



# Olmsted 200

Bicentennial Notes about Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township –  
First Farmed in 1814 and Settled in 1815

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Issue 22

March 1, 2015

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## Grand Pacific Hotel Had a Scholarly Beginning

*This is the second in a series of articles about Grand Pacific Junction. If you missed the first article, you may read it in Issue 21 of Olmsted 200, which came out on February 1.*

The building for which Grand Pacific Junction was named has had a series of names and several different uses – and it wasn't even built in the location where it has stood for most of its history. What is currently called the Grand Pacific Hotel was built about 1840 to be a girls' seminary along what now is called Lewis Road. Back then, it was called Seminary Road because of the building.

According to *Over the Years in Olmsted*, the history of the community that Bernice Offenbergl put out in 1964, the seminary was located on the east side of the road and north of the railroad tracks. That would put it in the vicinity of where New Chestnut Grove Cemetery is located now.

Although it began as a girls' seminary, it apparently began taking in boys before too long. Offenbergl wrote about a record that indicated that a boy, Cyrenus Kidney, enrolled in 1849 with the intention of studying civil engineering, but he died that fall before he could attend.

In his 1966 Olmsted history, *Township 6, Range 15...*, Walter Holzworth wrote that a genealogy record of the Fitch family mentioned that "Julius D. Fitch, a son of Chauncey Fitch, and William S. Fitch, son of Sanford Fitch, after attending common



*This photo from Bruce Banks shows a crooked chimney in the building. He said that was a result of its move across Rocky River.*

school, received higher education at the Rock[y] River Seminary which could very well be the seminary on Lewis Road.”

Somehow in the 1850s, the building that was the seminary was moved across the river to the location where it now stands on the corner of Columbia Road and Mill Street. It is unfortunate that no local newspaper was covering Olmsted at that time, because it would have been nice to have an account of how that move was accomplished. As Holzworth wrote, there was no bridge over Rocky River’s west branch along what is now Bagley Road (then called Irish Road). Also, he wrote, that the crossings at Water Street and Nobottom Road, which then was “the main road between Berea and Olmsted,” would have been inadequate for such a large building to be brought across.

In the talks that Bruce Banks (co-author of *The Olmsted Story: A Brief History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township*) has given about Olmsted’s history over the past few decades, he

has noted that one theory about the route of the building’s relocation was the river itself. “Russell Simmerer claims it was slid across the river when it was frozen,” Banks said in a talk on August 14, 1995, at the Grand Pacific Hotel during Olmsted Heritage Days. Of course, Simmerer was one of the building’s owners during part of the time it served as the family’s hardware store. But that suggestion that movers of the building took advantage of a frozen river to get it from one side to the other is hard to accept when you consider that it would have had to go down one steep bank and up the other.

More likely, the building was rolled on logs across the railroad bridge. The Toledo, Norwalk and Cleveland Railroad built the tracks, as well as the bridge, through Olmsted in 1853. Perhaps the building was moved across after the bridge was erected but before regular rail service began. That method of rolling on logs was used in 1873 to move the original St. Mary’s Catholic Church from where Olmsted Community Church now is located to St. Mary’s current location at the corner of Columbia and Bagley roads.

Clint Williams, the current owner of the Grand Pacific Hotel, learned when he renovated the building back in the early 1990s that, despite its size, the building’s construction actually would have been conducive to moving it. Gesturing at the large, wooden beams visible inside the building in 2006, he said, “That beam goes up, that beam comes across, then it comes down, and they built one right through the middle. So this whole thing is just like a solid pasteboard box, and it’s very, very sturdy. You could

probably pick up this end of it, and you'd go back and pick up this end, but this whole thing would just come up. It's amazing how these old buildings were built."

Although he did not move the Grand Pacific Hotel, Williams did have experience in moving other 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings at Grand Pacific Junction, such as the Carriage House.

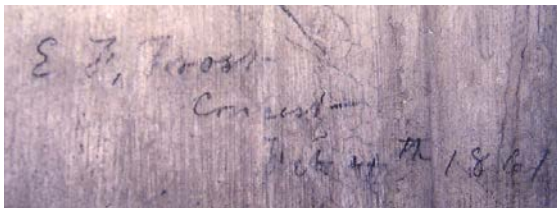
Certainly, the move of the former seminary was made no later than 1858, because by then it was put into service as a hotel with Thomas Brown as its first proprietor. According to Holzworth, it was Brown who named it the Grand Pacific Hotel, but it also seemed to be called simply "T. Brown's Hotel." The souvenir program for the 1939 Olmsted Falls Homecoming contains what is said to be an exact copy of a dance ticket that, in 1939, was in the possession of Ella Hendrickson Sinclair. (It would be nice to know what became of that ticket.) Here is what the reproduction looked like in the souvenir program:



