



Olmsted 200

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

Issue 26

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The Depositors Building Was a Renovation Challenge

This is the sixth in a series of articles about Grand Pacific Junction. If you missed the beginning of the series, go back to Issue 21 of Olmsted 200, which came out on February 1, and read each issue since then.



This safe remains in what now is Matteo's Italian Restaurant.

Among all the restored buildings at Grand Pacific Junction, the Depositors Bank Building is relatively young. It's not quite a century old yet. It also presented a big challenge for Clint Williams when he figured out how to renovate it and make it more useful for retail activities.

The lot where the building stands was empty for about a decade after the January 1913 fire that began in W.G. Locke's store and destroyed that store, Joe Anton's tin shop and a two-story house. In 1924, the Olmsted-Dover Savings and Loan Company, which had been formed in 1923, constructed its building on the site. Matteo's Casual Italian Restaurant, now located at the southeastern corner of the building, still contains an Olmsted-Dover vault and safe. (Dover was the township to the north of Olmsted before it was incorporated into Bay Village, Westlake and part of North Olmsted.)

Later, the company was reorganized as the Depositors Savings and Loan Company – thus, the name of the building. If the prosperity of the 1920s had lasted, the company might have survived. But it made it through just the first few years of the Great Depression before closing in 1932.

A heating and tinning business operated out of the building after that. But in 1940, it became the home of the business that would stay there for almost five decades: Kucklick’s Village Square Shoppe, which sold furniture and appliances. The store’s specialty was Early American-style furniture.



Olmsted-Dover’s safe now holds wine.



The Depositors name recalls its banking years.

For many years, a branch of National City Bank occupied the northern end of the building closest to the railroad tracks. Later, Cunningham’s Nationwide Insurance Agency and a miniature shop were located in the building.

After 1989, when Clint Williams purchased from Bill Kucklick most of the buildings that became Grand Pacific Junction, he made various changes in them while restoring them. For example, the former hardware store/hotel received new windows and doors, and the former Simmerer house got a new back porch. But the Depositors Building especially tested his ability to envision new uses for an old building.



National City Bank’s night deposit box remains on the front of the building.

The building is L-shaped. The storefronts for Kucklick’s and National City Bank faced Columbia Road. But the long wing of the L that extended back from the road on the southern side had no openings for storefronts.

“There was just one big building and it faced Columbia,” Williams said in a 2004 interview. “When I did this, I said, ‘What am I going to do with this building? It’s 160 feet long. What do I do?’ So I said, ‘Let’s do a

boardwalk.’ I wanted to keep it in a sense the Wild West theme, something that would be out of the past, so to speak. So we came up with the different roof lines and added a second story. Then we did a porch over the whole thing.”



Kucklick’s had the south end and National City Bank had in north end in this 1958-59 photo. Photo courtesy of Carrie Moore.

window or two but no door. Williams had to figure out how to vary the roof so that it would seem that each store had been built separately. He also had to open the side for storefronts with doors and windows.

A few of Grand Pacific Junction’s earliest merchants moved in before all of the renovations were completed. One of those early stores was Grand Pacific Junction Model Railroad & Hobby Company. It was located in the corner of the building with the storefront along Columbia Road that now is part of Matteo’s. In a March 2005 interview, owner Mike Bonacci said the Depositors Building was not in great shape before Williams renovated it.



Kucklick’s looked like this in 1964. Photo courtesy of Carrie Moore.

“You’ll think I was smoking dope when I rented this building,” he said, as he sorted through his photos of the building still in the process of being repaired and refurbished in the early 1990s. “The windows were all boarded up. That’s the building I rented. Can you believe how stupid I had to be? This driveway out here was nothing but a dirt road. I did business for four months and those windows were boarded up.”



This is how the building looked before renovation. Photo courtesy of Clint Williams.

Nevertheless, Bonacci said, it was a good location for a model railroad shop, “and it became very successful right off the bat.” He said he believed in the vision

that Williams had for Grand Pacific Junction.



This pair of photos shows how Clint Williams had construction workers establish different roof lines and open up the building's side for storefronts along what became the boardwalk. Photos courtesy of Clint Williams.



This is how the boardwalk side of the Depositors Building looks in 2015. Notice the features that were still under construction in the previous photos. The Olmsted-Dover vault is located near the second window from the right.

“I can stand in a place and get a feeling for it, and when I stood in this building, it wouldn't let me out,” Bonacci said. “I thought to myself, *Man, what a wonderful place to put a hobby store.* And it wouldn't let me go.”

