



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 Features Olmsted's Young Scholars of Long Ago

The filmmaker who created the 1936 film of Olmsted Falls caught many community residents during their daily activities. When he reached the second section he labeled "Here and there about the village," his focus turned to people and activities at what then was the community's lone school, the building that now serves as Olmsted Falls City Hall at the corner of Bagley Road and Mapleway Drive.



These are a few of the elementary students caught by the film in their classroom.

Consequently, most of those featured were students doing what students typically do – attending classes and playing. With a few exceptions, their identities generally have been lost to the memories of individuals who have long since passed away. When Jim Boddy recorded sisters Amelia and Clara Harding as they viewed the film in 1991, they had trouble attaching names to most of those students but were better with adults.



They were growing up in the middle of the Great Depression, but the smiles on the faces of these children above and below indicate they were happy no matter what hardships they faced – at least when a movie camera was aimed at them.



To view them today is to invite the mind to wonder whatever became of those kids who were so young and full of life almost 88 years ago. Some of them likely became Olmsted's community leaders in the decades ahead, while others moved away to make their marks on other communities. No doubt some of them served in World War II or the Cold War that followed. Whether they gave their lives for the cause or survived, their service surely shaped them for the rest of their years, as did their school days.

If any of them still survive, they must at least be in their late 90s. But the film preserves them when they still had the innocence of youth and still likely were full of hope for the future.



Here are a few more of the children in their classroom.

Before the filmmaker left the classroom, he caught a few fleeting seconds of the teacher. One of the Harding sisters identified her as Doris Goodnight.

“Mrs. Doris Goodnight’s career as a teacher and principal in Olmsted Falls Schools was outstanding,” Walter Holzworth wrote in his 1966 book of Olmsted history. “Her name became a very familiar one in the homes of this area, when children of some of her first pupils expressed their favorable opinion of their teacher, Mrs. Goodnight.”

Goodnight began teaching in 1915 in Cleveland but gave it up for several years after she married Harry Lynn Goodnight on September 1, 1920. He was a civil engineer for the New York Central Railroad and a recent Ohio State University graduate. In 1922, they had a daughter, Jean, while they still lived in Cleveland.

Holzworth credited the railroad’s “excellent commuters service to Olmsted Falls” for the Goodnights’ decision to move to the community in January 1927. Their son, David, was born shortly after that in April 1927.

“They had built their home on a part of the Art Atkinson farm on Columbia Road, and she looked forward to a career as a home maker,” Holzworth wrote.

However, her plans changed in 1933 when her husband was stricken with a fatal case of appendicitis. With two young children to support, she decided to return to teaching. She rented out her Olmsted Falls home and then went to live with her mother in Columbus while attending Capital University to advance her education.

In August 1934, Goodnight returned to the Olmsted Falls area to teach students in third grade. Initially, she and her son lived in West View, while her daughter remained in Columbus to attend junior high school. Each weekend, Goodnight drove to Linndale to catch a train (presumably with her son) to visit Jean. Holzworth wrote that she talked about returning at the end of each weekend that winter to face an ice-cold apartment and having to light a potbellied stove that burned coal and wood. He wrote that that revealed her determination to overcome difficulties.



The filmmaker caught just fleeting seconds of teacher Doris Goodnight as she passed by a classroom window.

In 1935, the Goodnights moved to an apartment on Cook Road. In 1936, they moved back into the home they owned on Columbia Road, and Doris Goodnight's mother moved there to live with them.

After World War II, Goodnight increased her education by attending classes at Western Reserve University. She would teach all day in Olmsted Falls and then head to the east side of Cleveland for four hours of classes in the evening. That work paid off with a Bachelor of Science degree in education that she received in 1947.

That education apparently helped Goodnight advance in her career. In 1950, she became a part-time principal. In 1951, she moved up to full-time principal. When the school district opened its first new school in almost four decades in September 1954 – Falls Elementary School – Goodnight became its first principal. Later, she served as principal of Lenox Elementary School and Fitch Elementary School. Holzworth wrote that, at one time, she was responsible for overseeing about 1,000 students and 33 teachers.

In 1950, Goodnight's daughter, Jean, became a flight attendant for United Airlines. That gave her the opportunity to provide her mother with what Holzworth described as a highlight of her Doris Goodnight's life – an all-expenses-paid, two-week vacation for the two of them in Honolulu.



On the left, children ride on a merry-go-round on the west side of the school. On the right is a boy whose last name might have been Walkden but his first name is unknown.

After he left the classroom, the filmmaker caught many students on the playground. According to Jim Boddy, that playground was on the west side of the school. One piece of playground equipment that shows up a few times is a merry-go-round on which children would ride after running while pushing it to make it revolve.



Above are some of the students on the playground. Most of their identities are unknown, but the Harding sisters indicated the boy in the striped shirt in the last photo was Ronald Krosen. The merry-go-round can be seen in the background of two of the photos. Below are more unidentified students.