*In this photo taken by Bruce Banks a few decades ago, the number 4 still was on an upper floor door in the former hotel.*

THANKSGIVING PARTY  
at  
T. BROWN'S HOTEL, OLMSTED FALLS, O.  
On Thursday Eve, Nov. 25—'58  
Music by Stanton's Harp Band  
Tickets Two Dollars

Holzworth wrote that Brown held square dances on the third floor of the hotel for several years.



*Another Bruce Banks photo from a few decades ago shows a name, E.F. Frost, left on an upstairs wall of the hotel in 1861.*

Brown served the first mayor of Olmsted Falls, which was incorporated as a village on April 7, 1856. His term lasted only one year. Years later, he disappeared after he left Olmsted Falls to deposit a large sum of hotel money in a Cleveland bank. As Offenberg put it, "Everyone thought that he had absconded with the money. A few years later a skeleton with a bullet in the skull was found in Devil's Hole on Columbia Road.

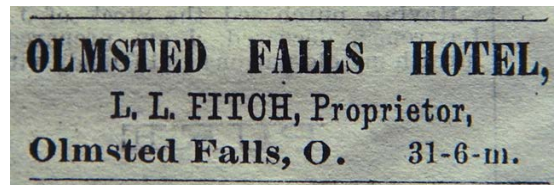
The Brown family moved away. Several years later, Orpha Brown visited Josephine (Kidney) Vaughan at her home in Kansas City, Kansas. Miss Brown told Mrs. Vaughan that her family had never heard from her father and they believed that he had been murdered and thrown over the bank into Devil's Hole in Olmsted Falls."

Offenberg didn't finish the story of Brown, but Holzworth did in his book: "Many years later a skeleton with a bullet hole in the skull was found in Devils Gulch where the Volks house is located on Columbia Road. Legally it was identified as that of Browns [sic]. Evidently he had been waylaid and murdered and his body thrown over the bank."

Devil's Hole or Devil's Gulch seems to have been along that section of Columbia Road that was bypassed a few decades ago when the new Route 252 was built in North Olmsted. Longtime residents who remember the road before the change might recall that section where Columbia Road curved and dipped just south of Butternut Ridge. That apparently was a dangerous part of the road, resulting in its association with the devil.

In her book, Offenberg wrote that W.S. Carpenter acquired the hotel property in 1860. Whether the building then was still called the Grand Pacific Hotel is not clear.

In the 1870s, the hotel changed hands a few times. A newspaper notice in March 1872 said Nicholas Moley was the new proprietor. In January 1873, Loren L. Fitch took over. At that time, it was called the Olmsted Falls Hotel.



*This 1870s ad for the hotel appeared when Loren Fitch was running it.*

Two years later, the April 15, 1875, issue of the *Grindstone City Advertiser*, the Berea newspaper, included this item: "The Olmsted Falls Hotel has again changed hands. W.S. Carpenter has again taken possession." The building then took on the name Hotel DeCarpenter.

That issue of the paper also included a related item: "Four hundred and twenty-five is the number of tramps that were furnished lodgings at the hotel between Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>, 1874 and April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1875." Disreputable visitors were a problem for the hotel in the 1870s. For example, the March 15, 1877, issue of the *Advertiser* reported: "A dead beat visited the hotel last week, and beat the landlord out of two or three days board for himself and horse by running away in the night. He offered his horse for sale at the auction on Coe Ridge, last Saturday."

The March 14, 1878, edition of the *Advertiser* explained why so many down-and-out people visited the hotel: "The township trustees have decided not to give aid to tramps in any way hereafter. They have been giving them orders to go to the hotel for lodging and one meal, and there is not a tramp within one hundred miles of this place that does not know where the township clerk lives. Just as long as they are fed, just that long will they tramp."

But by the time the township trustees revoked the policy that welcomed tramps, Carpenter had been gone almost a year. He died on Saturday, March 24, 1877. On the following Thursday, the *Advertiser* reported that Carpenter “fell upon the floor at his house and died instantly.” Three doctors who conducted a post-mortem examination determined the cause of his death was a ruptured aneurism in an artery near his heart.

Several weeks later, on May 17, 1877, the *Advertiser* reported: “Frank Dougherty, formerly flagman at the R.R. crossing, has bought the Olmsted Falls Hotel property, consideration, \$2,000.” The building was renamed the Dougherty Hotel.

