



Olmsted 200

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

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Film Shows How Olmsted Fought Fires Almost 90 Years Ago

As shown in the past few issues of *Olmsted 200*, the recently resurrected 1936 film of Olmsted Falls captured many people and places around the community at that time. Although some people posed for the filmmaker, he seemed to catch most of them as they were going through their daily activities. But one section near the middle of the film was clearly staged because it would have required more cameramen in different locations to have caught all the action as it happened.

That section starts with a title card with white letters on a black background – “Your fire department goes to a fire” – and then it shows how the Olmsted Falls Fire Department would have responded to a fire in 1936.

The first action comes as Clarence Simmerer, who then was fire chief, runs out of the P. Simmerer and Sons store and dashes down Mill Street. Other men then run out of other buildings.



At the beginning of the firefighting section, the film shows Clarence Simmerer, the fire chief, running out of the family's hardware store before heading down Mill Street.



This is another man shown in the film running to the community's fire engine.

been moved to Mill Street. Thus, Simmerer didn't have to run too far to get to it when he was called out to fight a fire. However, it wasn't quite in the spot where it is today. Instead, it was where the former B&O Railroad depot now stands. When Clint Williams renovated the jail and other nearby buildings in the 1990s to create Grand Pacific Junction, he moved the jail to its current location. He also lengthened the building by six feet in the rear to make room for a restroom. (For more on the history of the old jail, see Issue 29 of *Olmsted 200* from October 2015.)

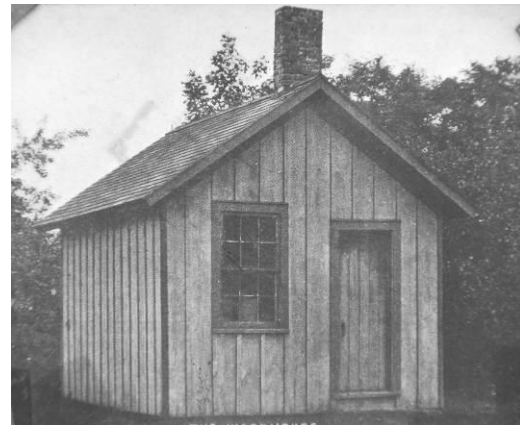
In the film, the firefighters roll aside a door on the building to reveal the fire engine. About that, in his 1966 Olmsted history book, Walter Holzworth wrote: "In 1928 a six cylinder Whippet equipped with a motor driven pump and tank became the pride of the fire department. Attire such as rubber hats and coats were provided and the members made badges by hand to distinguish them as bonafide firemen."

The number on Chief Simmerer's badge was 3, which Holzworth thought was odd because, as the leader of the squad, he presumably could have had number 1. However, as the film makes clear, Simmerer was distinguished by having a white (or some other light color) coat and hat, while the others wore dark ones.

The Whippet was a product of Willys-Overland, a company that did some of its production in Ohio, including a facility in Elyria. The company introduced the Whippet, named for a breed of racing dogs, in 1926. The vehicle was known for looking good, being speedy and having a low price – well below \$1,000. Because of the popularity of

Soon they converge on a small building where the village's lone fire engine was stored. That building was the former jail the community erected in 1878 with two small cells, iron bars in the window and a thick wooden door. A prisoner had to use a wooden plank as a bunk. The jail, which was 12 feet by 14 feet, once stood about where the parking lot between the Olmsted Community Church and the Moosehead restaurant is now.

By the time the village repurposed the former jail as a garage for its fire engine, the building had



This is how the old jail looked before it became a garage for the village's fire engine and eventually a Grand Pacific Junction shop.

the Whippet, Willys-Overland sold 315,000 vehicles in 1928 – the year the Olmsted Falls fire engine was built – putting it in third place for American sales behind only Chevrolet and Ford. However, the company barely survived the Great Depression and then got through World War II by building Jeeps for the military. But the company's days ended in 1953 when Kaiser Motors bought it out.



