



# *Olmsted 200*

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

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## **Olmsted Was a “Run-of-the-Mill” Town**

The community that took the name Olmsted Falls in the mid-1800s could have been named “Olmsted Mills” instead. That’s because mills – both sawmills and gristmills – played significant roles in the 19<sup>th</sup> century development of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township. Some signs of those mills, as well as parts of their dams and sluices, can still be found in the area.

Two of the most prominent mills in Olmsted Falls already have been featured in *Olmsted 200*. Damp’s Mill along Rocky River was covered in stories in Issues 5, 11 and 16. The Big Red Mill along Plum Creek was the subject of a story last month in Issue 51.

No account of the mills that served Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township would be complete without mentioning the name Hoadley. But first, let’s consider some other names.

One of the earliest builders of mills was Watrous Usher, who arrived in the township in 1820, just five years after the first settlers moved in. According to different historical accounts, he built at least two sawmills, one along Plum Creek in the area that became Olmsted Falls and the other farther north along a creek in what now is North Olmsted. That creek runs under Columbia Road (at the curve that was bypassed when the new section of Ohio Route 252 was built a few decades ago). In 1835, Usher made his home nearby across from the Butternut Ridge cemetery.

Also in that area, in what was then the northeastern portion of Olmsted Township, Joel Lawrence built the first gristmill near Cedar Point. Lawrence and his wife, Catherine, arrived from the state of New York. Walter Holzworth gave conflicting dates in two of his books. In *Story of Cedar Point Valley*, he wrote that Joel Lawrence was a township constable in 1827 and that he built the mill in about 1832. But in his main book of Olmsted history, *Township 6, Range 15, Historical Story [of] Olmsted Township, Villages of Olmsted Falls, North Olmsted, West View*, Holzworth wrote that Joel and Catherine Lawrence arrived from New York in 1833. Both books came out in 1966.

No matter when Joel Lawrence arrived, he is credited with building an early gristmill. In *Story of Cedar Point Valley*, Holzworth wrote that he arrived in Olmsted Township (then still called Lenox Township) with a deed to a large tract of land in the northeastern corner of the township. Part of that land is where the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Glenn Research Center now is located. Holzworth said another portion became a development known as Norwood Estates, while another portion abutted Cedar Point Road and included Switzer Road, Valley View Drive and Lucille Drive. Rocky River was the western boundary of Lawrence's land.

(To avoid some confusion, it should be noted that what was originally the northeastern corner of Olmsted Township became part of Brook Park in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That change began after Olmsted's school system starting transporting students to the school built in 1916 (now Olmsted Falls City Hall). It was too difficult and expensive to transport the few students who lived along Cedar Point Road and Ruple Road to Olmsted Falls and back, so their tuition to the Middleburgh Township schools was paid. After Brook Park was incorporated in 1950, voters in that section of Olmsted Township elected to join the new village.)

"When Joel Lawrence constructed his grist mill, he built a dam on the east branch of the river on the south side of the road," Holzworth wrote in *Story of Cedar Point Valley*. "He then made a wooden sluice under the road to divert the water to his wheel on the north side. There is still much evidence of the mill. The old stone foundation lies just north of the road leading down from Ruple Road."



*These photos from about 1900 show the dam and building for the mill that was begun by Joel Lawrence in about 1832 (although they likely had been modified over the years).*

The mill passed through several owners and was an important business in that area for many years. The mill building and dam lasted at least until the early 1900s.

Another early mill operator was Uriah Kilpatrick. In his *History of Cuyahoga County, Ohio*, in 1879, Criswell Johnson wrote that Kilpatrick built a “packet” gristmill along Plum Creek in the 1830s.

“Both the mill and its owner were of a slow and easy nature, and the patience of his customers was sometimes severely tried,” Johnson wrote. One such customer was named Powell. Johnson wrote that Powell once sought a warrant against Kilpatrick. The justice of the peace refused the warrant and suggested that Powell instead should seek revenge through poetry. Powell produced this verse:

*Iron beetles are seldom found,  
But basswood justices here abound.  
On the banks of Rocky river  
Tall Kirkpatrick’s nose doth quiver;  
There he sits in his slow mill,  
Which most folks think is standing still.*

Johnson wrote that Kilpatrick operated his mill for 10 to 12 years before abandoning it.