Bonacci's store lasted about a decade and a half in that location before he downsized, moved it outside Grand Pacific Junction and then eventually to Middleburg Heights.

But when he still was at Grand Pacific Junction, Bonacci was proud to have the section of the Depositors Building that contained the old Olmsted-Dover Savings & Loan vault and safe. “There's steel ribs in this, and then the building was built around it,” he said. “This is all concrete. This is two feet of concrete.... It's the same way with the side walls.”

The vault was reinforced with steel, Bonacci said. “This is damn near explosion proof in there,” he said. “It’s a bomb shelter.”

And now, it’s a “bomb shelter” that protects Matteo’s wine.



This pair of photos shows the western end of the boardwalk side of the Depositors Building during the renovation process. The first was taken before the boardwalk itself was built. Photos courtesy of Clint Williams.

In addition to Matteo’s, the merchants now operating in the Depositors Building include the Music Box and Dolls and Minis on the Columbia Road side and Depot Barber Shop, Pink Bicycle Boutique and La Blanca Bridal Boutique on the boardwalk side.



The left photo, courtesy of Clint Williams, shows the end of the Depositors Building as it neared completion of the renovation process. The right photo shows how that section looks in 2015.



This is how the northern end of the Depositors Building looks in 2015.

New Building Has an Old Look

Although most of Grand Pacific Junction consists of old buildings from the 1800s and early 1900s, developer Clint Williams has added a few new structures built to complement the older ones. The Grand Pacific Wedding Garden and the gazebo near the 1922 Vulcan locomotive are examples of the newer structures. The latest new building is a replica of an 1880s railroad depot at 8061 Columbia Road just south of the railroad tracks and across from the Depositors Building. It is on the site of what had been Barnum's Market, which burned down in the 1960s.

(For a story on construction of the new building last summer with photos of it and Barnum's, see Issue 16 of *Olmsted 200*.)

By late June, the building still was awaiting a tenant, but it was mostly finished. According to Williams, it has almost 3,000 square feet of retail or office space. (Crooked River Sporting Goods is located in the attached building on the south side that existed prior to the construction of the new building.)

Last August, Williams said he was putting up the new building because he wanted to clean up a prime spot in Olmsted Falls that "looked terrible" after remaining empty for almost 50 years.



It looks like a railroad station from the late 1800s, but this is really a new store taking its place among older neighbors at Grand Pacific Junction.

Pieces Move but Former Barn Site Remains Unfinished

One year after the deconstruction of the barn that John Hall built in 1880, parts of the barn's foundation remain on the site near the entrance to The Renaissance on John Road. But work has yet to begin on the promised "green space" to commemorate the barn, which had been one of the most enduring reminders of Olmsted Township's agricultural past. While some foundation stones are still placed where Hall put those stones 135 years ago, others have been moved around as though they were being tried out in new positions.



This photo from May 19, 2014, shows the beginning of the dismantling of John Hall's 1880 barn.

The Eliza Jennings organization, which owns The Renaissance retirement community, determined by early last year that it could not afford to repair the barn. Estimates for its preservation ran \$200,000 or more. The north wall was bowing out, and the fear was that it might collapse. So the Jennings organization engaged Razing Cleveland to dismantle the barn piece by piece and then sell most of the pieces to people who would reuse them. For example, one purchaser used some of the sturdy oak beams to make patio furniture.

walls were down, and the roof sat on the stone foundation. By fall, the foundation still stood mostly intact, but little else of the barn remained on site.

The deconstruction work began May 19, 2014. By the end of that week, the



This photo from late June 2015 shows that some of the stones from the foundation of John Hall's barn had been set on stone blocks as though they might be used as benches.

One year ago, Renaissance officials projected that “a beautifully landscaped sitting park” with something to commemorate the barn would be built by May 2015, but that didn't happen. In an email sent this past Tuesday morning, Sandy Skerda, executive director of The Renaissance, offered this update:

“We have communicated a great deal with the residents who live at The Renaissance, since the space on which the barn sat is part of their home. We place a great deal of value on their input. We’ve had meetings and surveys to see what they would like to see done with the area. While no detailed plans have been developed, the residents have determined that a park or sitting space would not be used enough due to the location on the property. They have however, expressed their wish to have the space commemorate John Hall’s barn in some way. One idea is to place the marker stone and some of the foundation stone on the space, along with a planting of some sort and a plaque. We are also looking at how we can use some of the foundation stones around the Renaissance property.”

The marker stone is one that John Hall created with his initials and “1880,” the year he built the barn. That stone has been moved from its original position on the east side of the foundation to a spot on the north side. Several stones have been placed on stone blocks as though someone was considering using them as benches. Several others have been arranged in a partial circle near a tree.