This series of shots from the film shows the fire engine being revealed as the door to the former jail is rolled aside (upper left), the fire engine leaving its garage with several men aboard (upper right), the fire engine with the firefighters heading down Mill Street (lower left) and then the firefighters' arrival at the corner of Columbia Road and Main Street (lower right).

The film shows the fire engine, with several men on board, heading west on Mill Street. It must have gone around the block because it is next shown arriving at the intersection of Columbia Road and Main Street.

The men then haul out the firehoses across the lawn at the blacksmith's shop of August von Brouse, who had made an earlier appearance in the film. He lived and worked on the property now occupied by the Olde Wine Cellar at 7932 Main Street. He points the way for Simmerer and others into his shop to the supposed fire they were there

to fight. (For more on von Brause and other Olmsted blacksmiths, see Issue 66 of *Olmsted 200* from November 2018.)

Two men carry an extension ladder to the front of the building and lean the ladder against it. Two firefighters climb the ladder to the roof, going past election signs – one for someone named Busher, who was running for re-election as county clerk, and another named Ewing.

Next, the film shows firefighters aiming their hoses into the air. The streams of water were not directed toward von Brouse’s building, but of course, it was just a bit of moviemaking.



In these shots, firefighters pull hoses across the lawn (upper left), August von Brause directs Chief Clarence Simmerer and others into his blacksmith’s shop (upper right), firefighters carry a ladder (lower left), and they erect the ladder in front of the building (lower right).

Finally, the firefighters pose standing together in a field – at least a dozen of them. Such was the line of defense against fires in Olmsted Falls almost 88 years ago.

More about the history of the Olmsted Falls Fire Department can be found in Issue 56 of *Olmsted 200* from January 2018 and Issue 57 from February 2018. Two stories about the history of the Olmsted Township Fire Department can be found in Issue 58 from March 2018.



This series of shots from the film shows firefighters climbing the ladder to the roof of the building (upper left), firefighters shooting their hoses into the air (upper right), the streams of water flowing through the air (lower left), and the fire squad posing as a group (lower right).

Olmsted Had Three Parties in an Election 150 Years Ago

In this election year of 2024, when many Americans have misgivings about the Democratic and Republic candidates for president, there has been much talk about whether voters should consider a third-party candidate. That would be nothing new for Olmsted voters – at least on the local level. It happened 150 years ago this month.

The Olmsted column in the April 10, 1874, edition of the local newspaper, Berea's *Grindstone City Advertiser*, reported that the just-concluded local election was “a lively time” that included candidates from the Democratic Party, the Republican Party and the Olmsted Township Party.

“It was certainly amusing to a by-stander to see these three parties laboring for their candidates,” the newspaper reported.

Candidates ran for positions as officials of Olmsted Township, the Village of Olmsted Falls, and the school boards for both the township and the village, which had separate school systems back then. The polling place for all of them was the Town Hall, “giving a chance for a goodly number to vote four times, providing they were sharp

enough to find their way to the ballot box through the cloud of tickets that was thrust into their faces,” the newspaper reported.

At that time, the “Town Hall” was the basement of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the building now known as the Grand Pacific Wedding Chapel. In his 1879 book, *History of Cuyahoga County, Ohio*, Crisfield Johnson wrote that the township had purchased the church basement in 1856 “for a town house, at a cost of two hundred and fifty dollars.” The township and the village continued to work out of the church basement until the township built a new Town Hall across the street (where the Moosehead restaurant now is located) in 1882-1883.



During a few decades in the 19th century, the basement of the Methodist Episcopal Church provided office space for officials of both Olmsted Township and the Village of Olmsted Falls. This is how it looks in the 21st century as part of the Grand Pacific Wedding Chapel.

Not only did Olmsted voters in 1874 have the choice of candidates from three political parties, but there also was a separate political movement in Olmsted Falls led by citizens who couldn't vote – the women. Here is how the newspaper put it (with odd use of capitalization and punctuation):

A village Caucus was held and a ticket nominated, but it did not suit the ladies, and they got up another ticket and got their friends to labor for the election of their candidates, and came very near accomplishing their purpose, the winning candidate for Mayor only having one majority, and they succeeded in electing one councilman.