The next time the hotel changed hands was August 1892. In an item dated August 24, 1892, the Olmsted column in the *Advertiser* reported: “J.P. Peltz & Co. have bought the village hotel and are making improvements.” What was not apparent from that item was that the hotel was being converted to serve as a hardware store, a use it would continue to have for almost eight decades.

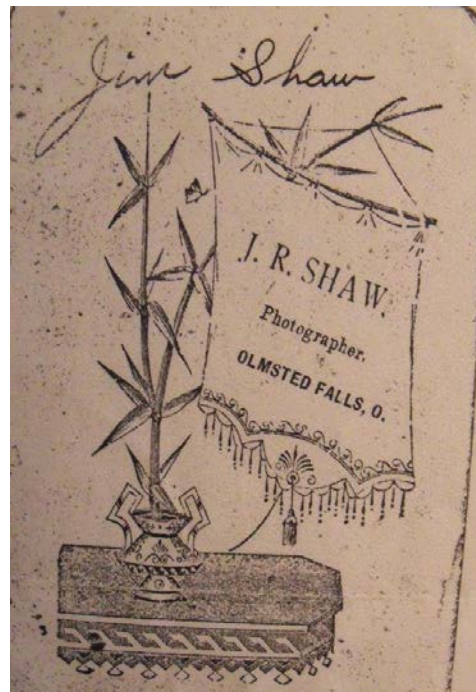
The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will have more on the building that became the Peltz & Simmerer store and later Simmerer & Sons Hardware.

## Civil War Veteran Worked as Photographer in Olmsted Falls

In the years after the Civil War, Olmsted Falls had a professional photographer who conducted his business practically single-handedly. That’s because a war injury limited use of his right arm. The injury prevented him from farming.

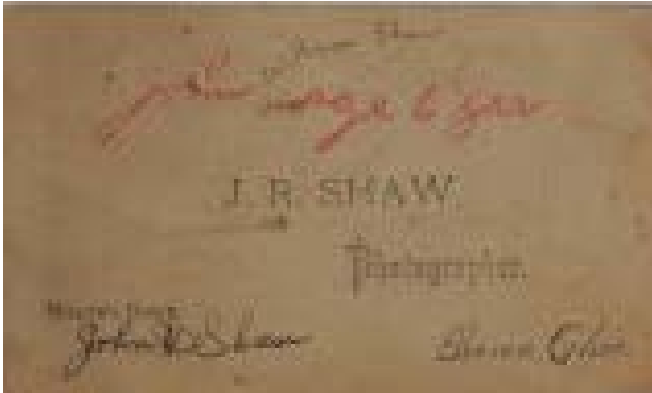
According to information gathered by his great granddaughters, Helen Shaw and Barbara Hanno, James Robert Shaw – who was better known as J.R. Shaw – practiced his trade in Olmsted Falls and Berea from about 1868 until 1884, and then he moved to Nebraska. His Olmsted Falls studio, J.R. Shaw’s Photography Gallery, was located on the southwestern corner of what is now Cook Road and Columbia Road. He worked there until early 1875. An item in the *Grindstone City Advertiser* on January 21, 1875, said this: “J.R. Shaw has rented his photograph gallery to Mr. A. Sheldon of Berea, who has taken possession and is ready for business.”

Shaw continued in the photography business for several more years at a studio in



When he worked in Olmsted Falls, Shaw put this on photo backs.

what was called Miller's Block in Berea. The back of a photograph of his son John, who was born in 1876, at age six has the Berea location.



*This is the back of a photo apparently from 1882 or 1883, when Shaw was working in Berea. It says the photo on the other side is of his son, John, at age six.*

Shaw was born December 3, 1839, in Covington, Kentucky. The woman he married, Mary Boone Beard, also was a Kentucky native. She was born in Lexington on February 9, 1844. Those facts are listed in her *Bible*. They were married in Olmsted Falls on March 25, 1868, which was almost five years after Shaw was wounded in the war.

Records show that he was 21 years old when he was mustered into service in Cincinnati on September

18, 1861. Shaw served as part of Garrard's Sixth Independent Ohio Cavalry, which joined up with the New York Third Cavalry's Company L. On July 23, 1863, gunshot shell fragments wounded his right shoulder during Potter's Raid at Street's Ferry in New Bern, North Carolina. He was operated on the next day, but the wound led to his being discharged from the army on September 15, 1863.