The stone with John Hall’s initials and the year of construction now sits on the northern side of what is left of the barn’s foundation rather than the western side, where Hall put it.



Several stones were put into a partial circle near a tree next to the barn’s foundation.

Some of the barn’s wooden beams also remain on the site. A few of them show the thick iron nails that Hall used to fasten them to other beams.

Skerda has promised to keep *Olmsted 200* updated about what will happen with the former barn’s site. One year ago, she said the plan was to “create a space that will be a beautiful reminder of the historic significance of the barn that once stood in its place.”

Late last summer, when work on deconstructing the barn's foundation was delayed, Holly Reed of Razing Cleveland said the plan was to leave just the marker stone and six other stones for the future park that would commemorate the barn.

For more about the deconstruction of the barn of John Hall, for whom John Road was named, see Issues 12, 13, 14 and 16 of *Olmsted 200*, which are available at:

<http://www.egovlink.com/olmsted/docs/menu/home.asp>.

The photo to the right shows the big, square nails that Hall used to hold his barn together.



Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include the next story in the series about Grand Pacific Junction. Also in the works are stories about the Peltz family, which played an important role in Olmsted Falls in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and a story about a local artist who captured many sights from Olmsted's past in pen-and-ink and watercolors.

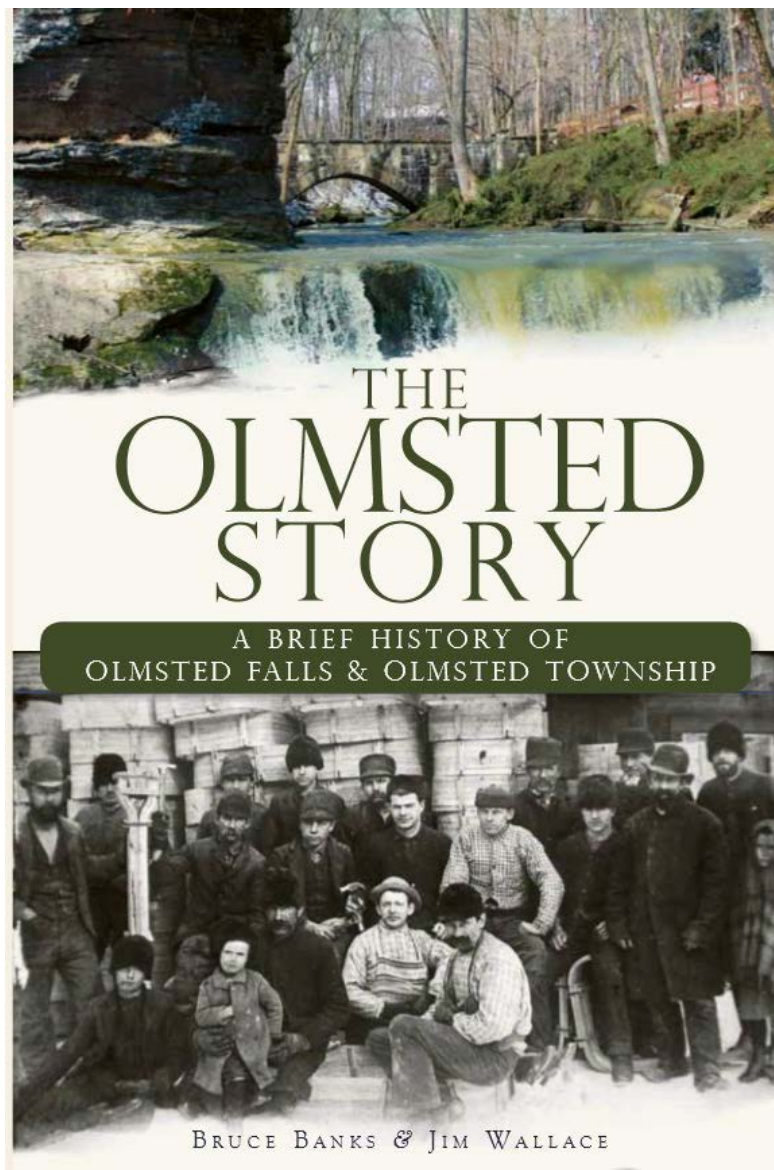
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Your questions and comments about *Olmsted 200* are welcome. Perhaps there is something about Olmsted's history that you would like to have pulled out of *Olmsted 200*'s extensive archives. Or perhaps you have information or photos about the community's 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://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.

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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