



Olmsted 200

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

Issue 71

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Merger Mania Gripped Olmsted Half a Century Ago

Efforts to change the boundaries of Olmsted Township have come and gone in spurts over the decades. They usually have begun when a neighboring community – Olmsted Falls, North Olmsted or Berea – has looked covetously at portions of township land or sometimes at the entire township. But a particularly active period of what one newspaper headline writer called “annexation fever” broke out in the latter half of the 1960s.

In this case, discussions began not when one of those other communities attempted to take township territory but with a two-year Tri-Community Study conducted by the Olmsted Falls Kiwanis Club. As reported in the *Berea News* in June 1966, the conclusion of that study was that the citizens of the area would benefit from a merger of Olmsted Township, Olmsted Falls and West View. It said they would get better schools, better police and fire protection, and better community planning and development.

SURVEY COVERS ADVANTAGES

Would Merger Help Olmsted Area?

This was the headline that topped a June 23, 1966, story in the Berea News about an Olmsted Falls Kiwanis Club study that recommended a merger of Olmsted Falls, Olmsted Township and West View.

Kiwanis members worked in four committees assigned to education, legal, services and finance issues. They conducted the study by interviewing officials of the

three communities and neighboring municipalities, state officials and residents of the area. They also conducted research and group discussions.

The committee on education found that the school district would benefit from a merger because it could switch from being a local school district to a city school district. As a local district, it came under the authority of the county school system, which meant the district had to pay about \$17,500 to the county each year to support county services. That resulted in having the district share with seven other districts two county supervisors, two-and-two-fifths psychologists, a testing program, clerical help and assistance in recruiting teachers. By becoming a city school district, Olmsted schools could hire a fulltime supervisor and get 90 percent state funding for the hiring of a fulltime psychologist, while still having funds to pay for clerical help and development of a testing program, according to the Kiwanis study.

The report said the district would receive other intangible benefits that could not be expressed in simple financial terms.

“Educationally, we can move forward faster to sounder and newly developed programs,” the report said. “This committee feels it would be to our communities’ benefit educationally to become a city system; and therefore, we should work toward uniting West View, Olmsted Falls, and Olmsted Township into one unit.”

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The other committees reported residents would be safer in a combined municipality with a police department that could have two police cars on the roads around the clock. Plus, they would pay just a little more to have a single department with a chief, a captain, three sergeants and six patrolmen at an estimated cost of \$67,500 compared to the \$65,792 the three communities

were already spending for police protection.

However, a professional, fulltime fire department would cost much more than the three volunteer departments the communities had then. The estimated cost of a city fire department with a chief, an assistant chief, two captains and 18 firemen was \$101,200. That was almost six times more than the \$17,000 the three communities were spending on their volunteer fire departments. But the study suggested residents would get “drastic savings” on insurance by having three to four fire stations manned at all times.

The cost of garbage and trash collection by the combined community was estimated to be about \$15,000, which was close to what the three communities were paying on their own.

“Paying added taxes is not a material injury to the people in the incorporated area because of the added services that they receive,” the Kiwanis report said. “Industrial development can be fostered to support and nurture the entire community. The school district can only benefit by planning of the School Board in cooperation with one political body. Municipal planning and services would be less expensive and more efficient.”

The report suggested the first move should be for the villages of Olmsted Falls and West View to merge. Then the new municipality could annex the township.

The Kiwanis report happened to be released shortly after an effort to annex 30 acres of township land to North Olmsted. In an editorial, the *Berea News* cited that as a good reason to follow the Kiwanis Club’s proposed plan.

“Truth is that we are rapidly seeing township government going the way of justice-of-the-peace courts and buggy whips,” the newspaper wrote. “State laws being what they are, townships have little defense when petitioners decide they would prefer to become a part of a contiguous municipality.”

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The *Berea News* suggested that Olmsted Township should seriously consider merging with Olmsted Falls and West View.

“The three-community consolidation could represent a logical step to keep pace with the future,” the editorial writer said. “Whether we like it or not, township governments face minor roles in today’s jet age. Trustees can’t afford to look back on an era that will never return.”

Other annexation proposals emerge.

