



Olmsted 200

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

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How Did Olmsted Celebrate Its Centennial?

As 2014 begins, many residents are looking forward to celebrating Olmsted's bicentennial. Of course, as *Olmsted 200* has pointed out since Issue 1 last June, 2014 is not the 200th anniversary of the settlement of Olmsted but merely the 200th anniversary of when James Geer, then a resident of Columbia Township, planted a small crop of corn in the township later named Olmsted. (See Crisfield Johnson's 1879 *History of Cuyahoga County, Ohio*, which is available at the Olmsted Falls library, or past issues of *Olmsted 200* for more on that.) Geer and his family became the township's first settlers when they moved into a newly built cabin in 1815, so 2015 will be the 200th anniversary of Olmsted's settlement.

It's not clear when or why Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township chose to claim 1814 as the year of their founding. It happened at least by 1964, when they celebrated their sesquicentennial. But what happened in the early 1900s? Did Olmsted residents celebrate the centennial in 1914 or 1915?

Newspapers often are good sources of information about activities of the past, especially those activities that have failed to be covered in history books. A century ago, the local newspaper that served Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township was the *Berea Enterprise*. In the style of the day, that paper made many mentions of major and minor celebrations of any kind in the community. For example, the January 16, 1914, edition

had this item: “A very pretty dancing party was given Wednesday evening in the town hall auditorium. Music was furnishing by Cleveland parties.”

On May 22, 1914, the *Enterprise* had this account of a graduation ceremony:

The Olmsted town hall was crowded last Friday night to hear the Olmsted Falls commencement exercises. There were six graduates and the affair proved one of the most enjoyable of the season. The music was furnished by the Elyria orchestra and was much appreciated. Prof. Meck, the spokesman for the class, delivered a very scholarly and appropriate address. The stage was beautifully decorated in antique finish. The year's work is summed up as one of the best in the school's history. The superintendent, Mr. F.L. Black, has been retained for another year, as well as the rest of the corps of teachers, excepting Mr. Cheney, high school instructor, who resigned to take up studies at Oberlin.

(NOTE: That was the last year Olmsted Falls had a graduation ceremony separate from Olmsted Township's. Residents already were talking about combining the village and township school districts, which they voted to do in 1915. The construction of a single school for the combined district followed in 1916.)

As summer approached, that would have been a likely time for the planning of a centennial celebration if it were to occur in 1914. Because there was no definite date for the founding of Olmsted – other than spring 1814 for the planting of Geer's corn crop or spring 1815 for when he and his family moved into the new cabin – it might have made sense to combine a centennial celebration with the annual Independence Day celebration. In the June 5, 1914, edition of the *Enterprise* was this article:

June 2 – Olmsted Falls Village Council passed a 'Sane Fourth' Ordinance last night. The citizens are busy arranging for a Field Day with various games and athletic contests and a grand parade of Antiques and Horribles, civic and military organizations, etc. It's hoped that every family within a radius of ten miles will be represented in the parade or some of the events of the day. Everyone who can get a wagon or auto should fill it up with children, ages 1 to 100 and come to Olmsted Falls, July 4th. The committee will organize Monday, June 8th, at 8 p.m. Any person over 21 years of age, within ten miles, who will take an active part in directing the work of the day is invited to become a member of this committee and meet with them at Mr. E.C. Holton's, corner of Columbia and Hamlin, Olmsted Falls, June 8, at 8 p.m. eastern time.

It was shaping up to be the biggest community celebration of the year, and it would be nice to know what qualified as “Antiques and Horribles.” But there was no mention of marking Olmsted's centennial. (NOTE: Hamlin was the name for part of what now is known as Bagley Road, so E.C. Holton's place would have been at the corner of the current Columbia and Bagley roads.)

The July 16, 1914, edition included this follow-up: “The celebration the 4th was a decided success. The parade in the morning was equal to one in a large town. The ball game in the afternoon was very exciting as were the numerous contests. The day was an ideal one and all seemed to enjoy themselves to the utmost.” Certainly, if there had been any recognition of Olmsted’s centennial, it would have been mentioned.

