



# Olmsted 200

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

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## Sayers Saved the Old Sights around Olmsted

History is preserved through more than just saving buildings or erecting markers. Some history is preserved through the depiction of past scenes by artists of the time.

One artist who was especially good, as well as prolific, at preserving the way places around Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township looked in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was Bob Sayers. Although many people have treasured his paintings and drawings of buildings, bridges and other sites around the community, he did not receive the recognition he hoped to get. However, his talent was all the more remarkable because he worked with a handicap.

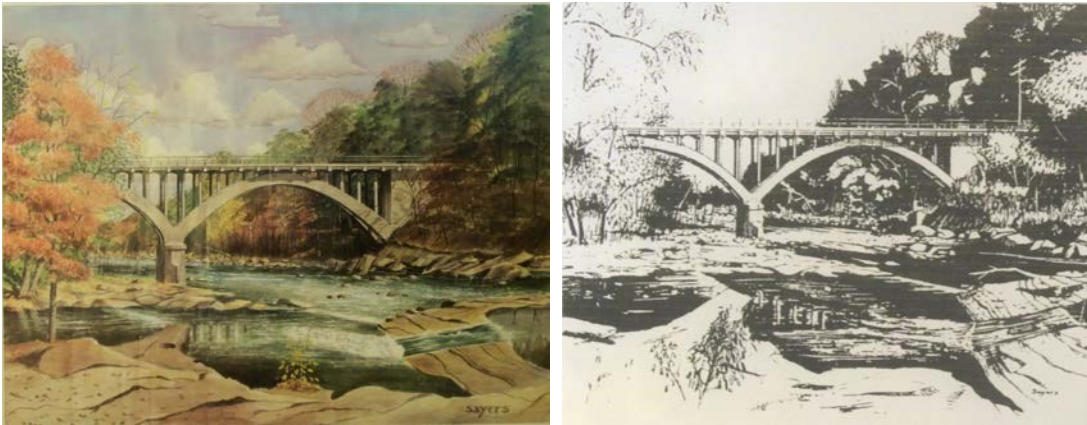


*The left photo shows Bob Sayers in what his daughter, Liz, says was his "Pierre Bear" mode. The photo on the right shows Bob Sayers with his wife, Marge, in either the late 1980s or the early 1990s. Photos courtesy of Liz Sayers.*

"It was more or less a little hobby of his," Liz Sayers, one of his daughters, said. "He enjoyed it. That was his time alone from the family."

Robert J. Sayers was born in Lakewood on June 12, 1920. Liz said his grandmother, who lived on River Street [now River Road] in Olmsted Falls, married a Sayers and her sister married a Fenderbosch, so the two longtime Olmsted Falls families are related.

“There’s something behind every [one] of Dad’s paintings because he always used to tell me a little story about everything he used to do,” Liz said. “Sitting down at the river, I remember him talking to me [about] the picture of the bridge that he did, the Water Street Bridge. We sat down, just him and I, one day. He told me the little history of how he used to go over the hill from Grandma’s house because his grandma’s house was right on River Street. They used to go down and play on the rocks and everything. He used to pick on the Fenderbosch boys [Richard and Robert] and throw their toys in the river. He remembered playing soldiers and stuff with them when he was little.”



*Here are two depictions of the former Water Street Bridge from Bob Sayers.*

Liz’s brother, Tommy, also recalled watching his father work.

“I always used to stop into the art studio to talk to him and find out what he was working on,” Tommy said. “It was kind of common. He would get those out kind of fast. He did a lot of homes, private paintings – their home or sailboat or things like that. I watched the process because I used to dabble in the art myself.”

*On the right, Liz Sayers holds a print of her father’s painting of John Hall’s barn, which stood along John Road from 1880 until 2014, when The Renaissance had it torn down.*





*This photo of Bob Sayers was taken in the 1980s. Photo courtesy of Liz Sayers.*

Bob Sayers worked in pen-and-ink and watercolor. Sometimes, he would pick up a pencil at a restaurant and just draw something on napkins, Liz said. He was paid for much of his artwork, but he made his living after World War II working in home improvement, such as installing windows and doors. Liz said he got jobs to do paintings by word of mouth.