Yet another gristmill operator mentioned by Johnson was Peter Kidney, who lived along what now is River Road. He built his mill on Rocky River below the mouth of Plum Creek. Because Rocky River flows north, below the mouth of Plum Creek would be just north of where the creek flows into the river, or somewhere around where the Water Street Bridge is now.

### **Hoadley brothers were prolific mill builders.**

Those are some of the people who built mills either on Plum Creek or on Rocky River, but as noted earlier, Hoadley is the name associated with several mills within Olmsted and nearby. That’s thanks to the efforts of two brothers, Captain Calvin Hoadley and Major Lemuel Hoadley, Jr. They and another brother, Samuel, came from Waterbury, Connecticut, and were among the earliest settlers. They arrived in Cleveland, which then was a tiny settlement, in 1807. In March of that year, they headed through the woods to Columbia Township.

“Wherever Captain Hoadley and Lemuel settled they constructed a saw or grist mill and the one they built in 1809 at West View over the years was owned by several succeeding proprietors,” Holzworth wrote in his 1966 book on Olmsted history.

That mill, primarily built by Calvin Hoadley, lasted more than a century at a spot along the West Branch of Rocky River just south of the border between Cuyahoga County and Lorain County (where Sprague Road now is). Thus, it was just inside

Columbia Township but so close to what became Olmsted Township that you could stand in Olmsted and throw a stone that would hit the mill. The area on both sides of the county line then was called West View (although the Village of West View that was incorporated in 1927 – and became part of Olmsted Falls in 1971 – was only on the Cuyahoga County side).



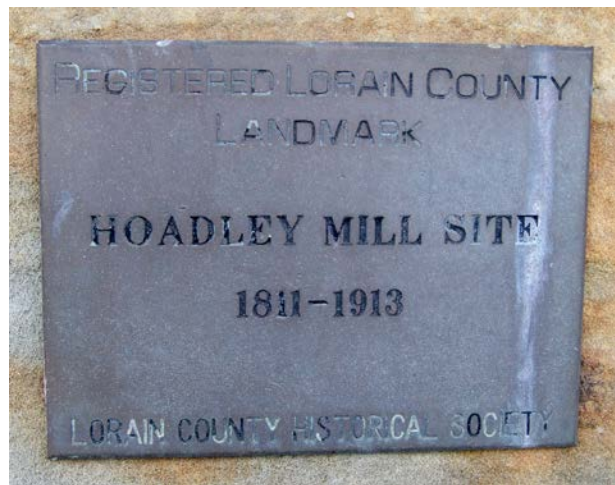
*This photo says the mill was built in 1810.*

Holzworth put the date of the West View mill's construction at 1809, but other sources list it as 1810 or 1811. An old photograph has 1810 written on it, but a plaque put up by the Lorain County Historical Society lists the mill's beginning as 1811. No matter which date is correct, it was one of the earliest mills in the area. It was a gristmill that ground grains, but Calvin Hoadley later built a sawmill nearby. Together, they were

known Hoadley's Mills.

The gristmill operated long after it passed out of the hands of the Hoadley family. Among its best-known owners was Thomas Chambers, an Englishman who came to America in 1870 and operated a gristmill in Sheffield in Lorain County for several years. In 1882, he acquired the mill built by Calvin Hoadley. He held onto it for so long – almost three decades – that it became known as the Chambers Mill.

But Chambers did not have good timing. In 1883, the year after he bought the mill, one of the worst March floods in the area's history swept down Rocky River and almost destroyed the mill. "Only the initial solid construction by its builders, the Hoadleys, saved it from complete destruction," Holzworth wrote. "He rebuilt the structure and replaced the old grinders and millstones with new machinery."



