



Olmsted 200

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

Issue 31

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Junction Building Had Connection to Ohio Automaker

Plenty of stores sell new things in old buildings at Grand Pacific Junction, but the place to go for antiques is 8153 Orchard Street, where Second Thyme Around now



In the early 20th century, Willys Knight cars received service here.

operates. However, in the early 1900s, that building was a service center for what now are antiques of a different sort – Willys-Knight automobiles. And some of those cars were built at least partly nearby in Elyria.

Auto historians give different accounts of how Willys-Knight cars came to be, but they agree that the central figure was John North Willys. He had been in the auto manufacturing business for several years when he met Charles Yale Knight of Chicago. Knight didn't like the noisy valves that were being used in internal combustion engines in the early years of the 20th century, so he adapted quieter sleeve valves for use in the engines. When Willys met Knight on a trip to Europe, he became enthralled with Knight's sleeve-valve engine and wanted it for his company, Willys-Overland, Inc.

By one account, Willys owned a plant in Elyria that had previously made Garford automobiles. In 1913, he began making Willys-Knight cars in Elyria. In 1915, he moved assembly of the cars to Toledo but continued to make the engines in Elyria. Those engines were known for their precision, quiet operation, durability and power, but they were more expensive than other engines to produce. The first cars built in Elyria had four cylinders and cost about \$2,500 each. One writer referred to the Willy-Knight as a “well-regarded” car that sold at a medium price for the times.



A sign like this one might have hung outside the Willys-Knight repair shop in Olmsted Falls.



This model is identified as the Willys-Knight Great Six roadster. It was built in 1929 and 1930. According to the Murphy Auto Museum of Oxnard, California, the price of a Great Six sedan was \$1,795 in 1930. A cheaper model went for \$1,195.

After 1922, Willys-Knight made about 50,000 cars a year. But like many companies, it suffered during the Great Depression and went out of business in the 1930s.

This one is labeled a 1920 Willys-Knight Model 20 Touring car. A recent online ad listed a similar 1922 sedan for \$12,950. Another ad asked \$34,500 for a 1922 Willys-Knight model.



No Vibration

Smoothness beyond Comparison with the new Lanchester Balancer

An amazing new invention now gives the Willys-Knight a positive freedom from vibration that is so common in motor cars. This wonderful new device is the Lanchester Balancer, invented by Dr. F. W. Lanchester, F.R.S., builder of one of the most expensive cars in Great Britain.

By securing the American rights for the new Lanchester Balancer, Willys-Knight brings to America an entirely new conception of enjoyable motoring. Smoothness beyond comparison. A new thrill of vibrationless motion. Velvety performance . . . the nearest approach to gliding through space yet attained in a motor car.

This new smoothness adds further laurels to a car already famous for the matchless performance of its sleeve-valve engine—the only type of engine in the world that actually improves with use. Never needs valve-grinding. Never needs carbon-cleaning. Owners report 50,000 miles and more without engine adjustment or expense.

All Willys-Knight models are now equipped with Balloon tires which give, in addition to vibrationless engine-running, the luxury of cushioned riding comfort unsurpassed by any car at any price.

Try it today. Realize what it means to float over the road on cushions of air, which absorb the shocks before they reach you—to ride in a car that has absolutely no period of vibration at any speed.

WILLYS-OVERLAND, INC., TOLEDO, OHIO
Willys-Overland Sales Co. Ltd., Toronto, Canada



WILLYS-KNIGHT

A smooth, quiet ride was an important part of the Willys-Knight image, as this ad to the left from 1924 shows.



Willys-Knight cars often showed off the Knight part of their name in their radiator caps, such as the one above from 1928 that recently was on sale in an online auction.

Clint Williams said he bought the former Willys-Knight repair shop about 20 years ago from Gary Metzger, who had an upholstery shop in there. Williams said he paid \$75,000 for the building and a lot on the other side of Orchard Street. That lot now provides extra parking for Grand Pacific Junction.