Some very estimable gentleman, put a ticket in the box composed of the names of a part of the prominent ladies of the village, but did a good thing, for it has made some converts to the Temperance cause, and all that the ladies feel bad about, is, that there was not enough votes of that kind.

To understand those paragraphs, it's important to realize that one of the most divisive issues in Olmsted Falls back then was the operation of saloons, which were blamed for bad behavior of all sorts among some men of the community. Many women were active in the temperance movement in the hope they might be able to get the saloons closed, but that didn't happen until decades later. The account from the *Advertiser* indicates that, although the women couldn't vote, they apparently persuaded enough men to vote for the candidates they preferred that one of them got elected to the village council and their candidate for mayor came in one vote behind the winner, quarry

operator Luther Barnum. If women had been allowed to vote in the 19th century, local government might have been much different.

Another item in the Olmsted column in that edition of the *Advertiser* is related to that: “THERE is a petition being circulated here to be presented to the council of this village praying them to pass the McConnellsville Ordinance.”

To a 21st century reader, that’s an obscure reference, but apparently it required no explanation in 1874. It refers to a law passed in the southeastern Ohio village of McConnellsville (as the community’s name is spelled correctly).



The Fenderbosch family’s saloon (where Grand Pacific Junction’s Millstone Mercantile now operates) was one of the targets of temperance supporters in the late 19th century. It is seen here in a photo taken before a pool hall was added to the building.

When *Olmsted 200* ran a series of stories about Olmsted’s history of saloons in 2014 in Issues 9 through 11 and 13 through 15, research failed to turn up what the McConnellsville Ordinance was, except that the references to it in the *Advertiser* indicated it was anti-saloon. However, new research recently uncovered an explanation of it in an 1886 book, *History of Morgan County, Ohio*, by Charles Robertson, M.D. Here is what it says in a section about McConnellsville, which is the county seat:

An interesting item connected with the temperance history of the town is furnished in the celebrated “McConnellsville Ordinance.” This ordinance became quite noted; was adopted in many cities and villages in Ohio and elsewhere; went to the Supreme Court in the case of Burckholter vs. The State, and was declared constitutional. Some of its features were afterward incorporated in in the Scott law.

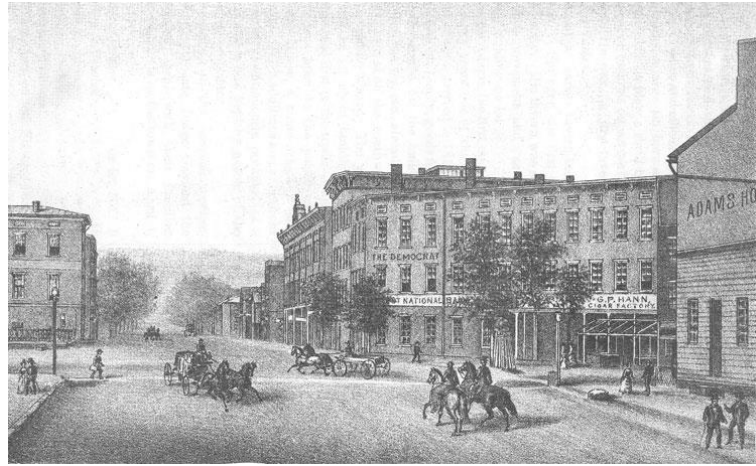
The first ordinance for the purpose of restraining the liquor traffic was passed while Hon. F.W. Wood was mayor, in April, 1869. This proved unsatisfactory, and September 10, 1869, a committee consisting of Mayor Watkins, Recorder Murry and Councilman Stanbery was appointed to draft a new ordinance. This was done, and the ordinance, as introduced, was passed the same evening, all the council – Messrs. Baine, Hammond, Wheeler, Stanbery, Doudna and Murry voting in favor.

July 15, 1871, the ordinance was repealed. March 14, 1874, under Mayor Hanna it was reenacted by vote of Councilmen Dawson, Mortley, McMurray, Porter and Stanbery. The ordinance continued in force until a

change in the statutes of Ohio took away from incorporated villages the power of prohibiting ale, beer and porter houses.