Recalling that her father was laid back and quiet, she said, “He just kind of went with the flow.”

Tommy said Bob Sayers “was just a real likable guy.” He said about his father, “He was just one of those personalities that most people just couldn’t help but like when they met him. He was just a real outgoing, personable kind of guy – never an angry sort. And I’d have to say the same thing about him around the house. He was never an angry, neglectful or any kind of thing like that. He was always there, always helping out his kids. He was always in a good mood, and he always had a philosophy of if you were hurting or things were bad for you, if he wasn’t helping you out, he was giving you some real wise philosophy to help you through it.”

However, Liz also recalled, “He was a moody artist. You just had to give him his space. That’s why he built his shop on the side of the garage.”

Yes, Tommy agreed, his father could be moody at times: “If he was in any kind of mood, he was usually off on his own. He was that kind of person. He used to indulge in alcohol, but it... was definitely not that of an alcoholic. He was a very light drinker compared to most.... It wasn’t uncommon to see him with a beer, but he was the type of guy that would be nursing the same beer for four hours.”

The family, which included four sons and two daughters, lived at 7658 Columbia Road. “It’s blue now,” Liz said. “He built his little art studio on the side of the garage so he could have his alone time.”

The former Sayers house sits on the foundation of a barn that had burned down many years ago. The barn had been associated with the red house next door at 7674



*This is the house at 7658 Columbia Road where Bob Sayers and his family lived.*



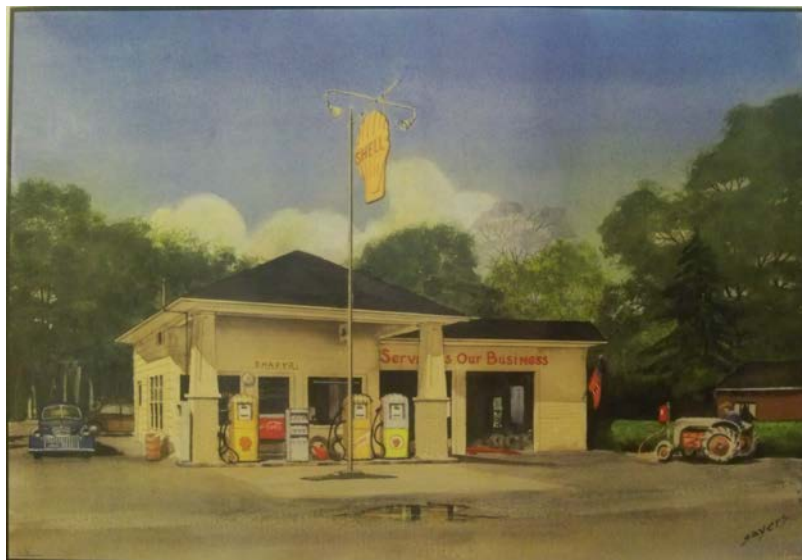
Columbia Road. The red house was built by Chauncey Mead in the early 1830s after he bought the land from Charles Olmsted. Liz Sayers said a stream runs under the house, and there once was a windmill in the rear to pump the water.



*Chauncey Mead built this house at 7674 Columbia Road in the 1830s. More than a century later, it was the home of Kinley Shogren, who achieved the wide recognition for his artwork that Bob Sayers had hoped to receive.*

On the other side of the former Mead house – at the corner of Columbia Road and Water Street – Chauncey and his son, W.W. Mead, operated a harness shop. During much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, beginning in 1927, that location was the site of a Shell service station. For three decades from 1936 to 1965, Gordon Schady ran the gas station, which became the subject of one of Bob Sayers’s paintings. (The building now houses the office of Clint Williams Realty.)

