



Olmsted 200

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

Issue 65

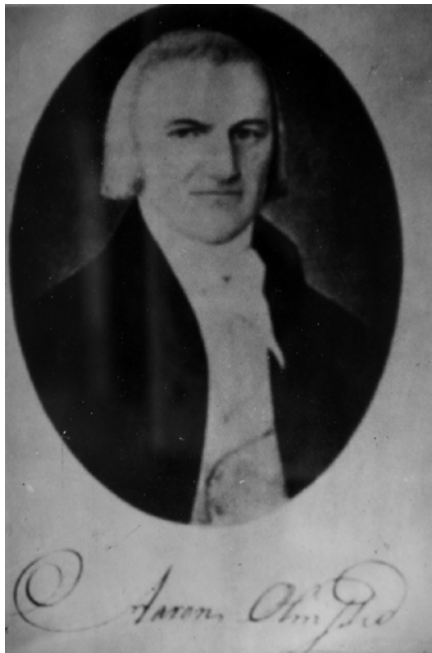
October 1, 2018

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Keep the “A” Away from Olmsted

“A” is an excellent grade to get in school, but anyone who puts an “a” in “Olmsted” should get an “F.”



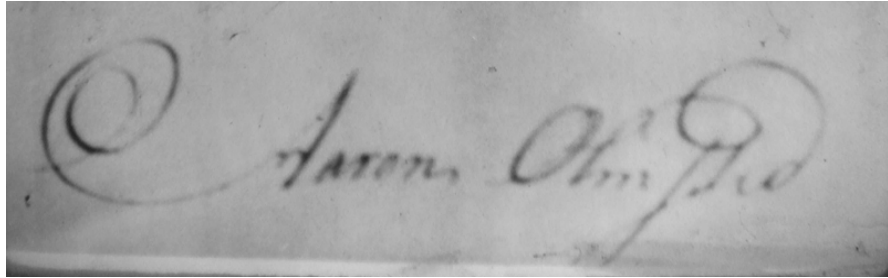
Under this portrait of Aaron Olmsted is his signature, which has no “a” in his last name.

Yet people have done that over and over again throughout many decades. In some cases, they have just made simple mistakes. However, others have perpetuated a myth that “Olmsted” once had an “a” that was dropped at some time. They have included such entities as the governments of Olmsted Township and North Olmsted, the Cuyahoga County Public Library and the Ohio Historical Society, although each of them corrected the error in recent years after it was pointed out to them. Also included among those who have perpetuated the myth are authors of books and articles on Olmsted history as early as 1879 and into the early 21st century.

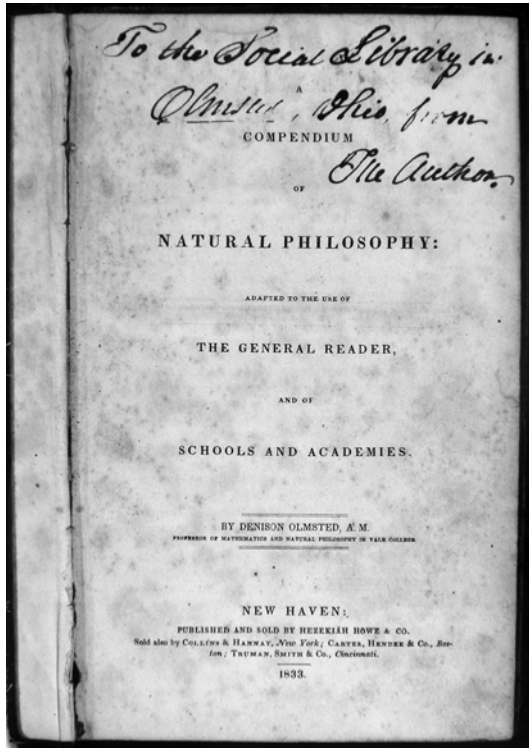
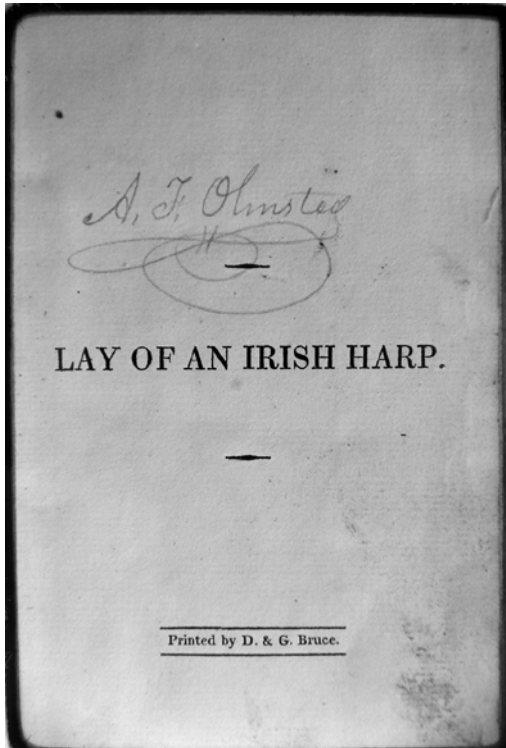
But the Olmsteds for whom Olmsted Township and subsequently Olmsted Falls and North Olmsted were named never spelled the family name as “Olmstead.” Several sources confirm the correct spelling. One is a portrait of Aaron Olmsted, the Connecticut sea captain who placed a successful bid in a 1795 auction for about half of the original

