



Olmsted 200

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

Issue 129

February 1, 2024

Contents

Old Film Shows Several Olmsted Businesses in 1936	1
Community Church's New Look Debuted 70 Years Ago	8
Olmsted Fought Dutch Elm Disease Seven Decades Ago	10
Love of the Library Lasted Long	11
Still to Come	11

Old Film Shows Several Olmsted Businesses in 1936

The 1936 film of Olmsted Falls shows many scenes around the community – some that still look much like they did back then and some that have changed a lot or disappeared.

As told in Issue 128 of *Olmsted 200*, longtime Olmsted Falls resident Jim Boddy has edited a new version of the film, adding a soundtrack consisting of commentary from Amelia and Clara Harding from when they watched the film in 1991, as well as music from the time of the film. His intension is to schedule a public viewing of the film later this year, but in the meantime, *Olmsted 200* is offering a preview of the film by showing still shots of many of the scenes in the movie.

The first five-and-a-half minutes of the film, which Issue 128 covered, shows people and activities at the 15th annual Olmsted Falls Homecoming, which was held on the Village Green on August 8 and 9, 1936. After that, the next several minutes of the film, which runs a total of almost 27 minutes, show various businesses around Olmsted Falls beginning with the United Farmers Exchange along North Depot Street.



This is the United Farmers Exchange, as seen in the 1936 film.

The United Farmers Exchange was 16 years old when the film was made. According to Walter Holzworth in his 1966 Olmsted history book, the business was incorporated on June 17, 1920, with local farmers as most of the stockholders. When they held their first stockholders' meeting on July 1, 1920, 58 individuals subscribed to the stock. The company bought the location along North Depot Street for its building in 1921.

Among the organizers of the company were Sim Jennings and his son, Lynn, who were partners in the Sim Jennings & Son Dairy Farm along Bagley Road. They also helped organize the Ohio Farmers' Cooperative Milk Association in 1923.

"The United Farmers Exchange was incorporated to market grain, hay, straw, and to sell farm supplies to the advantage of its members, along with the processing of grain into feed," Holzworth wrote. "As general farming and dairying declined the business of buying and selling of grain in car load lots and grinding of feed diminished. Calf feed, hog and chicken feed are being replaced by dog and cat food, bird seed and food for riding horses."



This was the Olmsted Falls Lumber Company, as seen in 1936.

Holzworth credited Carl Sprague, who became manager of the exchange in 1952, for guiding the "successful readjustment to the demands of the times" with help from the organization's directors. Sprague also served as the mayor of West View in the 1960s, when Holzworth wrote his book.

The next business depicted in the film was the Olmsted Falls Lumber Company, which was organized in September 1913. It stood about where the Olmsted Falls post office now stands. Holzworth wrote that the company, which had a sawmill, lumber yard and wood-finishing operation, became Olmsted's second-largest industry within a decade – second only to the railroads and later the greenhouse industry.

The coal portion of the business had its origins in a coal yard that Phil Simmerer operated near the railroad depot. He also operated "what was called a teaming business in the days of horsepower hauling and excavating," Holzworth wrote. Those businesses were separate from his main business, Simmerer and Sons Hardware.

In 1913, F.H. Bodecker bought the coal business from Simmerer. Not long after that, Harry Stearns took over the coal company and operated it as a sideline to his lumber company with Bodecker and about 20 other men as stockholders. The company set up a steam-driven sawmill that could handle logs as much as 60 feet long. Holzworth wrote

that “the whine of the saw mill was music to the serene little village.” Later, the company replaced the steam-driven sawmill with an electric motor.

The company also set up a finishing department to make trim, molding and other products from lumber, and it set up a dry kiln to dry lumber.

A man Holzworth identified only as “Mr. Ludlow” searched the countryside for timber that could be cut down and then hauled to the sawmill. “It was claimed that Ludlow could size up a tree and come up with its board feet of usable lumber right down to the last slat,” Holzworth wrote.

In addition, he wrote, “During World War I, when submarines were made of wood, the Olmsted Lumber Company supplied the Cleveland Submarine Base truck loads of extra long clear white oak timber.”

The company held a stockholders’ meeting on February 18, 1919. Holzworth said that was the first stockholders’ meeting ever held in Olmsted. At another stockholders’



As shown in the film, the Olmsted Falls Company received some shipments by rail.

meeting held in 1920, the company declared an 8 percent cash dividend with 19 of the 28 stockholders in attendance. The company not only had the lumber business and coal business, but it also operated a feed mill.

