



Olmsted 200

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

Issue 130

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Old Film Preserves Prominent People of Olmsted Falls

The 1936 film of Olmsted Falls that Jim Boddy has restored with a soundtrack of commentary from sisters Amelia and Clara Harding and music from that time provides a visual time capsule of the people and places of the community almost 88 years ago. One section of the film, which runs almost 27 minutes total, features mostly people caught briefly by the camera wielded by the unidentified photographer.

As recounted in Issue 128 of *Olmsted 200*, the first several minutes of the film show many Olmsted residents at the 15th annual Olmsted Falls Homecoming on the Village Green in August 1936. The next several minutes, as told in Issue 129, show



This was Helen Simmerer, a longtime teacher.

mainly businesses – including the United Farmers Exchange, the Olmsted Falls Lumber Company, Simmerer and Sons Hardware, Schritz Chrysler-Plymouth, three gas stations and two grocery stores – as well as several people associated with them.

After that, the next section, which runs for a bit more than five minutes, shows a few places but mostly specific people associated with those spots, and the Simmerer family is represented especially well.

The first person shown in that section is Helen (Guscott) Simmerer, who was the wife of Russell Simmerer, one of the three sons of Philip Simmerer who worked with him in the hardware store. She worked for many years as an elementary grade teacher in the Olmsted Falls schools. In fact, when Walter Holzworth published his 1966 book of Olmsted history, he mentioned that she was still teaching, and that was three decades after the 1936 film.



This is a young Bill Kucklick, years before he became a longtime business owner in Olmsted Falls.

The film shows her outside with several of her students. One of those students, according to Boddy, is Bill Kucklick. He went on to operate Kucklick's Village Square Shoppe, a

store that sold Early American-style furniture, for many years in the former Depositors Bank Building along the west side of Columbia Road just south of the railroad tracks.



These are a few of the other children in the scene with Helen Simmerer.

Eventually, he came to own all the buildings in that block after the Simmerers closed their hardware store in 1971. That was until he sold them to Clint Williams in late 1989 for what then became Grand Pacific Junction.

After Helen Simmerer and her students, the film shows a place called Tom's Garage and a man the Harding sisters identified as Tom Milholm. He and his business are not mentioned in Holzworth's book.

Orchard Street. Perhaps it was in the building now occupied by Second Thyme Around, an antique and collectibles shop. The film pans across the name of the business at the top of Tom's Garage and shows a sign indicating it sold genuine Ford parts, but there is no wide shot of the building that might help to make it more recognizable and to match it with a building that might still exist. But because it appears in the film just before scenes at Simmerer and Sons Hardware, that might indicate it was located nearby, such as on Orchard Street.

Boddy suggested that Tom's Garage might have been located along

In addition, that building at 8153 Orchard Street that is now home to Second Thyme Around would have been well suited to be an automobile garage. Earlier in its

history, it was a service center for Willys-Knight cars, which were partially made in Elyria. Willys-Knight did well in the 1920s but couldn't survive the Great Depression and went out of business in the early 1930s. Thus, the building on Orchard Street would have been a good location for Milholm when he wanted to set up his garage. (For more about the history of that building, see Issue 31 of *Olmsted 200* from December 2015.)



To the upper right is the shot from the 1936 film of the man identified by the Harding sisters as Tom Milholm (spelling assumed). Below left is part of the name, Tom's Garage, at the top of the building's front. Below right is the sign showing the shop used genuine Ford parts.



Following the stop at Tom's Garage, the film's attention turned to Simmerer and Sons' store, which was a hardware store and more. The first shot shows a sign with the store's name, as well as the Firestone name, which indicates the store sold Firestone tires. "Most miles per dollar" was the slogan at the bottom.

This Simmerer and Sons' store sign also promotes Firestone.



Oscar Simmerer posed for the film with a horse collar.

After that, each Simmerer gets a turn in the film. The first is Oscar, one of the sons of Philip and Margaret Simmerer. He's shown wearing a horse collar. He lived from 1892 to 1982 and would have been 44 years old at the time of the film.

Next is the father and cofounder of the store, Philip, seen sitting on a bicycle and in closeup. He lived from 1865 to 1964, so he was 71 when the film was shot.



The film caught Philip Simmerer in closeup (left) and sitting on a bicycle (right). Notice behind him in the store window is a stack of tires, probably the Firestone tires that were advertised on the store's sign.