township, which then was known as Township 6, Range 15, of Connecticut's Western Reserve. Under that portrait is Olmsted's signature with no "a" in his last name. Even people who have trouble with spelling rarely misspell their own names.

Aaron Olmsted used the 18th century style of "s" that looks like an "f" but no "a" in his last name.



Several years ago, the Historical Society of Olmsted Falls acquired three letters written by Aaron Olmsted. His signature on each of them includes no "a" in his last name.



These two books from the Oxcart Library show that members of the Olmsted family never put an "a" in their last name. Aaron Franklin Olmsted, son of Aaron Olmsted, signed the book on the left. Denison Olmsted was the author of the book on the right, so his name is printed in the book and he spelled the name the same way when he donated the book to "The Social Library in Olmsted, Ohio." Photos courtesy of Bruce Banks.

Other evidence that members of the Olmsted family never spelled their name with an "a" can be found in a case in the North Olmsted library that contains the remaining books from the Oxcart Library. The Oxcart Library consisted of about 500 books that Aaron Olmsted's son, Charles Hyde Olmsted, sent to the township by oxcart from

Also among the Oxcart Library collection is a book written by Denison Olmsted, another relative from the Hartford, Connecticut, area. He even signed the book, “To the Social Library in Olmsted, Ohio, from The Author.” In both books, Olmsted is spelled without an “a” in it. Again, people tend not to misspell their own names. (More about Denison Olmsted and the Oxcart Library can be found in Issue 42 of *Olmsted 200* from November 2016.)

The Ws. Draft made by David Tiedtke & Others

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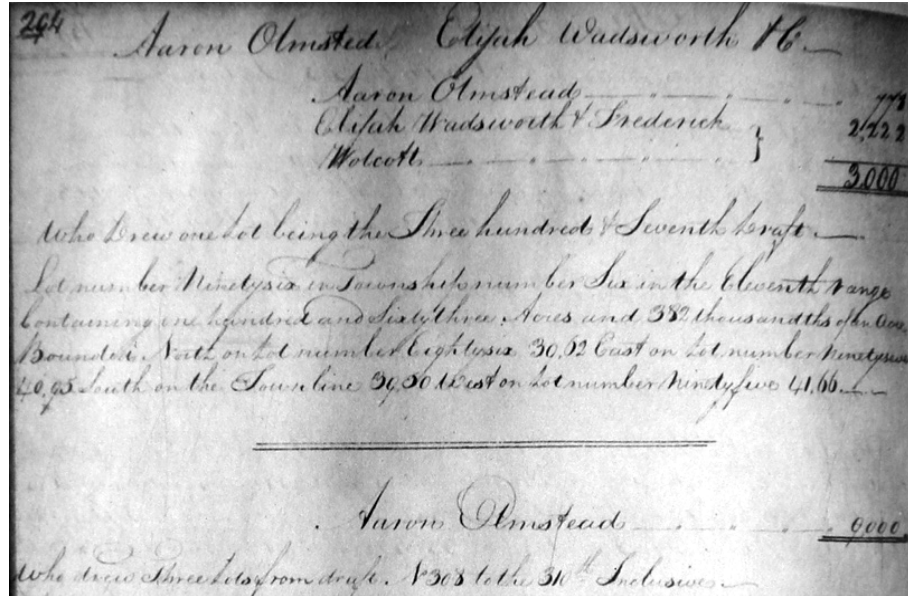
The draw township A & B in the 15th Range containing 14,472
acres and is bounded as follows Beginning at the north east