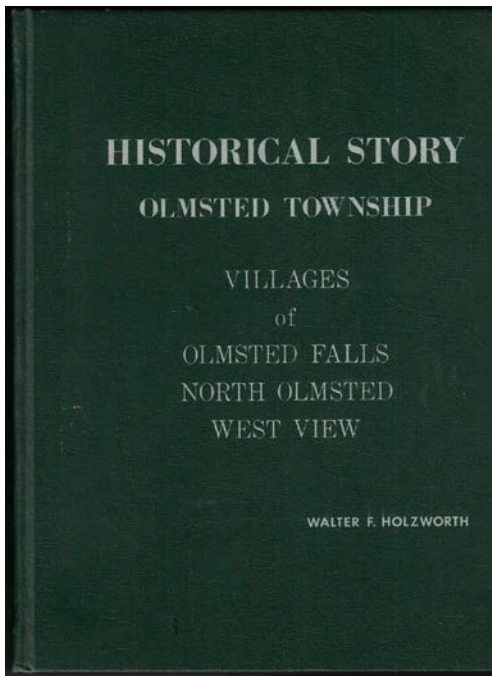
Despite such urging, the proposed three-way merger went nowhere at that time. Instead, by early 1967, Olmsted Falls was looking at annexing just the eastern section of the township along Bagley Road. As usual with such proposals, township officials expressed defiance.

“Olmsted Township is not about to lose any more of its territory by annexation to any of its hungry neighbors,” Township Zoning Commission Chairman Jack Gilbert was quoted as saying.

Again, the *Berea News* in a May 1967 editorial urged pursuit of a merger between Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township, if not also with West View, as the Kiwanis study had suggested.

“What would be wrong with creating one municipality and simply calling it ‘Olmsted?’” the newspaper asked. “We raise the question and hope that there are some answers to what seems to be a logical approach.”

In 1967, there was talk about a potential \$1.5 million industrial development along Bagley Road in the township east of Olmsted Falls, but it reportedly was held up by the village’s refusal to extend a water line to that area. In another case, the Cuyahoga County commissioners ruled that another portion of the township should be tied into North Olmsted’s sewer system. At the same time, Olmsted Falls Schools Superintendent Donald Cobb expressed concern that a portion of the township that had already been annexed to North Olmsted might also be taken away from the Olmsted Falls Local School District.



Walter Holzworth, a Schady Road resident who had just released his large book about Olmsted history (*Township 6, Range 15: Historical Story: Olmsted Township, Villages of Olmsted Falls, North Olmsted, West View*) the prior year, came out in favor of annexing Olmsted Township to Olmsted Falls.

Walter Holzworth’s book on Olmsted history was less than a year old when he backed annexation of Olmsted Township to Olmsted Falls.

“Jeopardizing the future of this community by the possibility of having portions of it annexed to other communities eager and prepared to extend their services is not the most rational approach to the interest of the Township or to the

Village,” he wrote in a letter published in the *Berea News*. “A combined community could develop into the best place in Cuyahoga County. This is something for the entire community to consider, before it is too late.”

Despite such pleas from certain individuals, annexation was not an easy issue in the township, where William Gilligan, chairman of the township trustees, was adamantly against it.

“One thing for sure, if the township is going anyplace, it isn’t to Olmsted Falls,” he told the *Plain Dealer* in January 1968. “I don’t think they have anything to offer except debts and problems and they have never consulted with us in any way regarding the proposed annexation.”

Gilligan was still bitter that the village’s refusal to extend a water line along Bagley Road had stood in the way of industrial development there.

In November 1967, Olmsted Falls Village Council tabled an ordinance to provide for annexation of the township. Thus, the annexation issue seemed to have died by January 1968, when West View officials began considering their own annexation of the township. They wanted to get approval of the county commissioners to put the issue on the ballot that November for township residents to consider.