A newspaper clipping, apparently from the *Semi-Weekly Tribune* of North Platte, Nebraska in 1918, said, "For fifty years this arm troubled him, ulcerations appeared constantly, and at times were very painful. Last July, fifty-four years after he received the wound, he had the arm amputated at an Omaha hospital. This amputation was necessary, for the continuous ulcers had practically eaten the bone away. Since then Mr. Shaw, who is seventy eight years old, has had very good health."



*Mary Shaw, J.R.'s wife*



*John William Shaw*

An article from a Cincinnati newspaper in 1899 showed that Shaw was one of 18 members of his cavalry unit who attended a reunion on the 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Washington, which occurred from March 30 to April 19, 1863, in Beaufort County, North Carolina. At the time of the reunion, he was listed as residing in Gothenburg, Nebraska.

J.R. and Mary Shaw had eight children, but two sons born in Olmsted Falls had their photos taken by their father. John

William Shaw was born on October 30, 1876, in Olmsted Falls. He was 39 when he got married on July 7, 1915, in North Olmsted to Wealthy May Hall, who had been born May 1, 1880, in North Olmsted. She was the daughter of Charles Thomas Hall and Wealthy Stearns. (John and Wealthy Shaw were the grandparents of Barbara Hanno and Helen Shaw.)

The second son, James Richard Shaw, was born on October 11, 1881, in Olmsted Falls.

J.R. Shaw died November 29, 1922, in North Platte, Nebraska. He was buried in the National Military Cemetery at Fort Kearney, Nebraska. Mary Shaw died July 15, 1935, in North Platte and was buried with her husband at Fort Kearney.



*James Richard Shaw*

One more tidbit that Hanno added about J.R. Shaw: He once grew a 15-pound sugar beet. Apparently, he had a talent for growing big sugar beets. The October 7, 1875, issue of Berea's *Grindstone City Advertiser* included this item: "Mr. J.R. Shaw, dug a sugar beet from his garden a few days ago, that weighed thirteen pounds."



*J.R. Shaw in Nebraska*  
great granddaughters.

Barbara Hanno and Helen Shaw, who helped with this article, would be interested in seeing any photos taken by J.R. Shaw that might be in the possession of *Olmsted 200* readers. If you have any original old photos of Olmsted people or places from the later 1870s, check the back side. If they have J.R. Shaw's identification on them, send an email to [wallacestar@hotmail.com](mailto:wallacestar@hotmail.com) with information about them. Better yet, put them into electronic form and send them along. If the quality is good enough, they might be used in a future issue of *Olmsted 200*. But good or bad, they will be shared with Shaw's

## **Fundraising Drive Starts for Hall Barn Memorial Park**

Just as 2014 was the year when the barn John Hall built in 1880 along John Road in Olmsted Township came down, 2015 is supposed to be the year when something new goes in its place. Recently, Holly Reed and Ray Adkins of Razing Cleveland, the company that dismantled the barn, put a post on Facebook announcing an \$8,500 fundraising campaign for the Hall Barn Memorial Park.

Reed did not respond to an email requesting comment, but here is part of what she and Adkins posted on Facebook:

*In May 2014, Razing Cleveland was elected to deconstruct a barn that was in serious disrepair. Understanding the historical significance of this*

*beautiful landmark to the surrounding community, we wish to honor it by working to create a beautiful green space in its place. This is a not-for-profit effort, collaborating with the property owners, The Renaissance Retirement Community - Eliza Jennings.*

*While we are blessed to have a couple of volunteers donating some contracting services, we still need help funding the project. We aim to create a space that all of the community can utilize and enjoy! We have donated many materials from the barn to construct a sitting area. We still need funding for soils, plants, trees, equipment and laborers to complete the project in the spring 2015.*

*This is a project that touches our hearts. Many members of the community are saddened by the loss of this beautiful structure that once stood proudly on John Road; and which represented John Hall's acres of fruit farms and the founding families of the Olmsted Township Community over 100 years ago. We at Razing Cleveland understand their sentiment and wish to show that we can repurpose materials and create a space equally beautiful, continuing to honor the history of the community, and all who share memories of what it represents.*

*Please consider making a donation to this fund. No donation is too small! All monies received will be used exclusively for the completion of this park. Razing Cleveland's services are voluntary.*

*Thank you for your time and consideration in helping us to help this community continue honoring their historical beginnings.*

To see the post, which includes two photos of the barn from when it was being dismantled, go to Facebook and search for "Razing Cleveland."