However, another document that lists the purchase of each parcel of land spells his name in some cases as “Olmsted” and others as “Olmstead.” The handwriting is the same, so the same person simply spelled it correctly at times and incorrectly at other times.

In 1983, Bruce Banks, local historian and co-author of *The Olmsted Story: A*

Brief History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township, exchanged correspondence with Pauline Olmsted, a member of the Olmsted family who still resided in Connecticut. She confirmed that the first Olmsteds who came to America spelled their name without an “a” in it. “James Olmsted arrived in Braintree Quincy, Mass., in 1632 with his two sons and a niece and two nephews,” she wrote and then included a family tree and information about other Olmsteds related to him in England and America.

In this document from the Trumbull County Courthouse, the person who wrote it spelled Aaron Olmsted’s last name without an “a” at the top but with an “a” twice farther down. Photo courtesy of Bruce Banks.



A 1912 book, *Genealogy of the Olmsted Family in America*, written by Henry King Olmsted, M.D., acknowledges that there were some people in America who spelled their last name “Olmstead,” as well as other ways, including “Elmsted,” “Holmsted,” and “Umsted,” but “Olmsted” was the version of “the name most commonly spelled by descendants.” In his extensively detailed book of 734 pages, he also noted that many Americans with various spellings of the name were not necessarily related to the Olmsteds who settled in the Hartford, Connecticut, area, which is where Aaron Olmsted and his family lived.



H.K. Olmsted’s book includes this Olmsted family coat of arms.

In the end, no matter how others spelled the name, it matters only that the Olmsteds for whom Olmsted Township and its related communities were named never spelled their name with an “a” in it.

Nevertheless, the author of one of the earliest histories of Olmsted got the name wrong. In his 1879 book, *History of Cuyahoga County, Ohio*, Crisfield Johnson devoted the final section to histories of the county’s townships at that time. He titled the chapter about Olmsted Township “Olmstead” and

spelled the name that way consistently throughout the chapter. There is no explanation why he did that; he seems simply to have made a mistake. Perhaps at that time, there were no signs at the township border indicating he was entering Olmsted Township or signs at the village border indicating he was entering Olmsted Falls. Perhaps he knew someone named “Olmstead” and just assumed that was the correct spelling for Olmsted Township.

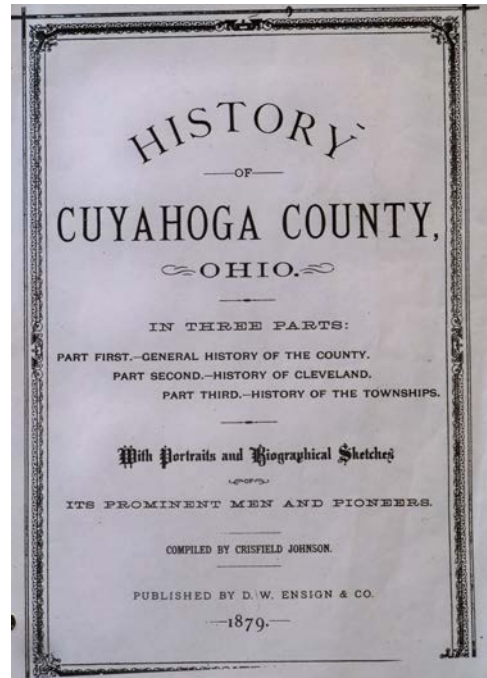
It has been said that history repeats itself. Whether that is true or not, errors made in telling history tend to get repeated over and over. No matter the reason for Johnson’s error, it influenced others who wrote about Olmsted history over several decades.