*A Lorain County Historical Society plaque puts 1811 as the year when Calvin Hoadley built his mill. It also gives 1913 as the year it ceased operations, but it actually lasted until 1920.*

Three decades later, in 1913, another big flood severely damaged the mill. Again, Chambers repaired it and operated it until 1920.



*This is perhaps the best old photograph of the mill started by Calvin Hoadley and later operated by Thomas Chambers, as well as the dam and other nearby buildings.*



*This photo shows the other side of the old mill away from the river.*

The gristmill and the dam that served it are long gone, but not all signs of it have disappeared. From the Sprague Road bridge, an observer can see stones that had been part of the dam. And on the site of the mill is Gibbs Butcher Block, a store that sells meats, cheeses and other foods. It still uses the slogan, "The Old Mill," and its building retains the contours of the former mill building. The store pays homage to its past with a replica millwheel out front. Also out front is a large sandstone grindstone with the aforementioned plaque from the Lorain County Historical Society.



*This pair of photos shows the March 25, 1913, flood and then the destruction it left at the mill and along Sprague Road.*





*The photo on the left shows the building that now houses Gibbs Butcher Block next to the site of the former dam. The photo on the right from August 6, 2017, when the water level was lower reveals some of the stones that once were part of the dam for the mill.*

Even if the Hoadleys had not built another mill, their mill on the northern edge of Columbia Township would have been significant in Olmsted's history because of its proximity to the border and role in commerce in that section known as West View. But Lemuel Hoadley, Jr., made his own name in Olmsted history as a mill builder. However, that came after he built at least a couple of other mills in northeastern Ohio.

One was in Brecksville, where he became one of the first township trustees elected in 1811. Hoadley built a gristmill there in either 1812 or 1813 (accounts differ). That mill was 18 feet by 20 feet, built of logs, and had a wheel made in sections and joined together by strap iron. By 1814, Hoadley and his family settled in Bath, where he built one or more mills.

Hoadley and his family moved to Olmsted Township (before it was called Olmsted) in 1819, initially at the western end of Butternut Ridge, where he built a log cabin. According to Johnson's 1879 history book, Hoadley and Crosby Baker "built the first gristmill and sawmill in the township, on the west branch of Rocky river, just above the junction with the east branch." That would have been near the current Cedar Point Road. In her 1964 history of Olmsted, Bernice Offenberger wrote that Hoadley and Baker built their mill in 1820.

Another move in 1824 took the Lemuel Hoadley family to Ridgeville (now North Ridgeville), but they returned to Olmsted in the early 1830s. Hoadley and his son-in-law, John Barnum, built a mill at the mouth of Plum Creek. Late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, local historian Bruce Banks (co-author of *The Olmsted Story: A Brief History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township*) noticed a diagonal groove in the side of Inscription Rock. He believes that might have helped anchor the dam for the mill.

"When you get up close, you can tell it was chiseled into the rock for planks of boards that blocked off [the water]," Banks said. "It probably wasn't really a great sawmill because it wasn't a huge height difference [in the water level], but I think it worked for him."



*The photo on the left shows a diagonal groove on the side of Inscription Rock that might have helped Lemuel Hoadley and John Barnum secure planks for the dam for their mill on Plum Creek. On the right is part of the hand-chiseled sluice carved into the rock on the opposite side of the creek.*

On the other side of the creek, a channel in the rock seems to have been the sluice for the mill. “He hand-chiseled about one or two feet wide and deep in about 40 feet of sandstone,” Banks said. “I wasn’t sure until we dug it up. It all connects. That dammed up Plum Creek, and then he brought this into some sort of wooden trough, probably to an undershot wheel for a sawmill. You can see evidence from where he had wooden structures to vent the water to his mill.”