The Simmerers' store was one of the longest-lasting businesses in Olmsted history, and the Simmerers remained at the center of community life for many years. Philip and Margaret Simmerer moved in the late 1880s to Olmsted Falls, where Philip went to work in the store of Joseph Peltz, who was married to Philip's older sister. Peltz's store sold drugs, hardware and other sundries. Simmerer went from being a clerk in the store to Peltz's partner. In August 1892, they acquired what had been a hotel and converted it to be their store, then called Peltz and Simmerer. They moved their goods into it in February 1893. That's where the store remained for almost eight decades.

Peltz left the partnership in 1912, when he moved down Columbia Street (now Columbia Road) to re-establish his drugstore. That lasted until 1920, when he and his second wife moved to California.

Simmerer kept the hardware store going under the P. Simmerer and Sons name with the help of three of his four sons. Only Carlton, the third of Philip and Margaret's sons, went his own way by working as an agent for a paint manufacturer.

In his book, Holzworth offered this explanation for why the business did so well for so long:

Philip Simmerer was honest, fair dealing and enterprising, and also a shrewd businessman. He allowed the village and township politicians and gossips to gather around his store. He stoked the fires but let the handling of hot potatoes and political issues to others. His contention was that the surest way to go out of business was to get into active partisan politics. However, he never allowed opportunities for business expansion to pass him by.

The Simmerers' store continued several years past Philip's death in 1964, but the sons finally closed it in September 1971, 78 and a half years after their father and Joseph Peltz opened it in the former hotel. After a period as an annex for Kucklick's Village Square Shoppe, the building became the centerpiece for Clint Williams's Grand Pacific Junction. Following his acquisition of it in late 1989, he restored the building to resemble the way it was as a hotel and restored its early name, the Grand Pacific Hotel, although it has served as a banquet hall since then, not a hotel.



Both Russell Simmerer (left) and Clarence Simmerer (right) had big smiles for the camera in the 1936 film.

Next in the film come the two other sons who joined Philip in the business – Clarence and Russell. Clarence lived from 1889 to 1982. He was almost 47 years old at the time of the film. Russell lived from 1905 to 1974. He was almost 31 years old in the film.

After showing the men of the Simmerer family, the 1936 film moved on to the family's matriarch, Margaret. She and Philip had lived in the house next to the store since it was built in 1894. It now is home to Treasure House of the Falls (formerly Timeless Treasures), an antiques and collectibles shop that is part of Grand Pacific Junction.

Margaret (Bauer) Simmerer was the daughter of a blacksmith, store owner and postmaster. According to Holzworth, her romance with Philip began at a dance hall in what then was Rockport Township:

Philip considered that his greatest triumph in life was the night he took the dare of his pal, Henry Rasp, to cut in on Margaret's dancing partner and escort in the old Rietz's Dance Hall in Rock Port. His victory



This was Margaret Simmerer's appearance in the 1936 film.

was perhaps the sweeter because her escort was the scion of one of Berea's wealthiest families. He danced with Margaret the rest of the evening and then escorted her home on foot, while the Berea lad left the hall alone in his rented livery rig. From that date on, their lives and interests became inseparable.

Margaret lived from 1869 to 1963, so she would have turned 67 in 1936, the year of the film. She died the year before Philip did, so he wasn't separated from her for long. Both were buried in the old Chestnut Grove Cemetery (also known as Turkeyfoot).

Wrapping up that section of the film was a shot of another woman from a prominent Olmsted Falls family. The Harding sisters identified her as Peggy Fenderbosch. She paused for a moment to smile at the camera before it moved on.



After that, the film went on to show the Olmsted Falls Fire Department responding to a fire. *Olmsted 200* will pick up there next month in this series about the 1936 film.

Special thanks go to Jim Boddy, not only for sharing the 1936 film but also for making an extra effort to identify several of the people in it. He worked with his sister, Judy, who conferred with a classmate from the Class of 1959 at Olmsted Falls High School – Marilyn, the daughter of Russell Simmerer – to make sure each Simmerer in the film was identified correctly.

Old Film Mysteries Get Solved

Many *Olmsted 200* readers wrote that they enjoyed seeing the pictures in Issue 129 of Olmsted Falls places and people from the 1936 film, and a few readers came forward with more information.

One of the first was Jamie Hecker who wrote about the photo at the top of page 5 of two men above the caption: *The Harding sisters indicated one of them was Charles Barnum*. Hecker wrote, “The picture with Charles Barnum. He is the man on the right. I remember him.”

Jim Boddy, who has added the soundtrack with the Harding sisters’ commentary to the old film, also confirmed that Barnum was the man on the right in that picture. “It’s so hard to tell with a fast moving movie and delayed response from the Hardings,” he wrote.



This was Charles Barnum.