In the 1924 book, *A History of Cuyahoga County and the City of Cleveland*, author William R. Coates clearly leaned heavily on Johnson’s book when he wrote about the history of Olmsted Township because many of Coates’s stories are very similar to those told by Johnson. After stating that the township changed its name to “Olmstead” early in the 1800s, Coates wrote: “The only change in name since has been spelling, as it is now written Olmsted.” He offered no explanation for why the spelling would have been changed or when it happened. He also introduced another error by referring to Olmsted’s previous name as “Lennox” instead of “Lenox.” Fortunately, later historians did not continue that second error.

Certain newspaper stories over the years also have spread the false story about the spelling of Olmsted’s name. For example, on August 8, 1957, a story in the *Plain Dealer* was titled: “Who Lost the ‘a’ Out of ‘Olmstead?’” The story began this way: “Who lost the ‘a’ out of ‘Olmstead’ is still a pressing question as Olmsted Falls prepares to celebrate its centennial.”

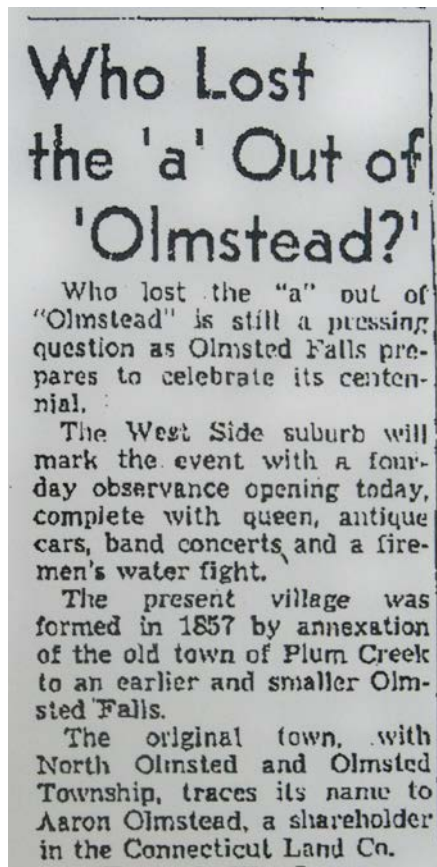
(That Olmsted Falls was celebrating in 1957 its centennial as a village was another error, not on the part of the *Plain Dealer* but because of a misinterpretation of history by community officials. Olmsted Falls incorporated as a village in 1856, so the community should have celebrated its centennial in 1956. What 1957 marked was the centennial of when Olmsted Falls doubled in size in 1857 by annexing the unincorporated hamlet of Plum Creek just to the north of the original village. The *Plain Dealer* story did get that part right.)

Later in the *Plain Dealer* story, it said the community traced its name to “Aaron



Crisfield Johnson’s 1879 book includes much useful information about Olmsted Township and Olmsted Falls, but he unfortunately failed to learn the correct spelling of the communities’ name.

Olmstead, a shareholder in the Connecticut Land Co.” Of course, the newspaper story appeared 78 years after Crisfield Johnson’s history book was published, so the misspelling of Olmsted’s name had plenty of time to get lodged in the lore about the community’s origins.



This 1957 newspaper story gave wider circulation to the wrong account of how Olmsted's name was spelled.

The newspaper told about how Lenox Township became Olmsted Township and went on to say:

But somewhere along the hills of history Olmstead's name suffered the same fate as did that of Moses Cleaveland, founder of a city which Olmsted Falls residents consider their largest suburb.

Books state only that "in the course of time the 'a' was dropped."

That excerpt offers one reason why the story that Olmsted dropped an "a" from its name was plausible. The Olmsted communities are suburbs of the big city of Cleveland (not vice versa as the *Plain Dealer* writer suggested in a tongue-in-cheek way). The story that Cleveland's founder had an extra "a" in his name that was dropped in the city's early years is known well. Thus, it would seem reasonable to anyone who hasn't studied all the evidence that Olmsted Township, and subsequently Olmsted Falls and North Olmsted, could have dropped an "a" out of "Olmsted" at some time.