*The photo on the left shows where a millwheel seems to have been anchored in the rock on the side of a hill just north of the mouth of Plum Creek. Notice the round indentation just below the center of the photo. The right photo shows a bolt sticking out of a slab of stone, which might have helped secure the base of a sawmill. Nearby, red bricks can still be found in the ground. They might have been left over from the mill that stood there.*





*Four Bradford bricks found in the ground at David Fortier River Park are shown next to a ruler. Photo courtesy of Bruce Banks.*

A bit north of the mouth of Plum Creek in a wooded area, there seems to be more evidence of a mill. “Looking down, I noticed a bolt sticking out,” Banks said. “If you sweep things away, you can see a foundation that it was anchored to. That was Lemuel Hoadley’s sawmill.... It looks like it had an undershot millwheel. You can see where he anchored beams into the sandstone there for a two-level building.”

Also in the ground in that area, some red bricks can still be found. Banks believes they were used in the construction of the mill, or perhaps the reconstruction of it after the original structure burned. They are Bradford bricks, which were made by brothers Lester and Eastman Bradford near where Nobottom Road and River Road meet.

“They’re all the same size and shape...but [have] no holes in them,” Banks said. (Bradford bricks also were used to build the house that still stands at 8008 Columbia Road.)

Lemuel Hoadley and John Barnum built homes close to their mill. Although it has been expanded in recent years, the house on the southeastern corner of Water Street and Main Street (7707 Main Street) began as Hoadley’s house in 1836. Barnum built his one-and-a-half story house a bit west from there along Water Street. When his son, Luther, and daughter-in-law, Mary, lived there later in the 1800s, they remodeled the house. (Its address now is 25334 Water Street.)

However, Hoadley did not stay long in his new house. In the spring of 1839, he moved with family members to Chillicothe, where he died of malaria that summer. If he had stayed in the Olmsted area, perhaps he would have built other mills.



*On the left is the house at 25334 Water Street that was built by John Barnum and remodeled by his son, Luther. On the right is the house at 7707 Main Street that was built by Lemuel Hoadley, Jr. It was expanded in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A 1960 photo of the house can be found in Issue 35 of Olmsted 200 from April 2016. The houses were close to Hoadley and Barnum’s mill at the mouth of Plum Creek.*



## Hoadleys Might Have Built Olmsted's First Frame House

In addition to having a reputation for building mills, members of the Hoadley family are featured in another story of construction from Olmsted's early days. But in this case, it was women of the family who played the major roles.

In his 1879 book about Cuyahoga County history, Criswell Johnson wrote that shortly after Lemuel Hoadley and his family settled at Butternut Ridge in 1819, Hoadley built a log house and then immediately began work on a frame house. Here is how Johnson wrote about what happened:

*After the frame was completed, ready to raise, one day in late summer Major Hoadley and his wife went away for the day, leaving at home his daughters, Maria and Eunice, the carpenter, James Miles, and a man named Eliot Smith. During the day Mrs. Scales [a neighbor] also came over to visit them. The two girls, both enterprising, wide-awake young women, determined that they would surprise their parents by raising the new house while they were gone. It was not a very large one, the timbers were light, the carpenter offered to help and to see that the work was done properly, young Smith was very ready to give his best assistance, and Mrs. Scales proffered a pair of arms not at all to be despised.*

*So at it they went. Under Mr. Miles's direction, they all took hold, carried the timbers to their proper position, fitted the sills into place, and matched the bents together. Then with hands and pike-poles the three women and two men started a bent upward, and to the cheery "heave-ho!" of the carpenter steadily raised it into place. The other work quickly followed, and when Major and Mrs. Hoadley returned at nightfall, their eyes were greeted with the sight of a frame completely erected and ready for the clapboards, while, to their astonished inquiries, two demure young ladies answered quietly, "Oh, we did it," as if raising houses was the commonest thing in the world for them to do.*

Some people claimed that was the first frame house built in the township. Walter Holzworth wrote in his 1966 book about Olmsted history that others claimed that different houses had the distinction of being the first, but he seemed to think the Hoadley house was first.