Its main feature was the power given to such corporations to “restrain and prohibit” such places.

That doesn't explicitly spell out what McConnelsville's ordinance did, but it certainly indicates it was an early attempt by a municipality to keep saloons from operating within its territory. Although temperance advocates attempted for many years beginning in the 1870s to get such an ordinance enacted in Olmsted Falls, the village did not go dry until 1908. It remained that way for several decades until dry Olmsted Falls merged with wet West View in 1971, although one provision of the merger was that the pre-merger Olmsted Falls section would remain dry initially, while the pre-merger West View portion would be allowed to continue to have bars. Eventually, the combined community adopted common laws and regulations about selling and serving alcoholic beverages for the entire municipality, which became a city in 1972.



This sketch from History of Morgan County, Ohio, shows McConnelsville in 1886, more than a decade after the village influenced Olmsted Falls and many other villages and cities in Ohio and other states with its ordinance against saloons that temperance workers sought to duplicate.



This is what the Fenderbosch Saloon looked like after the section for the pool hall was added to it.

Olmsted Had Trailer Troubles 70 Years Ago

Like many communities, Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township experienced growing pains in the years after World War II. One issue was a shortage of housing for many veterans and their young families. Some of them turned to the option of mobile homes as a quick and affordable solution, but not all their neighbors approved.

There were disputes over taxation, zoning issues and the effects on schools. An early example of that appeared 70 years ago this month in the local newspaper, the *Berea Enterprise*. Under the headline, “Trailers Are Protested By Olmsted,” this story appeared in the April 9, 1954, edition:

Separate complaints against the valuation of the Olmsted Trailer Park on Bagley Road were made to the board of tax revision last Friday by the Olmsted Citizens’ League, the board of education and the township board of trustees.

Complaints were against the assessed valuation of \$5,030. At an estimate of cost of \$1,000 per trailer, a commonly accepted figure, the park’s nearly 130 trailers should call for an assessment of at least \$50,000, the complainants say.

Fifty-nine scholars from the park attend the village public schools.

In March, 1953, the school board complained of the park’s \$1,530, which was increased to \$5,030. Many homes in that section are, of course, assessed for that and more.

Commissioner Speeth has promised an early hearing.

The Olmsted Trailer Park that story referred to later became known as the Olmsted Falls Mobile Home Park.



Better known as founder of the firm making Vitamix blenders and his pioneering television infomercials, William Barnard also became an opponent to zoning in Olmsted Township shortly after he moved to the community in 1948.

The dispute over its taxation wasn’t Olmsted’s first controversy over mobile homes. As Olmsted Township worked on its first set of zoning codes in 1948, many people became alarmed when Gerald Brookins set out to build what he called “a modern trailer park which would be an asset to any neighborhood and a contribution to orderly, healthful and efficient living.” His target was 52 acres of farmland west of Columbia Road, south of John Road and north of Cook Road. That was in Olmsted Township but just north of the border with Olmsted Falls.

However, not everyone shared his vision. On July 12, 1948, the village and the township held a rare joint meeting that attracted about 150 people. Many of them feared new residents of the trailer park would put a strain on the school system, which

already was straining from post-war growth that eventually would lead to construction of several new schools.

The township hurried to create a zoning ordinance, even though it was too late to keep Brookins out, and many township residents didn't like the idea of zoning. One of them was William Barnard, who founded the company that makes Vitamix blenders. The company was still operating under the name Natural Foods, Inc., when it moved to Usher Road in the township in 1948. In a letter to voters that year, Barnard wrote, "Someone is using police state tactics in a township, where freedom abounds."

Voters rejected the proposed zoning ordinance in November 1948, but four years later in July 1952, they voted 407 to 160 to approve a zoning ordinance.

By then, construction of Brookins's project, which came to be called Columbia Park, was well under way, but divisions over the presence of trailers – or mobile homes – in the community did not die out. Notably, the 1957 election for two of the three township trustees played out as a battle of "trailerites" versus "permanent residents." Some longtime township residents feared that several hundred Columbia Park voters would have too much influence in a township with just about 1,800 voters at the time.