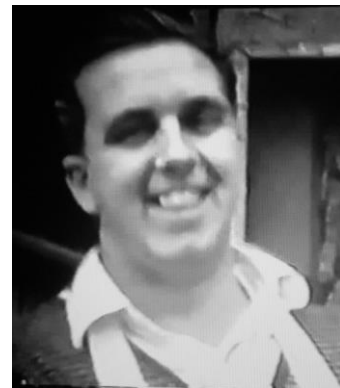


It wasn't shown in the film, but this is what Barnum's Super Market looked like.

Barnum was known as the “singing grocery man.” He opened his store on February 6, 1932, in the same location where Walter Locke had operated a grocery store until he retired in 1931 – the store where Barnum had worked as a young man. The store became the Barnum Super Market, which operated along Columbia Road just south of the railroad tracks until it burned down in the mid-1960s. According to Walter Holzworth’s 1966 history of Olmsted, Barnum was active in civic affairs and served at one time on the

school board. In 1950, he was president of the Cleveland Retail Grocers Association and vice president of the Lake Erie Grocers Association Warehouse Company.

In addition, Boddy wrote that, even though one of the Hardings identified the man in a picture at the top of page seven of Issue 129 as Henry Fenderbosch, it really was one of his sons. Boddy said he knew it was either Robert or Richard Fenderbosch, so he checked with the son of one of them. “Dave says it’s his dad Bob,” Boddy wrote.



This was Robert, not Henry, Fenderbosch.

Meanwhile, another issue arose. It came from Ross Bassett, the *Olmsted 200* reader whose memory of seeing the

old film shown at an Olmsted school by former Mayor Bill Mahoney a few decades ago prompted the search for the film and then Boddy's work on it.

"After reading and seeing so much about this film, I am starting to wonder if it was the same film that Mayor Mahoney showed at the high school so many years ago," Bassett wrote in an email. It was so long ago, he said, that he could remember only two scenes for certain – one he thought might have been taken from atop the old school that now serves as Olmsted Falls City Hall and another of Front Street near the Berea Triangle.

"As an active member of the Berea Historical Society at the time, that scene really stayed with me," Bassett wrote.

Having not seen anything like those scenes yet in the pictures previewed in *Olmsted 200*, he wondered if the 1936 film was the same one he had seen.



Ken Knuth had the 1936 film transferred to this videotape by Grant Geist in Brunswick.

"So while I certainly can be mistaken, as it was some 25 or 30 years ago, if the scenes I mentioned above are not in the movie, I would make a strong argument that there is a second film that still needs to be located," Bassett said. He also suggested perhaps some scenes from the 1936 film are missing from the preserved version.

After that, Boddy conferred with Ken Knuth, who was his original source for the film. In an email to *Olmsted 200*, Knuth said he recalled that Mahoney showed the 1936 film and a film he had made of Olmsted Falls in the 1970s back-to-back during a pancake breakfast put on by the Kiwanis Club at the high school. Here is more of what he shared:

The films were shown in the auditorium and anyone that wanted to could sit down and watch them after breakfast. They ran continuously while breakfast was being served. At the time I believe that the 1936 film was still in the possession of Dave Fenderbosch.

Dave then donated the film to the Olmsted Falls Library and at the request of my mom along with input from Gerry Geist, I checked the 1936 film out from the library and gave it to Gerry's son Grant who at the time had a company called Berkshire Videography, INC. in Brunswick.

Grant transferred the movie to video tape in both the Beta and VHS formats for me. The Beta tape sadly no longer exists but I still have the original VHS tape, Over the years I transferred the tape to DVD and of

course now to a digital format to preserve it for all time. To the best of my knowledge there are no missing scenes from these copies.

Boddy said that, when he learned about the 1970s movie Mahoney had made, he called Mahoney to get a copy of it. Unfortunately, that was just before Mahoney died in 1991, but a few months later, he contacted Mahoney's widow, Mary Francis, who lent him the film, so he could copy it on VHS tape.

That 1970s Mahoney film starts with a jet flying over the city followed by a brief aerial shot of Olmsted Falls. Boddy suggested that might have been what Bassett remembered instead of what he thought was a view of the community from atop the old school. Bassett said that might be an explanation for what he saw many years ago, but he won't know until he gets a fresh chance to see the 1936 film (and perhaps the 1970s film).



It's hard to recognize any specific spots, but this aerial shot was part of Dr. Bill Mahoney's 1970s film of Olmsted Falls.

Boddy still hopes to schedule a public showing of the 1936 film later this year. In the meantime, if anyone knows of any other old film that might have had the scenes Bassett remembered, please let *Olmsted 200* know.

Bad Guys Created a Hot Time on a Cold Night

Olmsted Falls was a quiet little village throughout much of its history, but it wasn't so quiet one night 130 years ago this month.