*Bob Sayers painted this picture of Schady’s Shell at the corner of Columbia Road and Water Street, which was two doors down from his house. In the 1970s, Clint Williams renovated the building to serve as his real estate company’s office in Olmsted Falls. The lot once was home to Chauncey and W.W. Mead’s harness shop in the 1800s.*



One of his father’s paintings that Tommy especially admires depicts the old Main Street Bridge. “He was experimenting with different baseboards for painting on, and he actually used a kick panel out of a storm door,” Tommy said. “In 1969, he removed a panel out of an old storm door laying up against the garage and painted a picture of the Main Street Bridge, which is still, I believe, somewhere inside in one of the back rooms of the high school. The Olmsted Falls High School owns that painting. It’s probably one of the best examples of that painting he’s ever done.”



*This is one depiction from Bob Sayers of the former Main Street Bridge, but Tommy Sayers says a better one can be found in Olmsted Falls High School.*

the 1930s at Olmsted Falls High School. Later, he taught night classes at the high school.

“When he was in the service, he drew little pictures of the lighthouses and machine guns and stuff,” Liz said. His first drawings of Olmsted Falls would have been after the war, she figured, so he probably started doing sketches around town in the late 1940s.

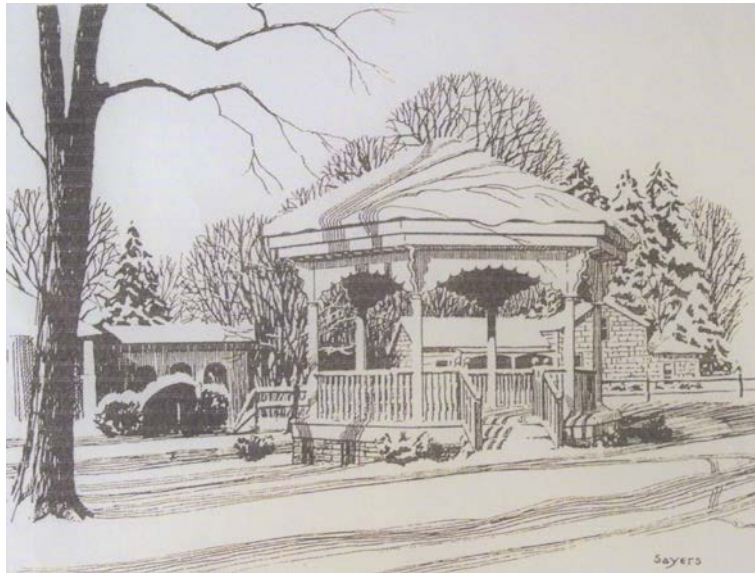
However, by then, he had a handicap that could have hindered someone of lesser talent.

“He was blind in his left eye from the war,” Liz said. “He was drafted in World War II. He was in the states when...something went off and the shrapnel hit his eye.... He was in the hospital for six months. They saved the eye, but he was blind in his left eye.”

Tommy recalled that it was typical for his father to work at all hours.

“He very rarely slept, so he usually did it in the middle of the night,” Tommy said. “He was the type of guy who took catnaps. He never really slept a lot.... If he wasn’t working or working around the house, he was painting usually with a group or by himself. He had an artist’s studio built onto the garage.”

Bob Sayers started developing his artistic talents with the help of a teacher in



*Bob Sayers made this wintertime drawing of the gazebo at the Village Green, which was across the street from his house.*



Tommy said it was a land mine that went off and cost Bob Sayers and one of his colleagues one eye each.

“After he had his stroke, he lost his only good eye in 1992, I believe it was, in October,” Tommy said. “I took him down to the Cataract Eye Center. Dr. [Samuel] Salamon pulled the shrapnel out of his eye that was in there for 50 years and got his eye working again in 1994, I believe it was.”



*Bob Sayers made these drawings of the Olmsted Falls depot (left) and the Union Schoolhouse (right) that stood on the Village Green from 1873 until 1960.*

After Bob Sayers started to have health problems, he went to Florida, Liz said, but he continued to draw on napkins at restaurants and painted as long as he could.

“He did paint all the way to the end,” Tommy said. “Unfortunately, his motor skills were tampered with from the stroke. I have some of his works that he did after the stroke, and you can definitely tell it wasn’t the same Bob Sayers paintings. As a matter of fact, I have the first painting that he attempted to do down in the Metroparks after the stroke on one of my walls.”