However, there is a big difference in the story of Cleveland's name change. First, it is well established that Moses Cleaveland spelled his name with an "a" that did not remain in the name of the city he founded. Second, the date and reason for the change in spelling are a matter of historical record. It happened in 1830, when one of the city's early newspapers, the *Cleveland Advertiser* couldn't fit its full name into the masthead using the city's original spelling. But dropping the first "a" out of "Cleaveland" allowed the paper to put its full, but shortened, name at the top of the front page in big letters. The spelling "Cleveland" subsequently became common and stuck.

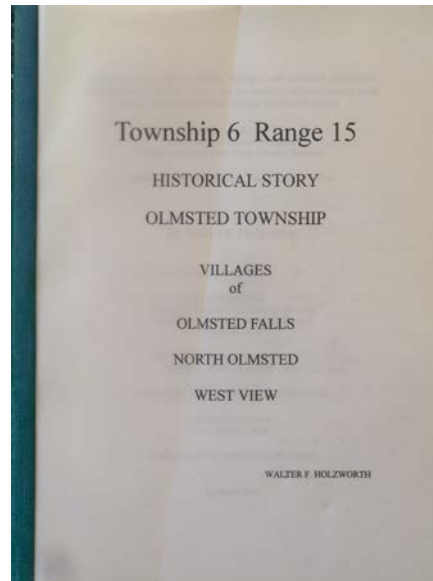
By contrast, if "Olmsted" ever had an "a" in it that was dropped at some time, it should be possible to pinpoint when that happened. Of course, that can't be done because the community's name never had an "a" in it.

Another story sometimes offered for how “Olmsted” lost an “a” was that early surveyors made a mistake when mapping Olmsted Township. But township land was sold and settled for years before the township became Olmsted, so the earliest surveys would have used Lenox or earlier names for the township on maps. Plus, surveyors couldn’t have taken out of the name an “a” that never existed.

In 1964, when Bernice Offenbergh brought out her book, *Over the Years in Olmsted, Township 6, Range 15*, she also repeated the erroneous “a” story in several places, such as stating that the township’s namesake was “Aaron Olmstead” and his son was “Charles Olmstead.” Her book is a series of stories about different aspects of Olmsted history, but it doesn’t include one about changing the name from “Olmstead” to “Olmsted.”

Likewise, in 1966, Walter Holzworth in his 334-page book, *Township 6, Range 15: Historical Story: Olmsted Township, Villages of Olmsted Falls, North Olmsted, West View*, also asserted from the beginning that Aaron Olmsted and his family had an “a” in their name. Thus, he wrote of the community’s name once being “Olmstead Township” but didn’t offer a good explanation for how it became “Olmsted Township.” Holzworth indicated that he got some of his information from the histories written by Johnson and Coates. Plus, Holzworth was not always consistent about spelling. In one sentence, he referred to “Charles Olmsted, an heir of Aaron Olmstead.”

In a briefer version of Olmsted’s history written several years later with a similar title, Holzworth consistently spelled the surname of Aaron Olmsted and the communities’ name without an “a” and without suggesting it ever was spelled otherwise. It’s not clear whether Holzworth had discovered the truth about the spelling or just didn’t want to get into the issue in that smaller publication.

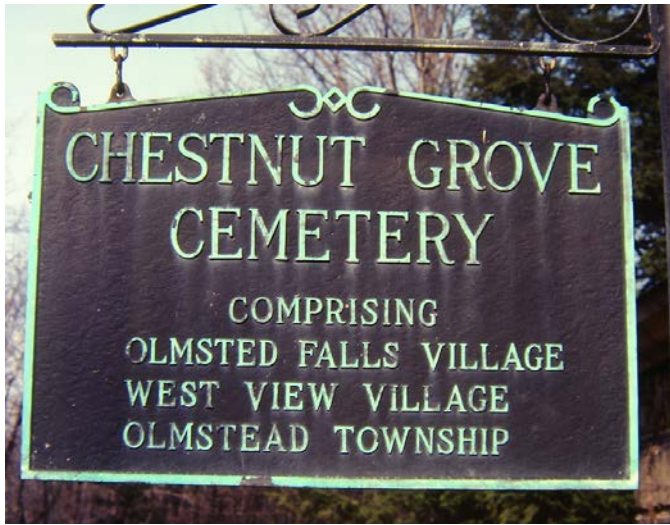


Walter Holzworth used the wrong spelling of “Olmsted” in his big 1966 history book.