However, after the United Farmers Exchange was organized, the coal and feed businesses were transferred to the exchange. The Olmsted Falls Lumber Company then concentrated on lumber and building supplies. However, as it became harder to find available timber, the business declined, the sawmill was removed, the finishing department ceased operations, and parts of the property were sold off.

Later, Henry Hoftyzer became the owner of the Olmsted Falls Lumber Company, which continued to struggle.

“But all of the smaller lumber companies were beset by the growth of companies in which the lumber business, housing developments, contracting and financing were merged into one operation,” Holzworth wrote. “Individual building contractors fell by the wayside and the smaller lumber companies struggled along as small repair supply depots.

On October 23, 1944, a fire of unknown origin started in a two-and-a-half-story storage building at the north end of the lumber yard. It threatened to consume the entire operation. Olmsted Falls Fire Chief Clarence Simmerer called for assistance from Berea,

Brook Park, North Olmsted and Middleburg Heights, but the help from Berea was enough to limit the fire to the storage building. Hoftyzer estimated the loss from the building and its contents was \$10,000.

Hoftyzer died on September 9, 1950, at the age of 82. His daughter, Hazel Hoftyzer, who had been the company's bookkeeper, kept the business going until the late 1950s, when she disposed of its assets and had its buildings dismantled.



The sign on the left shows that the gas station on the right at the corner of Bagley Road and Columbia Road was a Mobil station in 1936.

The next business shown in the 1936 film was the gas station on the northwest corner of Bagley Road and Columbia Road – the spot later occupied by Roberson's Sohio station and now by the BP station. In 1936, the station sold Mobil gas.



At the time of the 1936 film, the Simmerers' store had been in operation for 43 years. It would continue another 35 years.

After that, the film switched to the corner of Mill Street and Columbia Road to show P. Simmerer and Sons Hardware. In 1936, the hardware store was a bit more than halfway through its 78 years of operation that began as the Peltz and Simmerer Hardware in 1893 and came to an end in 1971. Beginning in 1989, Clint Williams renovated it to serve as a banquet hall and restored its historic name, the Grand Pacific Hotel, at the center of Grand Pacific Junction.

One feature of the building that can be seen in the film but no longer exists is the covered stairway on the Mill Street side. At times, it was used for access to separate businesses that operated on the second floor.



On the left is the grocery store operated by Charles Barnum. The right photo shows two men in front of the store. The Harding sisters indicated one of them was Charles Barnum.

Following the hardware store, the film moved on to show one of Olmsted's grocery stores. It was the store that Charles Barnum opened in 1932 along the east side of Columbia Road just south of the railroad tracks. The film shows the name on the store as "United Food Stores," which apparently was a grocery franchise at the time. Later, it became known as Barnum's Super Market. The store burned down in the 1960s. The lot remained vacant until a decade ago when Clint Williams built a replica of an 1880s railroad depot there. The Grand Pacific Popcorn Company now occupies the building.



August von Brause, a blacksmith, appeared momentarily in the 1936 film.

Next in the film is not a building but a man who briefly looks into the camera. The Hardings identified him as August von Brause, who had worked as a blacksmith in Olmsted Falls since 1901. On November 1, 1938, the *Cleveland Press* published a story about him that said, at age 89, he was believed to be the oldest working blacksmith in Ohio. For more about him, see *Olmsted 200* Issue 66 from November 2018. He lived in the house where the Olde Wine Cellar now is located at 7932

Main Street.

The next scene in the film illustrates a big difference between the 1930s and the 2020s. In the 21st century, North Olmsted has several car dealerships, but Olmsted Falls has none. However, the 1936 film shows the one dealership Olmsted Falls had back then. It was operated by Henry Schritz. At that time, it sold Chrysler and Plymouth cars, but Holzworth's book indicates Schritz at one time had a franchise to sell Nash and Whippet cars.

Another sign of the times is that posters for *Major Bowes' Amateur Hour*, a popular radio talent show in the 1930s and 1940s, hang in the windows of the dealership. One of them seems to promote a September 17th show.

The film also shows Henry Schritz and his wife, Agnes. She was the postmistress for Olmsted Falls at the time and operated the post office out of one end of the Schritz dealership.

In 1946, Schritz moved his dealership to Berea.



This was the Chrysler-Plymouth dealership operated by Henry Schritz.