Although the artwork of Bob Sayers can be found in many homes in Olmsted and elsewhere, Tommy said he didn’t feel as appreciated as he desired.

“I think he was relatively more unnoticed than he ever wanted to be,” Tommy said. “Our next door neighbor became very famous as an artist and well known throughout the whole



*This drawing by Bob Sayers shows three buildings along Columbia Road. On the left is the former Fenderbosch Saloon. In the middle is a residence that housed the Kreme Shop in the 1960s and 1970s. On the right is the former Masonic Temple, now the Grand Pacific Wedding Chapel.*

Midwest and East Coast. That was Kin Shogren. He once lived in the early 60s and late 1950s next door to us on Columbia Road. He was in the house next to Clint Williams Realty there. Kin really made a name for himself and made a living off of it. My dad always wanted to do the same thing. His artwork was topnotch, but he never really achieved that kind of notice.”

According to several sources, Kinley Shogren, who lived from 1924 to 1991, was a 1949 graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Art. An article in the *Plain Dealer* said he was one of the most popular artists with corporate buyers in the Cleveland area. A 1979 issue of the newsletter of the Cleveland Institute of Art noted that Shogren had received a commission for four watercolor paintings for offices of Erie County Bank in Huron, Ohio. Tommy Sayers said Shogren’s work also was displayed at the library in Olmsted Falls. In later years, Shogren and his family lived in Mansfield. His work still can be found for sale on online auction sites.



*In addition to being a talented artist, Bob Sayers was a talented musician. He was in his 70s when this photo caught him playing the piano. Photo courtesy of Liz Sayers.*

Nevertheless, the artwork of Bob Sayers was popular enough that Tommy took steps to protect the rights to it after he discovered that a company was printing cards of his paintings. Tommy, who is a musician in several bands, then put the paintings depicted on the cards and all the other paintings in his possession in the hands of his music company, Harbor West Music, so they cannot be printed without his permission. He has considered building a website for his father’s paintings.

Tommy said he inherited some of his father’s artistic talent but more of his musical talent. Liz recalled that their father found it easy to play the guitar and other instruments. She also recalled that Tommy, at age five or six, surprised their father when he drew a picture of a train that showed the vanishing point.

“My dad, because he was blind in one eye, had a hard time with that,” she said. “My dad could not believe a little boy like Tommy could make that, but he got his talent from Dad.”

Bob Sayers died on June 25, 1999. His grave is at Chestnut Grove Cemetery.

*This painting of John Hall’s barn is the one held by Liz Sayers on page 2.*





*This Bob Sayers painting, titled “Foundation of Old Stagecoach Inn,” hangs in Olmsted Falls City Hall. Accompanying it is this description: “Buried deep behind a house on River Rd. is the foundation of a stagecoach inn. Lester Bradford, one of ten children of Hosea Bradford, opened an inn on the trail, now River Rd., where it makes a junction with Nobottom Rd. When Nobottom was dedicated in 1830, it was the main east-west road between Middleburg and Olmsted Township. The stagecoach inn burned in 1834. The property was sold to the Hoadleys and a farming barn was built on the foundation. It was later turned into a furnace repair shop. The shop was not used after the 1940’s and fell into decay.” [Note: Missing punctuation has been added to this quotation. Also, the name of the township to the east of Olmsted was spelled “Middleburgh” in the 1800s.]*

*Thanks to Liz and Tommy Sayers for permission to use the paintings and drawings of Bob Sayers in **Olmsted 200**.*

## **Old Ads Provide a Limited Impression of Olmsted Falls**

Olmsted Falls had a few dozen businesses a century ago, but a newspaper reader might have gotten the impression that what Olmsted merchants sold were mainly coal, lumber, drugs and men’s clothes. That is because only a few merchants from the community regularly bought display advertisements in the local paper, the *Berea Enterprise*.

Those businesses were Olmsted Coal and Lumber, which was located about where the current post office now stands, and two located along what then was Columbia



Street – J.P. Peltz & Company and F.J. Moley’s store. The ads shown here are those that were published in late 1916 and early 1917.