When asked if Razing Cleveland and The Renaissance had determined what the green space where the barn stood will look like, Sandy Skerda, executive director of The Renaissance, replied, "At this time we do not have a definite plan for how the space will look. Once we start to thaw out, we'll begin to explore plans."

For more on the dismantling of John Hall's barn, see several issues of *Olmsted 200* from 2014, particularly the March, April, May, June and July issues.

## **Fundraiser for Olmsted Heritage Days Is Scheduled**

The annual celebration of Olmsted's history, the Olmsted Heritage Days festival, is several months away, but fundraising for it is coming up soon. The Grand Pacific Junction Merchants and the Heritage Days Committee will hold the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Wine-Beer Tastings and Silent Auction Benefit on March 6. The evening will include the tasting session, a silent auction, a Chinese raffle, hors d'oeuvres and live entertainment.



The theme this year is “Play Me a Movie.” The evening’s music will be from the silent movie era.

Organizers say it costs about \$15,000 to put on Heritage Days, so they are hoping plenty of people will participate.



**17th Annual Benefit ~ Wine - Beer Tastings & Silent Auction**

Tickets \$30  
Available at:  
Old Wine Cellar,  
Shamrock & Rose Creations,  
Clint Williams and  
Eventbrite.com

**March 6, 2015**  
Doors Open @ 6:30pm  
Historic Grand Pacific Hotel  
8112 Columbus Rd,  
Olmsted Falls, OH  
OLMSTED HERITAGE  
DAYS FUND RAISER

Evening Entertainment includes Live Silent Movie Music  
Silent Auction ~ 50/50 Raffle ~ Chinese Raffle  
Ticket Price includes Hors D'oeuvres and 6 Tastings

Theme "Play Me a Movie" Celebrating  
Hollywood's Silent Film Era  
440.714.9000 - Shawn Jeffery & 440.235.9277 - GPJ Caboose  
gjmmerchants@yahoo.com

## Old Photos of Valley City and Liverpool Township Will Be Shown

Valley City in Medina County’s Liverpool Township is just a short drive away from Olmsted – on the other side of Columbia Township. As an article in the October 2014 issue of *Olmsted 200* about a Liverpool Township couple who had a fatal accident on a trip home from Olmsted in 1849 showed, there are some historical ties between the two communities.



Thus, readers interested in Olmsted history also might be interested in an event on Tuesday, March 10, at 7:00 p.m. at Valley City

Town Hall, 6705 Center Rd. (Rt. 303). Pictures from the early 1900s, such as those included here, will be shown. Many of them were taken by members of the Messmer family about town and in their Lawn Street studio.

The event is free and open to the public. Popcorn and water will be provided. The building is handicapped accessible.

For more information call the Liverpool Historical Society at 330-483-3707. Thanks to Rod Knight of the society for sharing the



information about this event. He also was the person who shared the information about the 1849 accident that appeared in the October issue.

## Still to Come

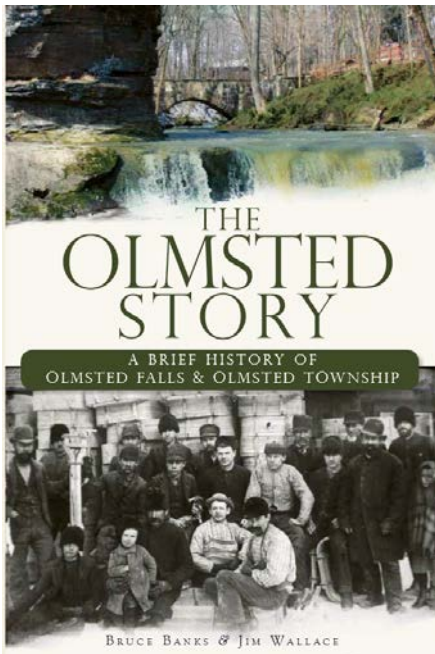
The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include the third part in the series about Grand Pacific Junction. Another article still on the way will provide a glimpse into what Olmsted Falls was like more than 60 years ago, based on a map that was a souvenir of the 1954 Homecoming.

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](mailto:wallacestar@hotmail.com). *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, Colorado, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, West Virginia, Florida, Massachusetts and Maine, as well as overseas in Mongolia and Japan.

Your questions and comments about *Olmsted 200* are welcome, as are 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://www.egovlink.com/olmsted/docs/menu/home.asp> and click on "Olmsted 200."

Except where otherwise noted, all articles in *Olmsted 200* are written by Jim Wallace. 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](mailto: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 Clementine's Victorian Restaurant at Grand Pacific Junction, the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.

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