“It needed everything,” Williams said about the condition of the building when he acquired it from Metzger. “He’d been working on it and working on it. He got as far as the front two rooms, and he was a fanatic, just total crazy. So we came in and dry-walled it all and insulated it all. The windows on that side of it are still the original windows, and they’re holding up very well.”

The building is “deceiving,” Williams said, because its roof is higher on one side than on the other. “It slopes down just one way,” he said. “No gable, no peak, so we did

the flat storefront across the front and a little porch roof on the front of there to camouflage it.”



Clint Williams put a new front on the building that now houses Second Thyme Around to disguise the sloping roof. He also noted that one side of the building, but not the other, has plenty of windows. He said he hasn't figured out why it was made that way.



Although the building was a service center for “horseless carriages,” a peek into the garage door on one side reveals a display of the older variety of carriages, along with manikins in period dress and their horse counterpart.

Another store has uncertain history.

Less is known about the Grand Pacific Junction building at 25561 Mill Street. Williams isn't sure how old it is, but he has a rough estimate. "It's got to be early 1900s because even the shelving on the one side with the ladder rolls in the roller – that was all 1920s."



The Cutting Garden now operates in this building, but its history isn't clear.

One *Olmsted 200* reader, Patrick Carroll, who graduated from Olmsted Falls High School in 1972, recalled noticing when he was a child that the building always seemed to be unoccupied. He said that old-timers, such as the grandfather of one 1971

graduate, said he thought it once was used as a millinery. Carroll also recalled that Robert Fenderbosch, who once served as the fire chief for Olmsted Falls, thought the building might once have been a saddle and harness shop associated with the Simmerers' hardware store.

In recent years, the Cutting Garden, a florist's shop, has operated there. At one time, Clementine's restaurant was located in it, but Clementine's outgrew that building and moved over to the Livery Stable. (For more on the Livery Stable, see Issue 28 of *Olmsted 200* from September.)

Anyone who knows more about the history of this or any other Grand Pacific Junction building in this series of articles is welcome to share that information with *Olmsted 200* and its readers.

Old School Building Stirred Many Memories

More than 100 people responded to the article in the November issue of *Olmsted 200* about the school that was built in 1916 and the 1915 newspaper picture depicting an artist's conception of what it would look like. That building now serves as Olmsted Falls City Hall.

Many people in emails and Facebook posts recalled having classes in the building when it was a high school or a middle school or even when it held all of the district's students from first grade through 12th grade.

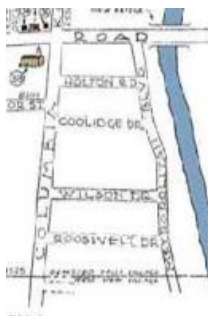
In an email, Patrick Carroll recalled having junior high school industrial arts classes – wood shop, metal shop and drafting – as well as band classes in the building. He even remembered the smells.

“In 1967-8 I had band in this building on the basement level down the steps, to the right of the Mapleway entrance,” Carroll wrote. “Home economics was directly across the hall, and when someone would be baking a good pie, no one could concentrate on the music! Mr. Theodosian, then Mr. Eckenfels hated it! Likewise, when someone would burn a dish they were learning how to bake, no one could breathe!” He concluded, “Ahhh, memories!”

For Carroll and others in the Class of 1972, the building was just the “old high school.” Until the current middle school opened in the 1990s, the Class of 1972 was the only one to miss having the old school as either a high school or a middle school. The current high school opened in September 1968 (when the school year began after Labor Day), just in time for the freshman year of the Class of 1972, making that class the first one to go through the current high school for all four years. Members of that class would have missed the old school entirely if they hadn’t had to walk over to it from the former junior high (now part of Falls-Lenox Primary School) for such classes as industrial arts, home economics and band.