*This is what the Olmsted Falls Coal and Lumber Company looked like about a century ago. It was reported to be one of the busiest businesses in the community after it got started in 1913. The building lasted until the late 1950s, when it was dismantled.*

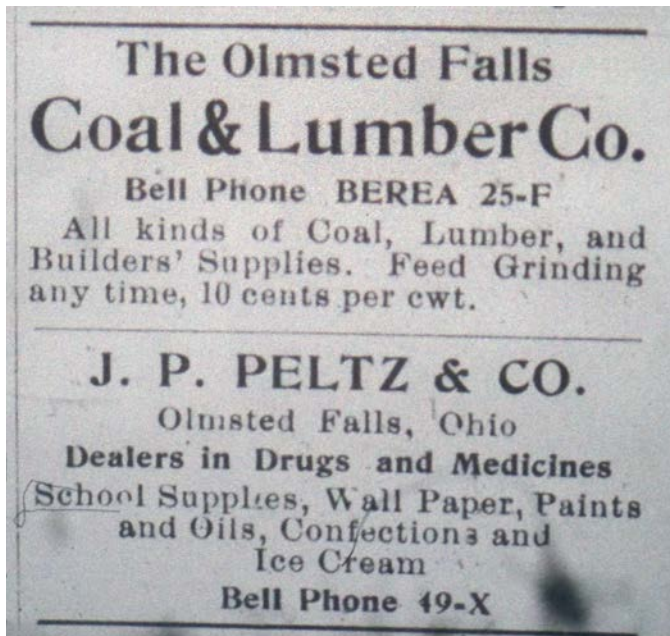
According to Walter Holzworth in his 1966 book about Olmsted history, Olmsted Falls Coal and Lumber was organized in September 1913. Over the next decade, the company, with its saw mill, lumber yard and wood-finishing business became one of the largest industries in Olmsted. Holzworth wrote that it was second only to the railroads and later the greenhouses.

“Its coal business had its origin in Simmerer and Sons Coal Yard beside the track at the depot,” he wrote. “Phil Simmerer owned the coal yard and also set up what was called a teaming business in the days of horsepower hauling and excavating. These were apart from his interest in the Peltz & Simmerer Store.”

F.R. Bodecker bought Simmerer’s coal business in 1913. That was shortly after Philip Simmerer and Joseph Peltz split up their partnership. Simmerer and his sons kept running their hardware store in the building that is now the Grand Pacific Hotel, and Peltz re-established his drugstore on the other side of Columbia Road.



*The Olmsted Falls Coal and Lumber Company typically ran smaller ads, but occasionally, it used bigger ads like this one.*



*Ads for Olmsted Falls Coal and Lumber Company and Joseph Peltz's store often ran together in the newspaper.*

department ceased operation, and parts of the property were sold off. Stockholders became disappointed and sold off their stock.

Henry Hoftzyer, who had served as the company's treasurer, bookkeeper and office manager, took over ownership. A fire on October 23, 1944, burned down a two-and-a-half-story storage shed at a loss of about \$10,000. After Hoftzyer died at age 82 on September 9, 1950, his daughter, Hazel Hoftzyer, then the bookkeeper, took over as president and general manager. Late in the 1950s, she disposed of the stock of building supplies and dismantled the large storage shed. Holzworth said that was to make way for other developments. "Not a trace of this once flourishing business remains," he wrote.

F.J. Moley was Felix James Moley, but according to Holzworth, he was known to friends and customers as Phil. He was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1846 and came to Olmsted Falls with his parents in 1863. His father, Hypolite, established a tailoring shop in Olmsted Falls that employed 25 women and made uniforms for the Union army in the Civil

Soon after Bodecker bought the coal business, Harry Stearns, who had organized a lumber company, took it over as a sideline to his lumber business. Bodecker became a stockholder in the company. Several others joined them in organizing the new company. They installed a steam-driven sawmill and built a kiln to dry lumber.