From the mid-1950s until 2002, Columbia Park was also a home to more than two dozen streetcars that Brookins collected and operated on tracks that ran through the park. It was known as Trolleyville, U.S.A.



As shown on this postcard, the Trolleyville, U.S.A., streetcars passed through Columbia Park among its mobile homes for almost five decades.

For more on Columbia Park and Olmsted's disputes over mobile homes, see Issue 62 of *Olmsted 200* from July 2018. For more on Trolleyville, U.S.A., see Issue 36 from May 2016.

Memorable Moments in Olmsted History Could Be Near

History is made up of a long series of memorable moments. The significance of certain occasions is not always readily apparent, but at other times, there is no question that what has happened will long be remembered. The recent Division I state championship for the Olmsted Falls High School girls' basketball team is one of those occasions. So were the 2000 state title for the OFHS football team and the gold medal



One effect a solar eclipse can have before and after totality is to send crescents of sunlight shining through the leaves of trees. This is what it looked like on a sidewalk in Madisonville, Tennessee, before the eclipse on August 21, 2017, reached its total phase.

across a significant portion of the United States occurred on August 21, 2017. Back then, the moon was a bit farther from Earth than it will be this year on April 8, so the 2017 eclipse had a slimmer path of totality than this year's eclipse, and the eclipse was shorter. In 2017, the path ranged from 62 miles to 71 miles wide, but the 2024 path will range from 108 miles to 122 miles wide, according to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Fortunately, Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township will be close to the center of that path.

Another difference is that the 2017 eclipse moved across the country from Oregon to South Carolina. The 2024 eclipse will move across Mexico before it enters the United States in Texas and heads northeast until it crosses from Maine into Canada.

Outside of the path of totality, viewers using solar-safe glasses will be able to see varying parts of the sun's disc blocked by the moon's disc – ranging from a crescent of the sun peeking through to just a small bite taken out of its disc. However, the difference between having 99.9 percent of the sun's disc blocked by the moon and having 100 percent blocked is amazing. With the total disc blocked, the sun's corona stands out all around the moon, and the sky gets dark, while planets and stars near the sun suddenly pop out.

that OFHS graduate Katie Nageotte (now Katie Moon) earned in pole vaulting in the 2020 Olympics (which occurred in 2021 after a delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic).

Another occasion that could go down as a memorable event in Olmsted history is the upcoming total eclipse of the sun, scheduled for the afternoon of Monday, April 8. Never in recorded history has Olmsted been right in the path of totality for a solar eclipse. If it had happened sometime in the past two centuries, the accounts of the eclipse in old newspapers might have made interesting reading.

The last total solar eclipse to move



This is what the 2017 total eclipse looked like in Madisonville, Tennessee. The sun's corona around the moon's disc might be more active in this year's eclipse because the sunspot cycle is close to its maximum level.



This portion of a NASA map shows how the April 8 eclipse will pass through a wide swath of Ohio, including Cuyahoga County.

A total solar eclipse is possible only because the sun is about 400 times larger than the moon, but it also is about 400 times farther away from Earth than the moon. That makes them almost the same size as seen by viewers on the ground. Occasionally, the moon is farther away in its orbit around Earth during an eclipse, so its disc doesn't completely cover the disc of the sun, allowing a ring of sunlight to get through. That's known as an annular eclipse. It's interesting but much less spectacular than a total eclipse. An annular eclipse crossed part of the western United States last October 14. Fortunately, that's not what will happen on April 8.

Yet another difference between the 2017 eclipse and the 2024 eclipse is that the earlier one occurred when the sun was near the minimum level of activity in its 11-year sunspot cycle, while this year's eclipse will occur near the maximum level of activity. That means viewers are more likely to see streamers and flares in the corona on April 8.

Observers should make sure they use approved eclipse-watching glasses. Although the few minutes of totality can be viewed with the naked eye, looking at the sun any time before and after it is totally eclipsed can be dangerous and cause permanent vision loss.