On the left is Henry Schritz in front of his car dealership. A poster for Major Bowes' Amateur Hour hangs in the window behind him. On the right is Agnes Schritz, the postmistress who operated the post office in the same building.



This shot shows Bill Maynard going into his drugstore.

After that, the film shows Bill Maynard, the man who ran the post office before Agnes Schritz took it over in 1928. It shows him going into his drugstore, which he established in 1923. Prior to that, he operated a typewriter and office supply store in Cleveland. Maynard decided that Olmsted Falls needed a drugstore after Joseph Peltz closed his and moved to California in 1920. Frank Mack had converted Peltz's former drugstore into a restaurant.



On the left is Henry Fenderbosch, who ran one of the community's grocery stores, which is seen on the right. The 1936 film shows it 13 years before a fire destroyed the building.

From there, the film moved on to another grocery store that was another franchisee. The sign on the store said, "Edwards Food Stores." Under that, it said "H.A. Fenderbosch & Sons, Owners." That referred to Henry Fenderbosch. He had gone into the grocery business with his brother-in-law, Arthur Dodd, in 1908. In 1914, he bought out Dodd's interest in the store.

After Fenderbosch died on February 23, 1943, the store ceased operations for a few years until his sons, Richard and Robert, reopened it in 1947. The store burned down



This was a Pennzoil station at the time of the film, but it later became Schady's Shell. The building still stands at the corner of Water Street and Columbia Road.

on January 19, 1949. The Fenderbosch brothers built a new store on the site, but the grocery closed several years later, and West View Appliance moved into the store. That building still stands with the dual address of 7994 and 8020 Columbia Road.

Next up in the film are two more gas stations. First is the one at the northwest corner of Water Street and Columbia Road. At the time, it was a Pennzoil station.

As the Harding sisters watched the film in 1991, one of them said, "When that gas station opened, our grandpa went over that night...and brought back cherry chocolates. That was the opening gift."

According to Holzworth, Leonard Parker started the station in 1927. It was built on the site where Chauncey Mead and his son, W.W. Mead, operated a harness shop beginning in 1848. Chauncey retired in 1870. His son kept the harness shop going apparently until his death in April 1891.

In 1936, Gordon Schady and Russell Theman took over ownership of the gas station started by Parker. At some point, it switched from being a Pennzoil station to being a Shell station. After Theman died in September 1953, Art Christiansen became Schady's partner, but the station was known as Schady's Shell. Schady retired in 1965. In 1978, Clint Williams renovated the former gas station to serve as the Olmsted Falls office for his real estate company. It stayed that way until Williams died in 2019.



This was the Texaco station at the corner of Cook Road and Columbia Road.

The next gas station shown in the film was a Texaco station on the southwest corner of Cook Road and Columbia Road. That's now the site of a Sunoco station with a different building.

From there, the film goes on to show young children with their teacher, a place called Tom's Garage and Phil Simmerer and his sons at their hardware store. After diverting for a few minutes to show scenes in Berea and Columbia Station, the film returns to showing people in Olmsted Falls and a simulated emergency run by the fire department. Shots from those scenes will be included next month in Issue 130 of *Olmsted 200*.

Community Church's New Look Debuted 70 Years Ago

Although Olmsted Community Church announced plans for a new church building late in 1953, it was 70 years ago this month in February 1954 when the public got a chance to see for the first time what the new building would look like. The February 5, 1954, edition of the *Berea Enterprise* featured a drawing by architect Erwin Lauffer at the top center of the front page as part of a story titled: "Olmsted Church's Proposed Building Plans."



This was the architect's drawing of the planned Olmsted Community Church that appeared in the newspaper 70 years ago this month.

Here is what that story said:

Architect Erwin O. Lauffer's drawing of the proposed church for the Olmsted Community Church of Olmsted Falls appears above. Mr. Lauffer estimates that the new educational wing of the church will cost \$157,000.

The new unit will house 20 classrooms, church and church school offices, a fellowship hall, kitchen, church parlor, chapel, rest rooms, and custodian's apartment. It will be built on recently acquired property which overlooks the Rocky River at the corner of Columbia and Main, adjoining the present Community House.

The church is planned to be early American in style and will be red brick facing, set off by white trim. It is planned to include the tower in the first unit if possible.

Brochures now being prepared for mailing by the public relations committee under the direction of Bill Jenkins, chairman, will present the church's new and much needed building program proposal to members and friends of the church. The campaign for pledges will be held during February, and the actual canvass will occur on Sunday, February 21.