According to Holzworth, the United Farmers' Exchange was organized in the early 1920s and took over the coal and feed business from the lumber company, which then concentrated on lumber and building supplies. However, the company ran into difficulties obtaining timber, so the sawmill was removed, the finishing



*This is the type of ad that typically ran for Phil Moley's store 100 years ago.*

War. Phil Moley worked in the store and then took it over after his father died in 1886. One of his sons, Raymond, served as school superintendent and mayor in Olmsted Falls when he was young and later in President Franklin Roosevelt's "Brain Trust," as well as briefly as assistant secretary of state.

## Olmsted's Turkeyfoot Is Not the Only One

The name Turkeyfoot doesn't show up on any current maps for Olmsted Falls or signs around town, but it is common knowledge that Turkeyfoot is an alternate name for the old Chestnut Grove Cemetery. Use of the Turkeyfoot name has persisted into the 21<sup>st</sup> century even though the cemetery has officially been called Chestnut Grove for 138 years.



*The Turkeyfoot Valley Historical Society is based in Confluence, Pennsylvania.*

It's an unusual name but not unique to Olmsted. The name also is used around the southwestern Pennsylvania community of Confluence, which is in the Turkeyfoot Valley. The town gets its name because it is located at the confluence of the Casselman River, Laurel Hill Creek and the Youghiogheny River. A quick look at the logo for the Turkeyfoot Valley Historical Society makes it apparent how the valley got its name: The map of the two rivers and creek bear a resemblance to the foot of a turkey.

Other places across the United States also use the name. Included among them are Turkeyfoot Lake in Akron, Turkey Foot Middle School in Edgewood, Kentucky, and Turkey Foot Campground in the Daniel Boone National Forest in Kentucky.

So how did Olmsted's Turkeyfoot – sometimes spelled Turkey Foot or Turkey-foot – get its name? Well, according to Walter Holzworth's 1966 history of Olmsted, it received that name "because a flock of Bradford turkeys roosted there." It's not clear what Bradford turkeys were unless they simply were turkeys that belonged to the Bradford family, which resided along what is now called River Road. Criswell Johnson's 1879 *History of Cuyahoga County, Ohio*, noted that wild turkeys "abounded" in Olmsted in the 1800s.



*The waterways shown in this logo for the Turkeyfoot Valley Historical Society make it clear how the valley got its name.*





*Originally called Turkeyfoot when it was created in 1854, this cemetery received the official name of Chestnut Grove in 1878, but many people still call it Turkeyfoot. Note the 1877 vault in the upper left of the photo.*

The cemetery at Turkeyfoot Grove was started in 1854, when Olmsted Township trustees decided that residents needed another cemetery in addition to Butternut Ridge Cemetery. In 1855, Oscar and Susan Kendall deeded the first few acres of the cemetery to the township. In 1877, the trustees had a vault built at the new cemetery. The Berea newspaper, then called the *Republican and Advertiser*, reported further changes in the Olmsted Falls column in its September 26, 1878, edition: “Long needed improvements are being

made in the cemetery near this village. Walks and drives are being made and the grounds cleared up. The name of Chestnut Grove was given to the cemetery at the last meeting of the trustees.”

Since 1929, Chestnut Grove Cemetery has been operated by the Union Cemetery Association, which was formed by Olmsted Township and the villages of Olmsted Falls and West View. (The two villages merged in the early 1970s and became the City of Olmsted Falls.) As empty space dwindled at the old cemetery, the new Chestnut Grove Cemetery was created along Lewis Road.

## **Former Resident Appreciates Olmsted’s History Better Now**

Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township share a rich history, but that history has not always been evident to people who grew up in Olmsted. Some don’t realize much about that history until after they move away. That was the case with one *Olmsted 200* reader, Lisa Kunberger Woodcock, who graduated from Olmsted Falls High School in 1972 and now lives in Texas. In a recent email, she said, an August visit to Olmsted – her first in more than 20 years – was more emotional than she had imagined.