In the 2007 book simply titled *Olmsted Falls*, John Cimperman repeated the erroneous account of the “a” in the name when he stated that Olmsted Township got its name from “Aaron Olmstead” by way of his son’s gift of books to the community. He then wrote, “As in the case of Cleaveland the *a* was dropped.”

Another author, Dale Thomas, did not carry on the “a” error in his two books. In *North Olmsted*, published in 2008, and in *Then & Now: Olmsted*, published in 2011, he used only the “Olmsted” spelling for Aaron and Charles Olmsted and the communities named for that family.

The 2010 book, *The Olmsted Story: A Brief History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township*, devotes the entire second chapter, “‘A’ Is Not OK in Olmsted,” to proving



This sign at Chestnut Grove Cemetery has long presented different spellings of the Olmsted name. Photo courtesy of Bruce Banks.

“Olmsted” never was correctly spelled with an “a,” using much of the evidence presented here.

Even community officials who should have known better have misspelled the name from time to time. A good, and strange, example of that is a sign at the old Chestnut Grove Cemetery, also known as Turkeyfoot. The sign, which apparently was erected sometime in the early half of the 20th century, indicates that the cemetery served “Olmsted Falls Village,” “West View Village,” and “Olmstead Township.” How “Olmsted” came to be spelled two different ways in one sign remains

unexplained.

Another sign that contains the incorrect “Olmstead” spelling is the Ohio Historical Marker for the Oxcart Library along Butternut Ridge Road near the North Olmsted library. The sign, which was erected in 1979, was sponsored by the Ohio Historical Society and the North Olmsted Landmarks Commission, which evidently was responsible for putting the misspelling on the sign. Occasionally, the erroneous “a” on that sign has been covered with a red X made of duct tape by someone who cares about history or spelling or both.



This Ohio Historical Marker in North Olmsted misspells Aaron Olmsted's name.

Even today, at certain stores in North Olmsted, Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township, it is possible to receive receipts that misspell the community's name. Presumably, they come from systems programmed by people from outside the area who are not familiar with the correct spelling.

Perhaps “Olmsted” gets misspelled because there are some people with that surname who spell it with an “a” in it. However, another reasonable possibility is that “Olmsted” suffers from being similar to the word “homestead.” Keeping spelling straight likely was especially tricky for anyone associated with the hotel that had been called for years the Homestead Studio Suites in North Olmsted.

In the end, remember it this way: No matter where you make your homestead, never put an “a” in “Olmsted.”

Some of the historical information for this story is based on research conducted by Bruce Banks.

Century-old Book Contains Biography of Aaron Olmsted

Henry King Olmsted’s 1912 book, *Genealogy of the Olmsted Family in America*, not only confirms the correct spelling of the surname of the Olmsted family for whom Olmsted Township, Olmsted Falls and North Olmsted are named but also includes a four-paragraph biography of Aaron Olmsted. Here is what it says:

All through his life Capt. Olmsted showed remarkable business ability. Following the sea from a boy he carefully saved his wages and profits from trading, and, as tradition has it, bringing his savings home and putting them in a bee-hive for safe-keeping. The bee-hive he afterward adopted as his coat of arms.

He was one of the first to go in to the China trade, and was captain of his own ship. He early became a member of the Masonic order, and brought home many beautiful things emblematic of the Order from different parts of the world, among them two white lambskin aprons elaborately decorated with Masonic emblems done in silk. One of them he presented to President Washington, a brother Mason. There are several of these emblems still kept to the family.

In 1794 he made the journey on horseback through the almost wilderness to the immediate vicinity of Cleveland, Ohio, then known as the Connecticut Western Reserve, buying 20,000 acres of land. This tract of land is a part to-day of Cuyahoga County, and practically a suburb of Cleveland. There have been built several thriving cities and towns on the land he formerly owned; among them are Berea, North Olmsted and Olmsted Falls. The certificates of purchase are now in the family, dated September 5, 1795, and signed by Jonathan Bruce, J.M. Morgan and John Caldwell, trustees for the Company.