The Community House referred to in that story was the former Congregational Church, built in 1848. The Olmsted Community Church was formed in 1917 through the merger of the Congregational Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, built in 1853, across the street. The Congregational Church was torn down as part of the process of building the new church, and its site became part of the parking lot between the new church and Village Hall (now home to the Moosehead restaurant). The Olmsted Falls Masonic Lodge bought the former Methodist Episcopal Church building in 1956 for \$25,000 and used it for 45 years until Clint Williams bought it in 2001 and made it the Grand Pacific Wedding Chapel.



The Olmsted Community Church that was built turned out to look very much as planned. This photo is from October 2023.

The first part of the new church to be built was the educational wing that architect Erwin Lauffer estimated in the *Enterprise* story would cost \$157,000. It was completed two years after that story was published at a cost of about \$240,000. It was dedicated on February 26, 1956.

Construction of the sanctuary had to wait another few years. Hardware store owner Philip Simmerer, who then was 93 years old and had been a church member since 1889, had the honor of turning the first shovelful of dirt on the site of the sanctuary on April 12, 1959. The congregation, which included about 900 members, dedicated the sanctuary on March 20, 1960. It cost \$205,000.

Three weeks after the story with the drawing of the new church appeared, the February 26, 1954, issue of the *Enterprise* reported that the building fund drive on Sunday, February 21, collected \$115,000 in cash and pledges. But the story said the canvassers had about 80 more calls to make, so they were hopeful they could raise that total.

For more about the history of Olmsted Community Church, see Issues 44 and 45 of *Olmsted 200* from January and February 2017 and Issue 128 from January 2024.

Olmsted Fought Dutch Elm Disease Seven Decades Ago

Are there still any elms on Elm Street? If elms are scarce there and elsewhere around Olmsted, it's likely because of an issue that captured much public attention seven decades ago.



This photo of an elm tree comes from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

On February 26, 1954, the “News of Olmsted Falls” column in the *Berea Enterprise* included this item: “Council arranged...for the spraying of the elms in the village for Dutch elm disease. The spraying will be done by Charles F. Irish Company who also did this last year.”

The Ohio State Extension Service calls Dutch elm disease “one of the most destructive urban forest diseases,” affecting several species of elm native to North America. They include American elm, slippery elm, winged elm, rock elm, September elm and cedar elm. Asiatic elms are much less susceptible to the disease.

Dutch elm disease has spread throughout the range of the native elms in the continental United States, so it can be found everywhere but the desert Southwest.

“American elm trees once dominated our urban landscapes as beautiful shade trees,” the Extension Service says online, but Dutch elm disease devastated them. “In fact, American elms are virtually absent in most communities today, with the exception of ‘lone survivors.’”

Dutch elm disease got its introduction into America near Cleveland in the 1930s, so it should be no surprise that Olmsted Falls was affected by 1954. The cause of the disease is fungus that grows inside the vascular tissue of the trees. The trees' natural defenses are poor matches for the disease. Then, after branches wilt, they become susceptible to beetles that lay eggs in them.

In the mid-1950s, communities like Olmsted Falls tried to combat the loss of their elms, but they had little success. Thus, many trees that were quite common a century and more ago cannot be found in those communities today.

Don't blame the Dutch for the disease, however. It got its name from Dutch women who did some of the early research into the disease.

Love of the Library Lasted Long

After all the comments in *Olmsted 200* Issue 128 from current and former Olmsted residents who expressed fondness for the former Olmsted Falls branch of the Cuyahoga County Public Library on Main Street, one more rolled in by email.



This was the former Olmsted Falls library just before the current library opened in 2013.

“Love it!” Susan (Fedirko) Manning, who grew up in Olmsted Falls but now lives in Georgia, wrote. “Spent enough years working at the library that I got half a year credit towards my years of public teaching. Used to decorate the display window when I was real young. Mrs. Lovell was my boss and I admired her Mercedes Benz. The Mercedes I currently own is as close to hers as I could get. It’s not black because, well, it’s hot enough in Savannah.”

Hers and the other readers’ responses about the former library resulted from the story in Issue 127 about the renovation of the building at 7928 Main Street by Josh Lorek and others to create a library-themed steakhouse, a project that began in 2017. If their plans proceed, the fans of the former library should soon be able to dine there while looking at photos reflecting its history.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include another story with stills from the 1936 movie of Olmsted Falls 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 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.

Olmsted 200 is copyright © 2024 by Jim Wallace. All rights reserved.