Most of the students in the top four photos are unidentified. The exceptions are the two girls in the center left photo. The one saluting on the left is Carol Hecker Miska, according to her grandson, Kevin Radigan, and the one in the center is Greta Gossett. (Thanks go to Jim Boddy for contacting Radigan to get help with identification.) The lower left photo shows two women, perhaps teachers, as they leave the school. The lower right photo is a closer shot of one of them with an automobile in the background.

After many shots of children at play, the film shows a few adults just outside the school. The Harding sisters did not identify all of them, but they recognized some of them, including Superintendent Wilbur W. Smith. According to Holzworth, Smith became superintendent in 1928 and served 19 years in the position.



Wilbur Smith was halfway through his 19 years as superintendent when the film caught a glimpse of him in 1936.

“During those years aside from his role as school administrator, W.W. Smith and his wife, Anne, became a part of the social, civic and religious life of Olmsted,” he wrote. “The community shared in part their grief when their only daughter, Emily Jane, died at the age of 12. Later their only son, Howard, an Olmsted High graduate, was one of the 17 young men who gave their lives in World War II.”

While Smith was superintendent, the high school gained membership in the North Central Association of Colleges and

Secondary Schools in 1935. That allowed graduates to enter accredited colleges without taking entrance exams. At that time, Ohio had 1,442 high schools, and Olmsted Falls High School was one of only 329 that had achieved the association’s first-class accreditation.

Smith left the job as Olmsted’s superintendent in 1947 to become a teacher in the Strongsville school system.

The next story about the 1936 film in Issue 134 of *Olmsted 200* will show the school’s principal, students on buses and the bus drivers. Those who want to see the film can do so when Jim Boddy shows it at the Olmsted Falls Branch of the Cuyahoga County Public Library on Sunday, June 2, at 2:00 p.m. and Monday, June 3, at 6:30 p.m.

Old Papers Tell of Baseball, Peltz and Simmerer

In the 21st century, it’s not unusual to on a nice spring or summer day to see young people, as well as some older ones, engaged in games of baseball or softball on the athletic fields around Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township, although these days they might just as likely be involved in soccer or some other sport. It appears baseball became especially popular in Olmsted late in the 19th century. Several items in the Olmsted Falls column of the *Berea Advertiser* 130 years ago this month seem to confirm that.

For example, the June 8, 1894,



This photo of Olmsted’s baseball team is dated 1910.

edition included this item: “Batting and catching ball is not indulged in as much as heretofore on our principal business street since Saturday evening. Well, the ball shot through a plate glass window [at the] residence of J.P. Peltz. Parties drove to Cleveland Monday and procured glass; possible expense of window, \$10.”



The date of this baseball team photo is unknown.

Joseph Peltz’s residence is the house now occupied by Mary’s Hair Salon, 8086 Columbia Road, in Grand Pacific Junction. At the time, Peltz ran the nearby hardware store (now the Grand Pacific Hotel) with a partner, his brother-in-law, Philip Simmerer.

One week later, the June 15, 1894, edition of the *Advertiser* included this item: “Olmsted Falls nine played a mixed nine of Columbians and Bereans on Sunday afternoon; result – Olmsted Falls 12, only 3 for the mixed nine.”

The Olmsted Falls column in the June 22, 1894, *Advertiser*, included three items about the local love of baseball:

- “Many of our base ball admirers attended the game in Cleveland between the Clevelands and the Chicagos.”
- “Our nine played the Columbians – result, 17 in favor of Olmsted to 4 for the Columbians.”
- “Our Olmsted Falls nine looked well in their ball suits Sunday, furnished by F.J. Moley, especially the heavy weight.”

At the end of the month, the *Advertiser* column on June 29, 1894, included one more item about baseball: “Olmsted Falls nine played Columbia’s nine; result, Olmsted 8 to Columbia 7.”

That column also included one more item of interest: “Mr. Simmer of the firm Peltz & Co. is excavating a cellar preparatory to building his residence near their store.” Of course, the name should have been “Simmerer,” as in Philip Simmerer, Peltz’s



The house Philip Simmerer built is on the left. The one Joseph Peltz built is on the right in this 2023 photo.

hardware store partner. The house he built between the hardware store and Peltz's house is the building that now contains the Treasure House of the Falls antique store at 8096 Columbia Road in Grand Pacific Junction.

Township Has Grown Much in 70 Years

It would be an understatement to say that Olmsted Township has changed greatly in the years following World War II, but a few newspaper items from 70 years ago this month help to illustrate how much it has changed.

In 1954, the township was still largely rural with farms and fields in many locations where housing developments since have been built. But it was starting to grow, and township trustees thought it was time for the township to get traffic lights at the intersection of Stearns and Bagley roads and the intersection of Cook and Fitch roads. However, as the *Berea Enterprise* reported in its June 11, 1954, edition, Cuyahoga County Engineer Albert Porter rejected that request.



The intersection of Cook Road and Fitch Road didn't get traffic lights in 1954, but it now has walk signals and decorative banners as well as lights.

“A traffic count May 27 showed 1300 vehicles on Bagley in 12 hours, 400 on Stearns, 850 on Cook and 450 on Fitch,” the newspaper reported. “Porter says that does not warrant lights.”