Section of Olmsted Falls Could Have Been Much Different

The recent republication of a 1954 map of Olmsted Falls included hints of a long-gone past and plans that never were implemented fully. (See Issue 28 of *Olmsted 200* from September and Issue 29 from October for more about the map, which the Olmsted Falls Alumni Association is selling as a fundraiser.)



1954 map

In one section south of Bagley Road, the map shows four east-west streets between Columbia Road and Metropolitan Boulevard. In order from north to south, they are Holton Drive, Coolidge Drive, Wilson Drive and Roosevelt Drive. But people expecting to use Coolidge Drive or Roosevelt Drive today would have a hard time finding any sign of them, and they would find only half of a street named Wilson Drive.

As maps sometimes do, that section of the 1954 map reflected developers’ plans that never came to fruition. Those plans were made a generation before the original map came out. Advertisements in the *Plain Dealer* in 1926 indicate that developers had even bigger plans for that section of Olmsted Falls. One ad that was placed in the October 17, 1926, edition of the paper referred to “Rocky river, along both sides of which Metropolitan Boulevard is planned.” That ad was placed by G.H.W. Horst, owner of a 25-acre fruit farm one mile northeast of Olmsted Falls, which was along the prospective path of Metropolitan Boulevard. Of course, the Metropolitan Boulevard that was built is much smaller than was planned and runs along only the west bank of Rocky River.

Other ads that ran in the *Plain Dealer* in the spring of 1926 reveal that the planned development was for what was called the Caine-Garfield Allotment “in the heart of Olmsted Falls.” One ad in the April 30 edition that was placed by the Olmsted Falls Development Co. promoted the development this way:

Health for the kiddies – happiness for Mother and pride for Father. Health for the kiddies in that the neighborhood surroundings are adapted to freedom of play; no grime, no dangers from truck or auto, but instead fresh air, grass and trees. Happiness for Mother in that she need not worry about the safety of the children, she has space for a garden, for flowers. She can realize that Mother’s ambition – a real home such as she has dreamed of since childhood. Pride for Father. He can come home to healthy, normal kiddies, to a happy and contented Mother.

These homesites are priced right; 60X150 feet in size, graded streets, sewers, sidewalks, etc.; close to grade and high school, stores and churches. Before selecting a homesite inspect this property.

Another ad from May 2 said the new development was “right in the path of the new Metropolitan Boulevard.” It also extolled the beauty of the area and ample transportation, including bus service and the New York Central Railroad, which could get commuters to downtown Cleveland in 25 minutes.

It is not clear why the grand plans for Metropolitan Boulevard were downsized, but they might have been a casualty of the Great Depression, which began a few years later. That’s what happened to another big development that was planned in the area between John Road and Butternut Ridge Road. (For a story on that, see Issue 3 of *Olmsted 200* from August 2013.)

SELECT YOUR HOMESITE NOW
IN
Caine Garfield Allotment
Opening Today and Tomorrow

Located in the heart of Olmsted Falls, right in the path of the new Metropolitan Boulevard. The extreme beauty of the surrounding territory is widely known to the people of Cleveland and vicinity.

Transportation facilities are ample in wonderful auto roads, excellent bus service and via New York Central railroad, offering twenty-five-minute running time to Cleveland.

These homesites are 60x150 feet, enough space for a playspot and garden. Close to grade and high schools, stores and churches, carefully restricted. We urge you to come and see this beauty spot and make comparisons.

5% Reduction on all lots sold Opening Days
The Olmsted Falls Development Co.
OLMSTED FALLS, O.
Phone Berea 496.

This ad ran in the Plain Dealer on May 2, 1926.



This 1949 photo of the Holton house at 8231 Columbia Road is courtesy of Jane Gardner.

Another issue raised by the 1954 map is why one of the streets – the only one built fully – between Columbia Road and Metropolitan Boulevard was named Holton Drive when the other three that were planned were given the names of early 20th century presidents – Coolidge, Wilson

and Roosevelt. But it's not such a mystery if you realize that a family by the name of Holton lived in a house at 8231 Columbia Road, which would have been between Bagley Road and Holton Drive.