In the spring of 1820, Maria Hoadley married John Adams, who had newly arrived in the area. They built their two-room house at what now is the corner of Columbia Road and Nobottom Road. From that beginning, the house was expanded several times by subsequent owners until now it is a very large house undergoing further remodeling by current owners Bill and Marty Richner. (See stories in *Olmsted 200* Issue 4 from September 2013, Issue 29 from October 2015, Issue 43 from December 2016 and Issue 48 from May 2017 for more about the house.) It is believed to be the oldest existing

residence in either Olmsted Township or Olmsted Falls and perhaps the oldest house in Cuyahoga County that always has been a residence.

Later, Eunice Hoadley married John Barnum, who was her father's partner in building a mill at the mouth of Plum Creek. As explained in the previous story, Lemuel Hoadley built a new house close to that mill, and so did John and Eunice Barnum.

## Former Library Is Becoming a Restaurant

One of the oldest buildings in Olmsted Falls is getting a new look. Many longtime residents recognize the building at 7928 Main Street as the former library. That's what it



*This is how the former Newton Loomis house appeared in February 2013, right after it ceased being used as a public library.*

was from the mid-1950s until February 2013, when the new Olmsted Falls Branch of the Cuyahoga County Library opened on Mapleway Drive. But the building began as the home of Newton P. Loomis, who moved to Olmsted in 1834.

The building has been empty since the library moved out, but by next spring, it is scheduled to become the community's newest restaurant. Josh Lorek of Cetera Advisor Networks of Fairview Park

and others are working on renovating the old building.

"I want to bring character to it," he said in late August. "We're shooting for like March-April. That's going to be pretty ambitious."

Lorek and his associates are using parts from a barn in the Amherst area that they dismantled to give the former library a look he calls an "older vibe with a modern flair."

That includes using the barn's old flooring as new flooring for the restaurant. Visitors to the area recently also might have noticed a big pile of sandstone blocks stacked behind the building. They, too, came from the old barn. They are about the same as the sandstone blocks quarried in Olmsted Falls and neighboring areas in the late 1800s and will be



*These planks from an Amherst area barn more than 120 years old will be the new flooring for the restaurant.*



*Wood and stone from this barn that stood near Amherst are being used as parts in renovation of the former library in Olmsted Falls. This and all but the first photo in this story are courtesy of Josh Lorek.*

used as part of a patio that will overlook the park.

“That will be the perimeter, so we’re going to stack those and pour a footer to receive them, and then they’ll be sitting on that,” Lorek said. “I think that will be a one-of-a-kind patio.”

Plans also are for an expansion on the back of the building for the restaurant’s kitchen. “We’ve decided we’re going to have our architect maybe do a little of a bump-out of a kitchen behind the building just because we think it would be too hard to retrofit based on size,” Lorek said.

As someone who grew up on Water Street, he thinks it’s “cool” to do something in the community. Lorek believes Olmsted Falls has the potential of being more like Chagrin Falls with more restaurants and specialty stores that people would be willing to travel to visit.

Mike Jacobs, who co-owns the Olde Wine Cellar next door with his wife Kari, welcomes a new restaurant on Main Street. He said it is good for all the merchants if Olmsted Falls has more restaurants and others shops to attract visitors. Lorek said he and Jacobs have promised to work with each other.

As part of the renovations, Lorek wants to play off of the building’s connections to Olmsted’s history and especially its role for almost six decades as a library, perhaps even with “library” in the restaurant’s name. “We want to keep that history,” he said. “It’s somewhat of a play on words, ‘I’m heading to the Library.’”

Structurally, he has found the building to be in fine shape but “just dated.”

Lorek and his associates are aiming for a restaurant with a menu like a steakhouse but where people can still get a sandwich in the evening. “It should have three distinct party areas between the basement and the patio,” he said.



*These stones from the old barn were piled behind the former library in preparation for use in the planned restaurant.*



## Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include a story about an old home that belonged to one of Olmsted's prominent families of the 1800s, as well as more stories about the history of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township.

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, Washington, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, West Virginia, Florida, New York, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Maine, as well as overseas in Egypt, 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.

Except where otherwise noted, all articles in *Olmsted 200* are written by Jim Wallace. Thanks go to Mary Louise King for help in 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 Village Bean in Olmsted Falls and the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center, as well as through online booksellers.

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