During the rest of 1914, the *Enterprise* mentioned various other minor celebrations around Olmsted but nothing about the community’s 100th birthday. Likewise, the column about West View, which was then the unincorporated area in southeastern Olmsted Township (now part of Olmsted Falls) noted plenty of minor get-togethers but no major celebrations. Thus, it seems unlikely that Olmsted residents celebrated a centennial in 1914.

Early in 1915, according to the February 19 edition of the *Enterprise*, residents of Olmsted Falls were looking forward to hearing from the Metropolitan Glee Club at the town hall on February 23. Another item said the Men’s Club and their friends would meet that Friday to discuss community work. Yet another item noted: “The first floor of the Odd Fellows building has been fitted up for social events. A dining room and kitchen has been added.” (The Odd Fellows building is now home of Taqueria Junction, the Mexican restaurant. During most of the 20th century, it was known as the Grange Hall.) Those items indicated Olmsted residents had regular social events scheduled and were interested in more.

One month later, news included an item about the upcoming concert by the Alpine Singers and Yodlers [sic] on March 24 and one about the celebration of the 90th birthday of a Mr. Stoddart, who had been born on March 17, 1825.

As summer drew near, the June 4, 1915, edition of the *Enterprise* noted this: “A new club formed by the young people of the village bears the mysterious cognomen “SSS Club” – can you guess it? Some Swell Social Club. Their first dance is to be given Monday night at the town hall.” Perhaps such a new social club might have been interested in a centennial celebration, but that club received little more attention as the year wore on.

However, the July 2, 1915, edition included a front-page article about an upcoming celebration:

THE FOURTH AT OLMSTED

Practically all plans for the Public 4th of July celebration at Olmsted Falls, next Monday, have been completed. The Oberlin Boys’ Band, under the leadership of Jack Wainwright, will lead the parade, which will form at the junction of Columbia-st. and Usher-rd. at 9:30 and proceed over the same course followed last year at 10:00 o’clock eastern time. Places to dress up will be provided by the parade committee. The

ball game between the Married and the Single men will be played on the School Green at 11:00 o'clock.

Musical selections and speaking will take up the first hour of the afternoon programme and the miscellaneous sporting events, for prizes immediately after. The little folks will have some games and sports of their own to be looked after by Mrs. W.B. Maynard and assistants.

That would have been the obvious time to hold a centennial celebration if one were to be held in 1915, but there was no mention of one nor did any edition of the *Enterprise* later that year mention anything about a centennial.

That leads to the conclusion that residents of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township apparently were unaware they had the chance to celebrate a centennial in either 1914 or 1915. Various little items in the *Enterprise* showed that residents enjoyed plenty of celebrations and other social events, so it is hard to believe they would have passed up the chance to celebrate Olmsted's centennial if they had known about it. Perhaps no copy of Crisfield Johnson's *History of Cuyahoga County, Ohio*, was available in the community at that time, so residents might not have realized when Olmsted was founded.

If that is so, then it was sometime between 1914/1915 and 1964 when someone decided to claim 1814 as the year Olmsted was founded, perhaps from a misreading of Johnson's history. It would be nice to find out when that happened.

News of the Past

The lack of a centennial commemoration in either 1914 or 1915 did not reflect an inability by Olmsted residents to put on a big celebration when they decided to do so. For example, in 1882, they decided the 106th anniversary of the nation's independence deserved what for then was an unprecedented community celebration. Why they did it in 1882 instead of 1876, the United States' centennial year, is not clear.

The *Berea Advertiser* on July 6, 1882, wrote of the Independence Day celebration two days earlier that it "certainly leads everything ever before attempted in these parts." Posters printed by the newspaper had been distributed throughout nearby towns inviting everyone to the festivities at Turkey Foot Grove. The paper said that the six-man planning committee "left nothing undone to secure the success of the celebration."

Unfortunately, the *Advertiser* wrote, the weather did not cooperate:

Monday night the arrangements for the celebration were completed and everything in readiness for a grand gala day. But during the night it commenced to rain. The morning came and with it clouds, rain and mud. This state of circumstances dampened the ardor of the most patriotic. But the celebration was not abandoned. The general gloom was somewhat enlivened by little private amusements here and there; along toward noon it began to clear up, and it was determined to gather at the

Public Square at one o'clock and go ahead with the celebration. As the spots of clear sky enlarged, the crowds began to arrive.