According to Walter Holzworth in his 1966 history of Olmsted, Edward Holton, who served on Olmsted Falls Village Council and then as mayor in 1910-1911, lived in that house. He and his wife, Lydia, had five children.

Holzworth wrote, "The Holton home at the southeast corner of Bagley and Columbia Roads, was a landmark that



The corner where the Holton House once stood is occupied now by a Speedway gas station.

was razed in 1966 to make way for a gas station." Today, the Speedway gas station sits on that corner.

Olmsted Shines through the Snow

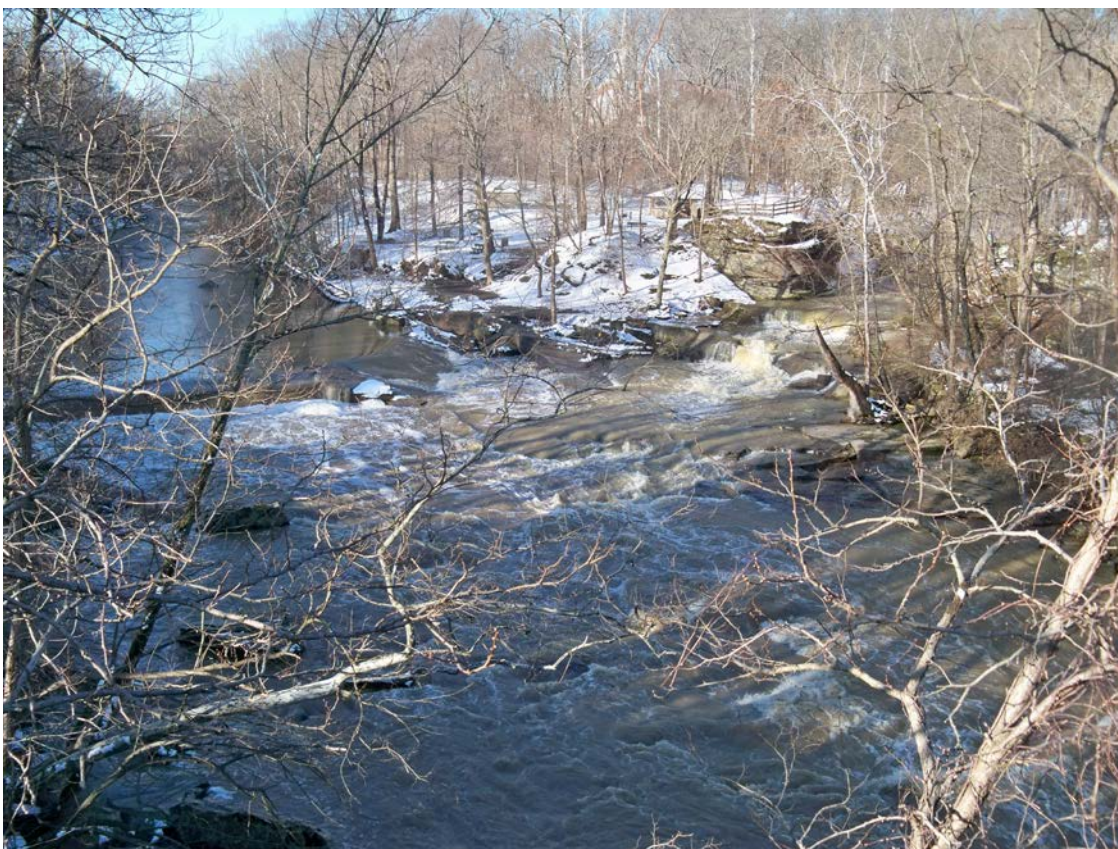
This is the time of year when holiday decorations appear on homes and businesses around Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township. But winter brings its own decorations, especially when skies clear and become blue again after a snowfall. Here are a few photos of Olmsted sites wearing their winter coats.