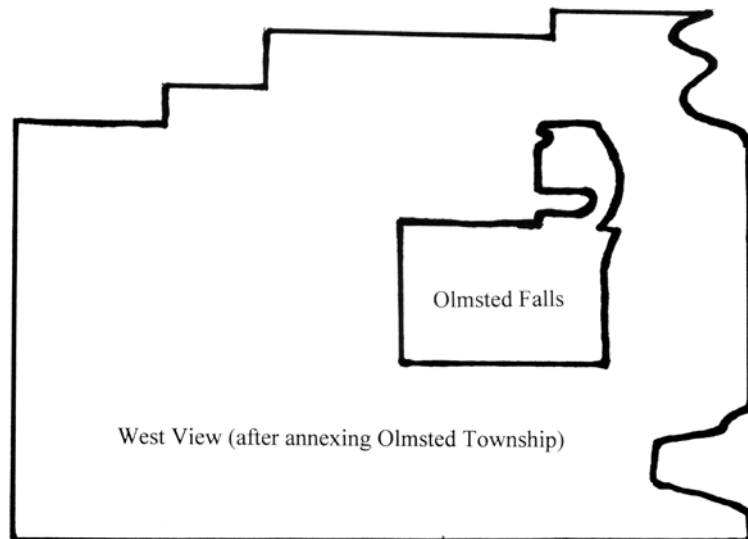
West View’s move was enough for Olmsted Falls officials to renew their efforts to acquire the township. They were concerned that an enlarged West View, which could become a city, would surround Olmsted Falls.

“The results could be disastrous,” Olmsted Falls Councilman Richard Nichols told the *Plain Dealer*. “We could be totally surrounded and strangled.”

Gilligan said he would prefer to have the township go to West View rather than Olmsted Falls, but Olmsted Falls took the lead in the race by

submitting a request to the county commissioners to put the issue of annexation to Olmsted Falls on the township’s ballot for the May 7 primary election. West View couldn’t meet the deadline for the May primary and had to settle for shooting for the November general election.

By February 1968, North Olmsted and Berea also began expressing interest in the township’s territory, although Berea wanted only the section east of the west branch of Rocky River. Township Trustee Richard Radigan said any annexation should be “all or nothing.” He didn’t want the township to be carved up among its neighbors.



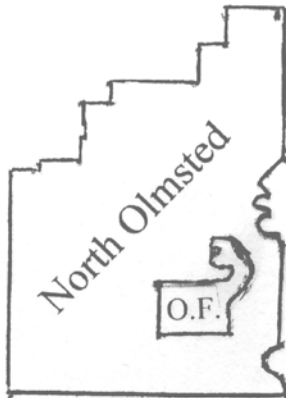
Olmsted Falls officials feared a map looking like this if West View were successful annexing Olmsted Township, leaving a small Village of Olmsted Falls surrounded by a larger City of West View.

Although, a few times in the past, residents of the township had considered incorporating the township as a municipality, it no longer was a realistic possibility. That was because Ohio legislators had changed the law in December 1967 to make it extremely difficult to incorporate any township within three miles of a municipality without getting the approval of that municipality. Olmsted Township's neighbors would rather have gone after the township themselves than let it acquire equal status with them.

West View Mayor Allan Mills expressed the fear that, if Olmsted Falls would annex the township, Berea would apply pressure to take the eastern half of West View, and West View could have been divided between Olmsted Falls and Berea. Mills preferred for Olmsted Falls, Olmsted Township and West View to unite as a single community.

North Olmsted gets back in the picture -- briefly.

By March, talks began among officials from North Olmsted, Olmsted Township and West View to consider merging their three communities. North Olmsted agreed to pick up \$1,100 of the \$2,000 cost for a Government Research Institute study on the proposal. Olmsted Falls declined to participate.