“Much has changed, but the basic ‘feel’ is exactly the same,” Woodcock wrote. “Never appreciated the multitude of historic buildings around us when we were kids; didn’t really know the history at all except for the old mill stones. Just thought we lived in a ‘quaint’ suburb. It’s a real gem and thank heavens someone in Cleveland had the foresight years ago to protect the entire Metropolitan Park System which remains an easily accessible escape into tranquility. The entire [Grand] Pacific Junction set up is

exceptionally well done and there are **several** restaurants, all of which have [good] quality food and ambiance! If it weren't for the fact that those damp cold winters always got to me, I'd be ready to move back. My husband now understands the kind of childhood I was blessed to have and which I describe to him in great detail. It was a great place to grow up."

Woodcock added that some of what she read in *Olmsted 200* made her interested in seeing Olmsted again.

## Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include a story about Olmsted's connection to an astronomical event, a story about the illnesses that might have driven one of Olmsted's prominent citizens away from town and a story about a coin from Olmsted's sesquicentennial celebration.

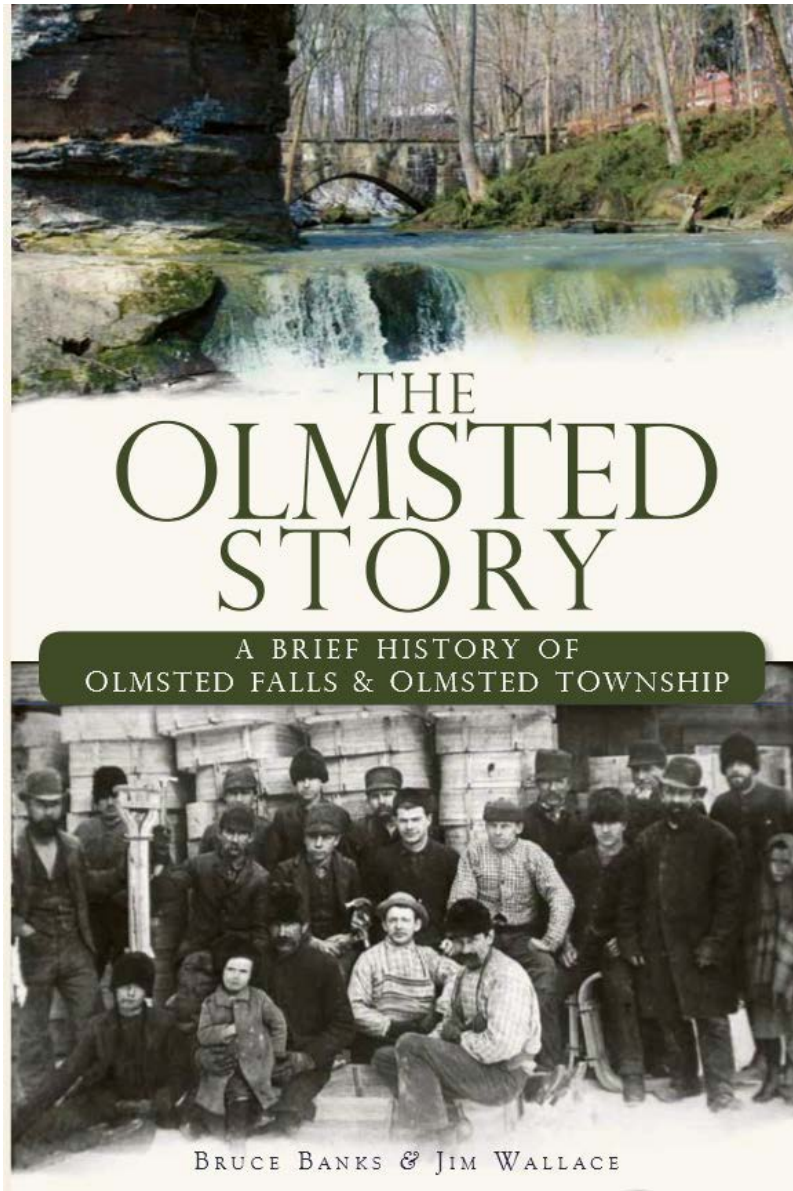
If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: [wallacestar@hotmail.com](mailto:wallacestar@hotmail.com). *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, Colorado, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia, Florida, Texas, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine, 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://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. Thanks go to Mary Louise King for help proofreading and editing many issues. 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 the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.



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