NASA says an observer in Olmsted Falls should see totality begin at 3:13:20 p.m. and last three minutes and 50 seconds until 3:17:10 p.m. It will be brief, but it should be memorable – if the early April weather in northeastern Ohio cooperates. But even if the sky is cloudy that day, it should be interesting to see darkness fall for a few minutes in the middle of the afternoon.



This is the full eclipse map from NASA. It shows how the April 8 eclipse will move from southwest to northeast through Mexico, the United States and then Canada.



Interest in the April 8 solar eclipse has been growing in northeastern Ohio for many months. This shirt commemorating it was on sale as early as late summer 2023 in the Rift Shop at Mill River Plaza in Olmsted Falls. It is produced by a company called JakeWear.

Still to Come

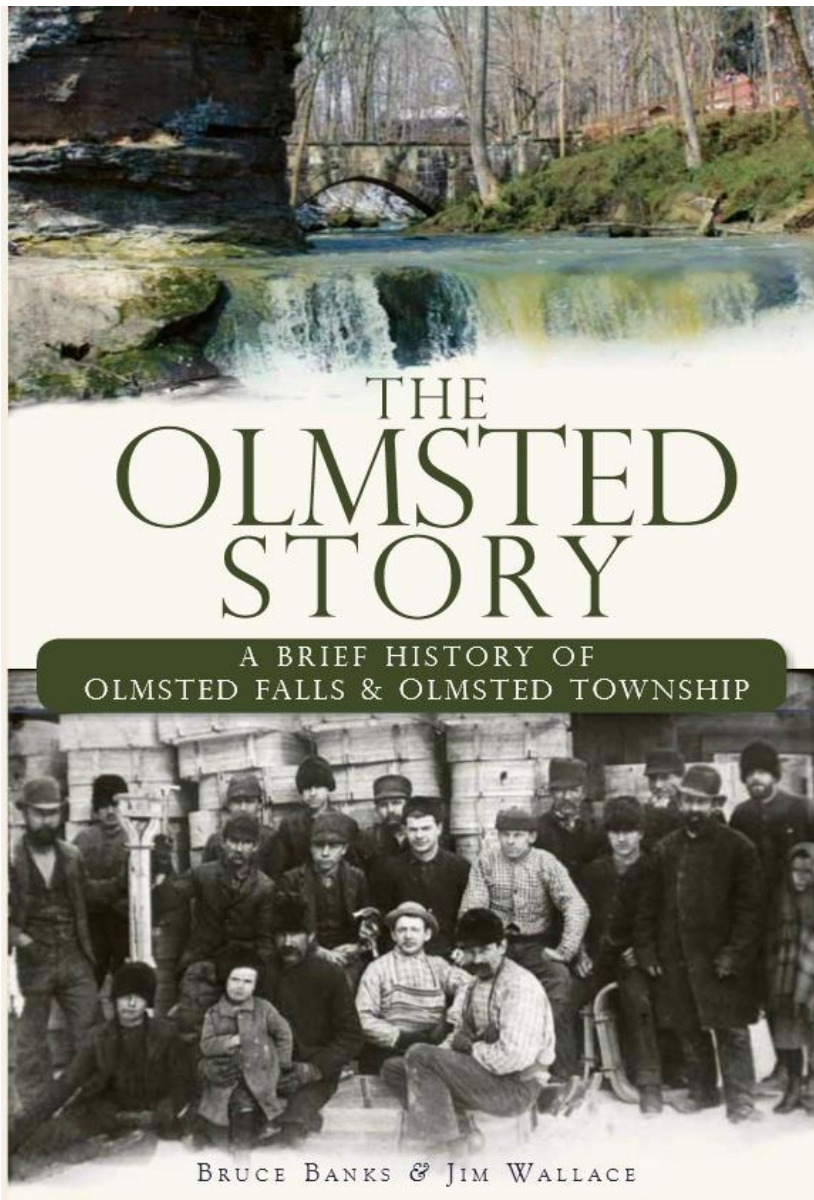
The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include another story about the 1936 film of Olmsted Falls, an insider's view of how Olmsted Falls and West View merged, and a story about a Dutch-themed operetta staged 100 years ago by students of Olmsted Falls High School.

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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