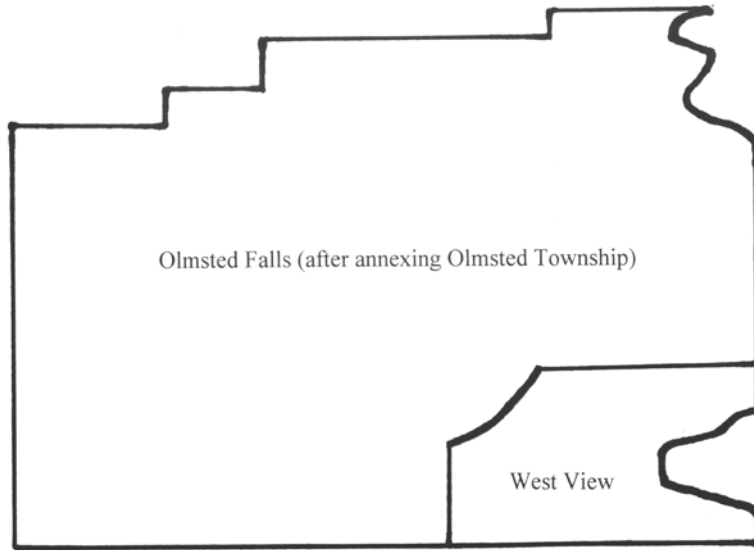
Olmsted Falls could have become an island inside North Olmsted under one merger proposal.

North Olmsted had been a city since 1951, so it would have been the dominant community in such a merger, and the new consolidated community likely would have been called North Olmsted. If that had occurred, it would have meant the community that broke away from Olmsted Township 60 years earlier would have acquired almost all of the territory of the original Olmsted Township outside of Olmsted Falls, which would have become a tiny village surrounded by North Olmsted. However, the idea of a grand merger among North Olmsted, Olmsted Township and West View did not go very far.

In early May, days before the election to decide the issue, Olmsted Township Clerk Nicholas Ziegler announced "qualified support" for annexing the township to Olmsted Falls even though township trustees opposed it. Olmsted Falls then offered to give township residents three council seats instead of the two that had been promised earlier.

Such maneuvering did little good. On May 7, 1968, 429 township residents voted for annexation to Olmsted Falls while 1,109 voted against it. That knocked Olmsted Falls out of the race for the township. Under state law, a municipality had to wait five years to retry initiating such an annexation after being rejected by voters (although township voters or landowners could have initiated such annexation attempts on their own under other provisions of state law).

This is what the map would have looked like if Olmsted Falls had been successful in annexing all of Olmsted Township in the late 1960s. Olmsted Falls could have become a city a few years earlier than it did. If that had happened, it is quite possible West View subsequently would have chosen to become part of the larger Olmsted Falls.



West View takes its turn.

West View then resumed its effort to annex the township, and Berea resumed working on getting the eastern part of the township.

In the summer of 1968, David Fortier – a College of Wooster senior from Olmsted Falls who later would become mayor – conducted a survey of a sample of residents of the township, Olmsted Falls and West View. He found 78 percent of them favored a merger of the three communities, but 52 percent opposed the township’s annexation to West View as the next step in the ultimate consolidation.

That fall, a group of Olmsted Township residents and West View residents pushed hard to promote the annexation of the township to West View. They scheduled meetings, door-to-door visits and speaking engagements.

Mayor Mills expressed those residents’ concern that if the annexation bid would fail, both Olmsted Falls and West View would be prohibited from going after the township for five years, and the township could then be slowly absorbed in pieces by North Olmsted and Berea. In an interview with the *Plain Dealer* in September 1968, he suggested that could happen because the other municipalities would need to get the support of only 50 percent of residents on petitions to take pieces of the township (with approval of the county commissioners).

That October, a month before the election, the local unit of the League of Women Voters endorsed the annexation of the township to West View “because of the need to maintain community identity, to promote true home rule by giving due weight to the vote of township residents, to preserve the present school system and to build a viable economic unit.” Like Mills, the group suggested that if the township did not get annexed to West View, other neighboring communities could nibble away at it, which would reduce residents’ voice in planning and developing their community.

The Olmsted Township Businessmen's Association also endorsed the annexation that October. But shortly before the November 5, 1968, election, opponents launched a phone and letter campaign against it. Mills called it "a bunch of malarkey" but lamented that it came so late in the process that annexation supporters had no time to react to it.



Signs like this would have been long gone if certain annexation efforts had succeeded in the late 1960s.

Olmsted Twp., West View Merger 'Now or Never'

The Plain Dealer ran this headline on September 24, 1968, as proponents began a big push to annex the township to West View.

In the election, 946 township residents voted to become part of West View, while 1,051 voted against it. It was much closer than Olmsted Falls got to annexation of the township but still not enough. While they were at it, voters also rejected a 2-mill operating levy for the township.