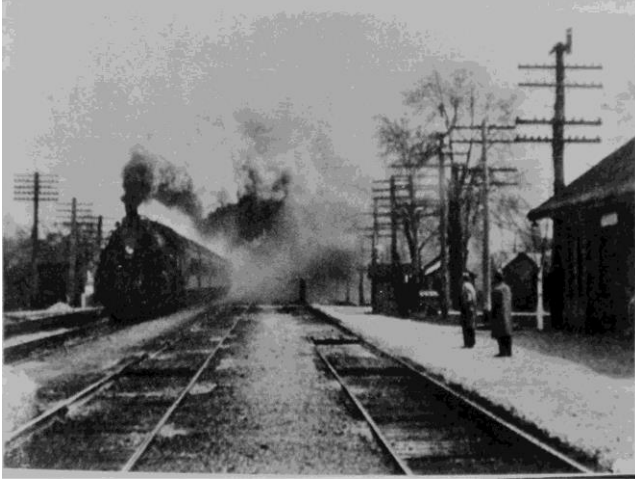
"Burglars entered the depot last night at midnight, bound and gagged the operator and attempted to blow the safe," the *Berea Advertiser* reported in its Olmsted Falls column on March 30, 1894. "They got nothing from the safe, but got the operator's gold watch and \$3 in money."

And that was just the beginning.

"George Bowman, living opposite the depot, heard them and fired at them," the newspaper reported. Further, it said:

The firing made the visitors seek seclusion and in a short space of time nearly the whole male population of the village was on the trail with Town Marshal Romp at their head as commander-in-chief. The tracks of six men in the snow were found along the railroad near the depot and the pursuers kept on this. They were overtaken in Rockport and the whole six

were arrested and taken to Cleveland on a freight car. The Cleveland papers say the captors of the gang of six attracted much attention on the streets with the dangerous looking shotguns over their shoulders and the military precision with which they marched. Several of them wore army

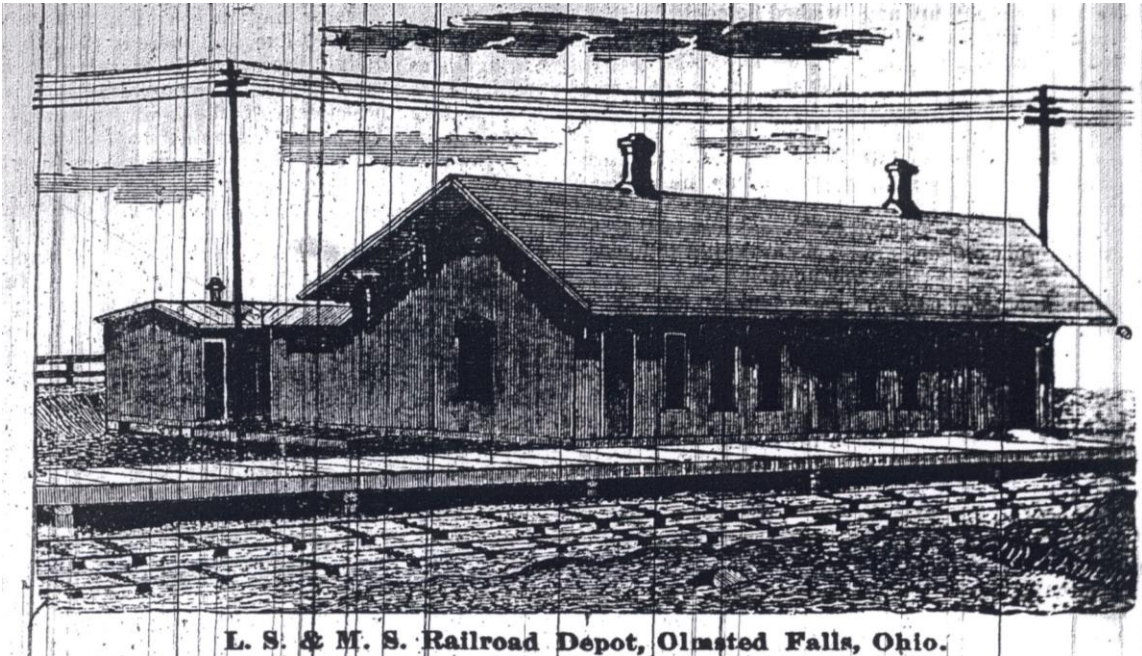


Trains like this once ran past the Olmsted Falls depot in the late 19th century and early 20th century.

overcoats with brass buttons and capes which added to their warlike appearance. In the party were Township Treasurer T.C. Stokes, Marshal Romp, W.J. Spafford and James Short. They were heroes at the Lake Shore office.