The story added that the trustees said there were nine accidents at the intersection of Cook and Fitch and three at Stearns and Bagley in the previous three years.

One week later, in its June 18, 1954, edition, the *Enterprise* reported that 62 percent of Cuyahoga County was still undeveloped for residential purposes, and the county could accommodate another 1.5 million residents. That information apparently came from the Regional Plan Commission, which estimated that “some 835,000 families could be housed in the county without crowding and still have an undeveloped space of 82,000 acres.” The commission also criticized “spotty residential developments because they multiply the cost of schools, transportation, utilities and protection.”

However, the Regional Plan Commission was too optimistic about how many more people the county might get. Accommodating another 1.5 million would have doubled Cuyahoga County's population. It was still growing in the mid-1950s, but the growth would eventually stall and go in reverse. The county went from 1.2 million in the 1940 Census to almost 1.4 million in 1950, more than 1.6 million in 1960, more than 1.7

million in 1970, less than 1.5 million in 1980, more than 1.4 million in 1990, less than 1.4 million in 2000, and less than 1.3 million in 2010 and 2020.

If more than half of the county was seen as undeveloped in 1954, that certainly applied to Olmsted Township in the far southwestern corner of the county. Since then, housing developments have replaced many of the farm fields, vacant lots and other nonresidential tracts that once dominated the township.



A park with a playground along Usher Road is one of the township's more recent improvements that came long after the post-World War II growth spurt.

Another *Enterprise* story in the June 25, 1954, edition marked something of a coming of age for Olmsted Township and its counterparts, the other 1,334 townships across Ohio. The story in the June 25, 1954, edition was about how the state was getting ready to share money from motor vehicle fees with the townships for the first time, thanks to a bill legislators passed over a veto from the governor. Under the bill, townships were to share 5 percent of the motor vehicle fee revenues, while municipalities would get 9 percent. The first distribution of money to the townships was expected in July 1954. It was a significant development because townships had few sources of revenue back then.

Does Old Tavern Still Exist?

Reader Ross Bassett poses a question he hopes some other *Olmsted 200* reader might be able to answer. He notes that, after the United States emerged from Prohibition in 1933, Olmsted Falls remained dry, while Olmsted Township soon welcomed the resumption of sales of alcoholic beverages.

“My question is, in a few different publications I have read of a tavern on Columbia [Road] ‘between’ West View and the Falls,” he wrote in an email. “So every time I drive down Columbia, I look at all of the old farmhouses wondering if one of them was ever a tavern. Something like the northwest corner of West and Lindbergh. That old house was a tavern. There was also one on Prospect in Strongsville that still survives as a home. It is on the west side just a little south of Fair Rd.”

Further, Bassett wrote, “If I had to guess, I would say that this tavern was most likely just across the city line on Columbia just like so many others were, like the old tavern that, until recently, [was] at the northeast corner of Bagley and Lewis. Bottom line is that I am wondering if that old tavern building still exists as someone's home or if it was torn down long ago.”

In a subsequent email, he sent a 1910 photo of the White Elephant Saloon, which was said to have been between Olmsted Falls and West View. “I wonder if this is the bar I was wondering about,” Bassett wrote. “But where exactly?”

That’s a good question. Does anyone know the answer?

Please note that West View became an incorporated village in 1927, so if the saloon was between Olmsted Falls and West View, it likely would have been within West View’s municipal border after 1927.



This is the White Elephant Saloon with many of its patrons in 1910, a decade before Prohibition. It’s not clear whether it resumed operations after Prohibition.

Bassett has long been active with the West Park Historical Society. He also was the person whose questions about the 1936 film of Olmsted Falls led to Jim Boddy’s response that he had a copy of the film and his subsequent addition of a soundtrack of music and commentary to the film.

Readers React to Merger Story

Among those who reacted to the story in Issue 132 of *Olmsted 200* about how the villages of Olmsted Falls and West View merged into one municipality that soon became a city in the early 1970s was the man who made the story possible. The story was based on the recollections of Norman Sherbert – also known as Ron to some people – who was one of several people who were instrumental in getting the merger to occur. He was one of the first to respond to the story.

“While I may have been a leader (at a very young age 😊) to combine the two communities, it was a heartfelt effort by many—as you so appropriately recorded,” he wrote in an email. “It was truly an honor to be associated with the effort, and it was absolutely the right thing to do at the time.”

Another reader who reacted to the story was Kim Puckett, who wrote, “What a great read to any student of the history of our country and a reminder that [it] is the ‘small towns’ that have always been the true fabric of this country. Even more so a reminder on what politicians can accomplish when their goal is to make things better for all and as John Wooden said find a way to work together (even though they may disagree) without being disagreeable.”

(John Wooden was one of the most successful coaches in collegiate basketball history during almost three decades with the Bruins of the University of California at Los Angeles. He also was known for the inspirational messages he gave to his players.)

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include more from the 1936 film of Olmsted Falls, including the people who operated and rode school buses at that time, as well as a story about a man who helped organize Olmsted's first Boy Scout troop and wrote for decades about his love of nature in and around Olmsted Falls.

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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