The election did nothing to quell efforts to annex all or parts of Olmsted Township to neighboring communities, and township government went into a period of turmoil after the election. *Olmsted 200* will have more on that and an unexpected result of the merger mania in next month's issue.

Bumper Sledding, Schady's and Annexation Stir Responses

Several *Olmsted 200* readers have expressed the pleasure they have received from reading Patrick Carroll's essays about growing up in Olmsted in the late 1960s and early 1970s. His first essay, "Olmsted Teens Take on the Legend of Gore Orphanage," appeared in Issue 66 from last November. In Issue 69 from February and Issue 70 from March, he wrote about his adventures with his "Psychedelic Sled" and bumper sledding in "Winter Games Were Daring Half a Century Ago – Parts One and Two."

In each of those stories, Carroll referred to Schady's Shell service station as a hangout for him and his friends. That brought back good memories for some people. On Facebook, Sherrie Scarton wrote, "I lived a block away and always loved getting a bottle

of coke out of that classic Coca Cola machine. I used to buy candy there, not a big choice, but loved those Zero nugget bars too.”

After seeing the photo of the Schady’s Shell keychain, which noted ownership by Christensen & Schady, in the March issue, Gretchen Lyon wrote on Facebook, “That was my DADS.♥♥♥ He was Art Christensen (nickname Whitey). That keychain is sweet!!!!!!”



This photo of a Schady’s Shell Service keychain in last month’s issue of Olmsted 200 caught several people’s attention, including the daughter of Art Christensen, who for years was a co-owner of the gas station with Gordon Shady.

After the February issue, Lee Willet of the Olmsted Falls High School Class of 1977 wrote, “I enjoyed the Pat Carroll essay... I remember sledding with my buddies in the winter time too. Good memories. (I live in South Florida now.)” After the March issue, he wrote, “I like Patrick’s stories!”

On Facebook, Gregory Jones wrote, “Bumper sledding? We called it Bumper skiing in the mid 70s in Olmsted Falls.” To that, Dave Cunningham responded, “I remember calling it that plus bumper-hooking or hooky-bobbing. Fun times.” Jones then replied, “And we did it without safety helmets, and usually a beer.”

Joanne DuMound, who writes the “Olmsted Dates and Data” column for the *Sun Post-Herald*, wrote, “I had to laugh about your ‘bumper sledding’ experience. I grew up on the near west side of Cleveland. I have 5 brothers. They often talk about grabbing the bumper of an unsuspecting passing car in winters in the 1950s and 1960s and taking a ride down the street. That is one activity of my brothers that I never tried. You brought back some great memories of past discussions of snow, especially when my Dad saw them do that once. Thanks!”

In the same email message, she also reacted to the current series of stories about attempts over the decades to annex all or parts of Olmsted Township to neighboring communities or to incorporate it as a municipality.

“Glad you are bringing up the annexation talks over the years,” DuMound wrote. “Many folks now have no idea of past annexation attempts and why. Boy, the Bagley Road takeover really gave Berea an economic boost, didn't it? Just too bad Olmsted Township and Olmsted Falls were not more aggressive in keeping that from happening, but the business owners who pushed that annexation really did their homework in getting it done. Ellis Lovell was the lead on that. Anyway, again, thanks. Great reading.”

(Editor's note: The story of Berea's annexation of the Bagley Road corridor is coming up the series.)

Another reader, Lynn Rice, who grew up at the corner of Columbia Road and Nobottom Road, wrote, "I know my father was adamant about not incorporating township into village or expanding the trailer park down the road! Thanks again for all your research!"

A distant reader with a connection to Olmsted Falls, wrote in response to the story in the February issue about the 19th century photos of onetime Olmsted merchant Joseph Peltz, his wife Anna Simmerer Peltz and their son Julius Peltz. They turned up in Minnesota thanks following research by Doug Peltz, great-great-grandson of Joseph and Anna. David Simmerer of Hubbardston, Massachusetts, wrote to say he has his own experience digging into family history.

