall in the 1940s and now is home to the Moosehead restaurant, as part of Grand Pacific Junction.

Among those who wrote in response to

the story was David Shirer. He remembers when the building was new because he spent much time there as a boy. Here is what he said:

Thank you for another great memory. While I don't remember the exact date (I was 8 or 9 at the time) I do remember the excitement of the open house at the new Village Hall. My dad (J. Donald Shirer) was the village policeman at the time. His office was at the southwest corner of the building facing the street and next to the driveway. Across the hall at the northwest corner of the building was the combination mayor and village clerk's office. The council chambers took up the back half (eastern end) of the building. The basement was storage and the second floor would, in time, serve as the village library. The fire station was in the garage structure on the south side of the building.

I was so proud to see my dad in his uniform talking to all the people who attended the open house. And I was proud that Mayor Bonsey made a point to speak to my mom, older brother and me in front of all the assembled adults. Of course he knew us well as we'd eaten at his house and I was friends with his son Roger.

The old firetruck (a Whippet) and my dad's Buick with a police sign attached to the doors were parked in the driveway, ready to respond to any emergency.

That open house that Shirer recalled apparently was the one held on Monday, April 13, 1942. More than two weeks before that event, the *Berea Enterprise*, in its March 27, 1942, edition gave the public a preview of the building by publishing two photos. One showed the village officials meeting in the new council chamber. The other showed the outside of the building. In the latter photo, the firetruck and police car were parked out front, perhaps the way Shirer recalled they were situated for the open house.

A story headlined "Olmsted Falls Executives" that accompanied the photos provided this explanation:



The Berea Enterprise published these photos of the council chamber and outside of the new Village Hall in the newspaper's March 27, 1942, edition.

Here's a picture of the new Olmsted Falls Village Hall. Seated around the table, left to right, are Fire Chief Simmerer, Councilman Wm. Maynard, Councilman Earl Hecker, Solicitor Aubrey Billings, Mayor Bonsey, Clerk Art Staten, Councilmen Monn, Branfield and Baird.

The hall was begun two years ago, and cost \$30,000. The building houses the fire engine and is the fire and police headquarters.

Open house will be held Monday evening, April 13, following a short council meeting. Officials of neighboring towns have been invited.

Also, since last month's story, Kathy Schama, whose grandmother was Bonsey's sister, shared with *Olmsted 200* a photo of the gravestone for Bonsey and his wife, Muriel Jean, at the old Chestnut Grove Cemetery (Turkeyfoot). Charles lived from 1893 to 1987. His wife lived from 1900 to 1991.



This is the gravestone for Charles and Muriel Jean Bonsey at old Chestnut Grove Cemetery. Photo courtesy of Kathy Schama.

In addition to serving as mayor, Charles Bonsey also played a prominent role in the early years of the Olmsted Falls Kiwanis Club, which was organized in 1927 and chartered in 1928. In the *Olmsted Falls Homecoming 1939 Souvenir Program*, which was one year before Bonsey became mayor, Sam Jaeger, who was one of the club's founding members, devoted the largest of the nine paragraphs he wrote about the club to Bonsey's role in it:

We have numerous ardent and loyal members, some old and some new, but no doubt all will agree that the backbone of the club has been and still is our faithful secretary, Charles Bonsey. Charles, or "Chuck" as we know him has been the one and only secretary of the Club since its inception. When we think of "Kiwanis" we think of "Chuck" and adversely [he apparently meant conversely] when we think of "Chuck" we think of "Kiwanis." It is difficult to separate them and far be it from anyone of us wishing to attempt it.

Jaeger's article about the Kiwanis Club said that the club had 34 members in 1939, which was down from a high of more than 40, but "we feel that it is in a far healthier state than at any other time of its existence." He also wrote that the club had just purchased a motion picture machine for the Olmsted Falls School.



This photo in the 1939 homecoming souvenir program shows 26 of the members of the Olmsted Falls Kiwanis Club. Charles Bonsey, the club's longtime secretary and the village's future mayor, is seated fourth from the left in the front row. Here are all of their identities: front row, left to right – Glenn Leslie, Frank Monkosky, Oscar Schmied, Charles Bonsey (secretary), Gordon Hall (president), Aubrey Billings, Howard Braithwaite, Gilbert Hall, and Edward Graf; second row – William Guscott, Charles Sherwood, Philip Simmerer, Tom Driscoll, Charles Barnum, Gordon Muttersbaugh, Warren Hall, William Maynard, Sr., and Albert Scott; back row – Henry Hoftzyer, Rev. Arthur Decker, Sam Jaeger, Leland Utley, Isaac Kusse, Carl Geiger, Dan Waugh, and Wilber Hodgdon.

Still to Come

Coming up in 2024, *Olmsted 200* will report on the 1936 film that shows many scenes and people around Olmsted Falls and two neighboring communities. Longtime Olmsted Falls resident Jim Boddy has matched the images to audio commentary he recorded years ago from the late Amelia and Clara Harding, who were lifetime residents of Olmsted Falls. He hopes to have a public showing of his newly edited version in 2024, but *Olmsted 200* readers will get a glimpse of some of the film's images before that.

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 Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin, and 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 helping 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 the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.

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