Since 1988, the Pennsylvania Railroad caboose has accompanied the Olmsted Falls depot, which was built in 1876.



The tiny Olmsted Township Hall has stood at the corner of Cook and Fitch roads since 1939.



When the snow melts, water rushes down Rocky River and Plum Creek in David Fortier River Park.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include the first in a series of stories about one family that played a prominent role in Olmsted Falls for many decades from the mid-1800s until the early 1900s. It also will include a story about what many current and former Olmsted residents remember as the Grange Hall. However, it began in another location as the Odd Fellows building. That story will be the next one in the series about Grand Pacific Junction.

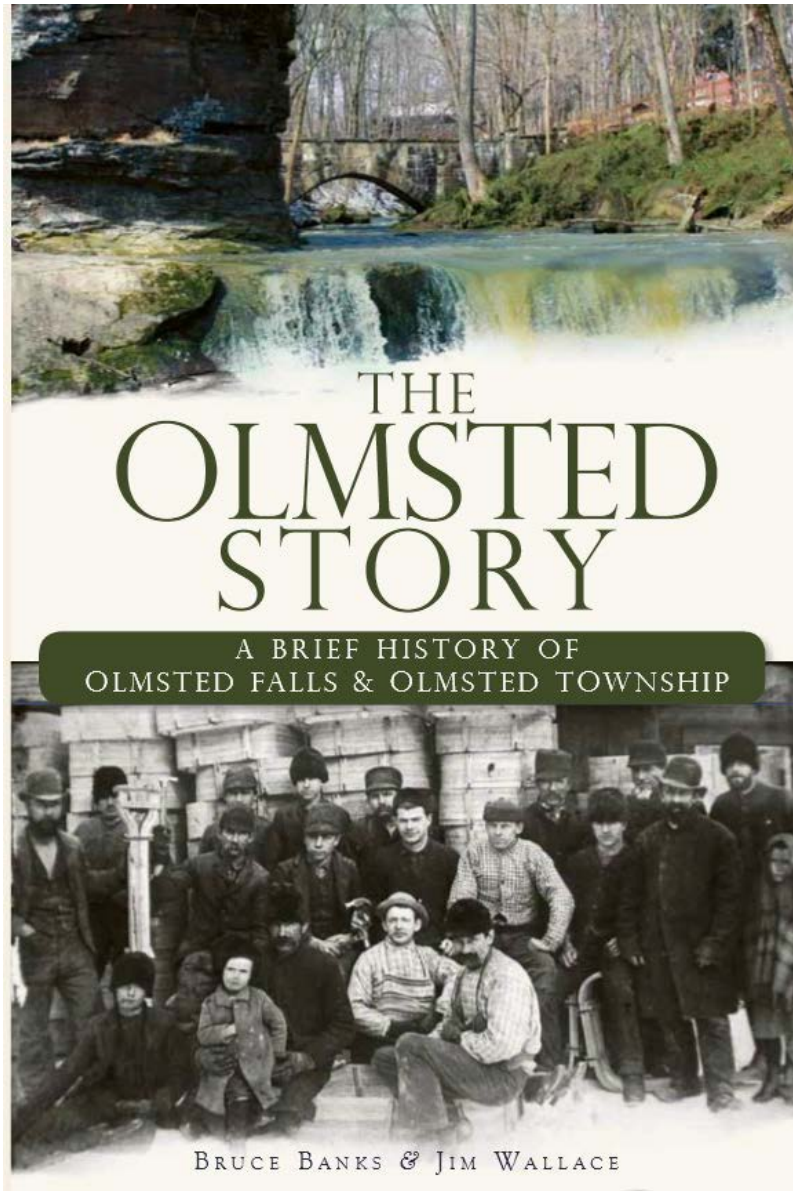
If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: wallacestar@hotmail.com. *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, Colorado, Texas,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