The Rockport that the newspaper referred to was Rockport Township, which later evolved into Rocky River, Lakewood, Fairview Park and part of the western end of Cleveland. The “Lake Shore” reference was to the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway, which

was the railroad that ran east-west through Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township where Norfolk Southern now runs. At the time of the robbery, the depot was still located farther west near what then was Division Street and now is Mapleway Drive. It was moved closer to the center of town early in the 20th century.



L. S. & M. S. Railroad Depot, Olmsted Falls, Ohio.

This is the artist's depiction of what the depot would look like in 1876, the year it was built. It appeared in the August 10, 1876, edition of the Berea Advertiser.

The full story of what happened to the six men who broke into the depot that March night in 1894 can be found in Issue 90 of *Olmsted 200* from November 2020, but in short, they were tried for the crime, convicted and sentenced to the state penitentiary within a month. In late June, almost three months after the break-in, an Olmsted man found a dynamite bomb on the bank of Plum Creek. It was believed to have been left by the depot robbers.

For a story about the history of the depot, see Issue 2 of *Olmsted 200* from July 2013.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include the next story in the series about the 1936 film with a sequence of shots showing how the Olmsted Falls Fire Department fought fires back then, as well as a story about how the women of Olmsted Falls fought against the community's saloons 150 years ago.

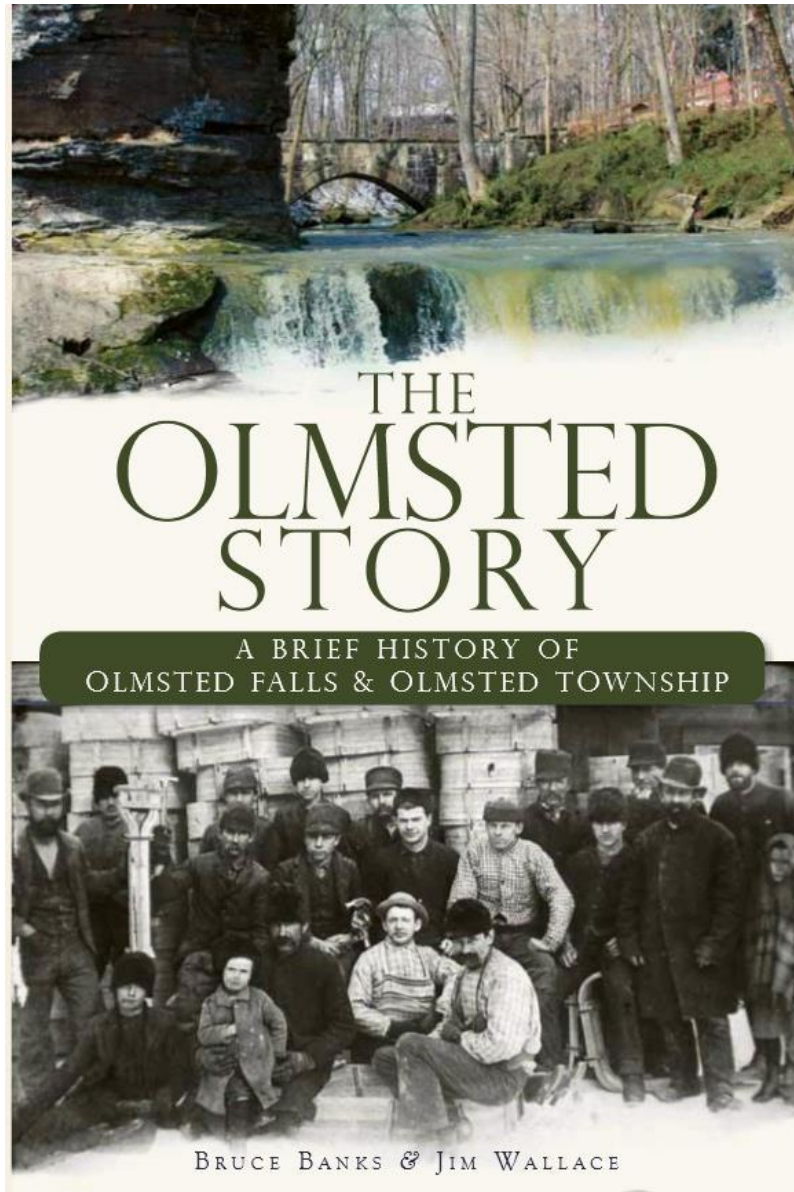
If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: wallacestar@hotmail.com. *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including Arizona, California, Colorado,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