"I have visited Olmsted on several occasions attending Simmerer Family Reunions," he said. "I do a lot of Genealogical work along the Simmerer line. Not only have I stayed in communication with Doug Peltz and a few others from the Olmsted area, but I am also in very close contact with the Simmerers still remaining in Germany. Most of my branch of the Simmerer Family come from Talheim, Germany, down near Lake Constance (The Bodensee)."

If you have information about Olmsted life in the past, please consider sharing it with *Olmsted 200* readers. Old photos of Olmsted places and people are especially welcome.

Finally, one question that arose after recent stories on the new look of Olmsted Falls High School was about when the public would be invited to an open house to see all the changes at the school. The district plans to hold a meeting at the high school on Tuesday, April 2, at which Superintendent Jim Lloyd will give his annual State of the Schools address beginning at 6:30 p.m. Following that, students will lead tours of the high school in a community open house. Light refreshments will be available. To plan for the appropriate number of attendees, the district would like them to call 440-427-6000 to RSVP.

Olmsted 200 ran a story in Issue 64 last September about construction work that expanded and renovated the high school just as it reached the 50th anniversary of its



The public will be able to see classrooms like this one when the expanded and renovated Olmsted Falls High School is opened for tours April 2.

1968 opening. Issue 69 from February included several photos showing what the school looks like now.

Reunion Planned for People with Memories of Schady's Shell

People with fond memories of working on cars and hanging out at Schady's Shell in Olmsted Falls will be able to share those memories on Saturday afternoon, June 22.

"It was a rite of passage," Dave Fenderbosch, organizer of the Schady's reunion, said. "If you have a story, stop by."

Fenderbosch recalls getting the first credit account of his life at Schady's Shell before it was common for most people to walk around with credit cards in their wallets.

The reunion will be held at the Clint Williams Realty office in the building that once housed Schady's Shell at the corner of Water Street and Columbia Road. In 1978, Williams renovated the former service station, which was built in 1926, to serve as the Olmsted Falls office for his company.

The Schady's reunion will follow a ceremony at the Village Green, which is across the street, for the new memorial to honor Olmsted residents who served and died in the Vietnam War.



The photo on the left shows Schady's Shell as many people remember it from its decades as a gas station. The photo on the right, courtesy of Bruce Banks, shows the building as it has looked since Clint Williams renovated it more than four decades ago to serve as the Olmsted Falls office for his real estate company.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include the next story in the series about attempts to annex Olmsted Township land to neighboring municipalities and how merger considerations took a new turn in the 1970s.

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

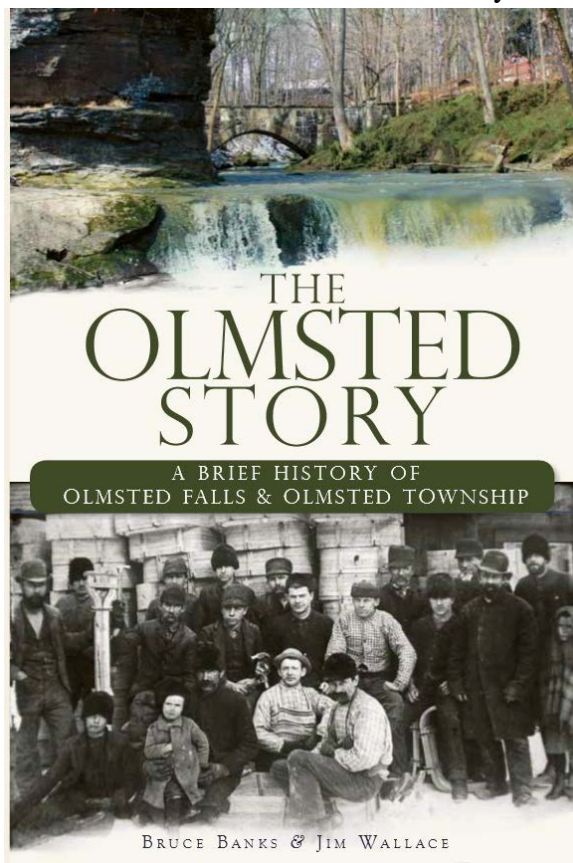
request to: wallacestar@hotmail.com. *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Florida, Wisconsin, New York, New Hampshire, 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. Email: wallacestar@hotmail.com.

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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