Of his descendants, some are scattered, living in different States, but a majority still live in Hartford and East Hartford.

He died comparatively in the prime of his life, leaving a very large estate as reckoned over one hundred years ago, being largely in real estate located in Hartford and East Hartford.

High School Stories Get Responses

Many readers had comments about the stories in Issues 63 and 64 of *Olmsted 200* about the construction 50 years ago of Olmsted Falls High School and the current



construction that is expanding the school by about 40,000 square feet and renovating much of the rest of the building.

New additions are expanding the high school.

Among those who responded to the September story was Jim Lloyd, the superintendent of the Olmsted

Falls City School District. “Nice job with the coverage,” he wrote in an email. “Thanks. We’re excited about the changes and about getting rid of the classroom trailers that have held classes for 14 years. We are planning a celebratory opening sometime in November when everything has been completed.”

Many people commented on the photo of the physical education T-shirt that was issued in the early years of the high school. “I remember my brother Denton having one of those shirts,” Dimple Johnson wrote on Facebook. “I liked to wear it every chance I could sneak it from him.”

A few people said they still have their shirts and, in at least one case, the shorts that went with them. One person arranged to buy one off an alumnus who had saved his.

Township Had a Big Wedding 12 Decades Ago

The home of John Hall and his family along John Road in Olmsted Township was the scene of one of the community’s biggest social events 120 years ago this month. The October 21, 1898, edition of the *Berea Advertiser* included this account of it:

The elegant country home of Mr. and Mrs. John Hall, about a mile west of this place, was the scene of a brilliant wedding Wednesday evening, when their lovely daughter, Miss Minnie, was united in marriage with Dr. Lathrop, of Dover.

Promptly at 6 o’clock the beautiful strains of Wagner’s wedding march, rendered by Dr. Henry Beeker, of Cleveland, summoned the happy couple to the parlors.

Here Rev. L.J. Luethi, of Jefferson, awaited their arrival under a lovely arch of ivy, flowers and palms. They were preceded by Miss Angie Webster, of Elyria, as bridesmaid, and Dr. Wm. H. Nevison, of Cleveland, as groomsman. Dr. Luethi performed the interesting ceremony in an impressive manner. The bride was charmingly attired in white mull over white silk, while the bridesmaid was beautifully clad in pink organdie over pink silk. Little Charlotte and Gordon Robb were pretty flower ushers. There were about a hundred guests in attendance, the relatives and intimate friends of the family.

The ceremony was followed by an elegant and abundant repast, prepared under the supervision of Miss Emmarille Ruple, caterer and decorator of South Euclid. The floral decorations were furnished by Thomas Kirchner & Sons, florists, of Cleveland.

Dr. and Mrs. Lathrop left soon after the wedding dinner for a trip to Washington and New York, where they will spend a couple of weeks. The wedding presents were both numerous and elegant.

Among those present from a distance were the bride's grandmother, Mrs. M.A. Rogers, of Cedartown, Ga.; Mr. and Mrs. I.A. Webster, of Elyria; Mr. and Mrs. E.B. Russell, of Cedartown, Ga.; Dr. Sherman and Mr. and Mrs. Earl Herrick, of Cleveland, and Miss Eliza Love, of Michigan.

Dr. Lathrop is a prominent and popular young physician of Dover, while his bride is one of the most attractive and generally beloved young ladies of this section. Their host of friends wish them long life and abundant happiness and prosperity. Dr. and Mrs. Lathrop will be at home at Dover after December 1.



On the left is John Hall's house, as it looked in the 1960s, when it served as the clubhouse for Homelinks Golf Course. On the right is his 1880 barn, as it looked in 2010, four years before The Renaissance had it torn down.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include a story about Olmsted blacksmiths, some of whom also served as the local marshals and truancy officers.

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, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Florida, Wisconsin, New York, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut 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://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. All of the issues of *Olmsted 200* also are available on the website of the City of Olmsted Falls. Find them at: http://www.olmstedfalls.org/olmsted_falls_history/index.php. A link to *Olmsted 200* can be found on the left side of the page.

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.

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 and through online booksellers.

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