The paper reported that Marshal W.W. Mead appeared mounted on his gray and white steed while his aides helped him prepare for the festivities. The Olmsted Cornet Band already had gathered at its hall as “fair women and brave men, young people and children” came into Olmsted Falls from all directions.

At twelve o'clock the romantic streets of the Falls presented a lively appearance. The genuine American boy was present in large numbers, as was evident from the bushels of fire crackers constantly exploded in every conceivable place. American patriotism finds expression in the explosion of gunpowder, and the Olmsted youth, supported by his country cousins, is in no way behind his city relatives in this respect.

The *Advertiser* said that a procession began to form on the “public square,” which apparently was what now is known as the Village Green. The band played several songs, which helped gather people and allowed the procession to be assembled in this order:

- Marshal
- Olmsted Cornet Band
- Officers and orators of the day
- Car containing the Goddess of Liberty and young ladies representing each state of the Union
- Hook & ladder companies
- Mounted Schnoligosters
- Industrious representations
- Citizens in carriages

It seems clear what all of those persons and groups were except for “mounted schnoligosters.” That word is not found in the average dictionary, especially with that spelling. An unabridged edition of the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a “schnollygoster” as “an unprincipled but shrewd person.” The online Free Dictionary defines a “schnollygoster” as “one, especially a politician, who is guided by personal advantage rather than by consistent, respectable principles.” Although that might seem as though it was a bit of editorializing by the newspaper, another paragraph explained more about the schnoligosters and other participants:

The long procession was nearly an hour in passing a given point. The young ladies representing the Goddess of Liberty and the several states were appropriately arrayed in the national colors and wore wreaths of evergreen, with blue sashes, upon which was emblazoned the names of the states represented. The Schnoligosters were a comical looking crowd, dressed in the oddest costumes imaginable and created much amusement. But the industrial exhibition surpassed anything of the kind ever before attempted outside of the large cities. The first wagon contained a

representation of the goods and manufactures of Mead's Harness establishment. This was followed by a vehicle with sewing machines and workmen engaged in manufacturing garments, representing Moley's clothing house. A representation of Olmsted Flouring Mills in full blast with hopper, machinery and all, including specimens of its manufactures. J.C. McDonald & Co., proprietors of the Olmsted Falls Quarry Co., exhibited grindstones, block stone, and workmen engaged in quarrying stone. Then followed carriage with a representation of the lumber business of Messrs. Alcott & Stokes. The Olmsted Falls Bending Works, Kidney & Broadey, proprietors, followed with a car containing elaborate representations of their business. The workmen were uniformed and engaged in the various stages of manufacturing their goods. J.S. Hendrickson's agency for the sale of farming implements with reaper and mower, etc., came next. Many of the vehicles were elaborately trimmed and presented a fine appearance.

That paragraph not only describes the parade on that Independence Day but also gives an indication of what work life was like in Olmsted Falls in 1882. The article said that, after the parade reached Turkey Foot Grove, J.W. Fitch called the ceremony to order, Prof. R.T. Elliott gave a blessing, and O.W. Kendall delivered an address, which the *Advertiser* printed in full. The address was mainly about how fortunate the United States was to be at peace after going through the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the Civil War.

The newspaper noted that most people, but not all, listened attentively to the address. "A drunken Englishman sought to make a disturbance several times during its delivery, but order was secured by the Marshal and the speaker proceeded," the article said. After the band concluded the ceremony with music, people danced and chatted throughout the afternoon.

The last paragraph gave a description of the scene of the celebration:

The scenery about Olmsted Falls is very beautiful and picturesque; Turkey Foot Grove is situated on one of the romantic knolls so common along the banks of Rocky River, and is reached from the village by crossing the bridge east of the school house and following the road on the east bank as far as the cemetery, where an avenue has been opened to the Grove, which is situated on the farm of Mr. David Lewis. The more enterprising citizens of the Falls have clubbed together and improved the facilities and accommodations of the grounds, which, added to the natural beauty of the scenery, render Turkey Foot Grove one of the most romantic and beautiful picnic grounds in this part of the country.

The school mentioned was the Union Schoolhouse that stood on the Village Green. The bridge was the original bridge along Water Street and the cemetery is what now is known as the Old Chestnut Grove Cemetery.

So Olmsted residents showed they could put on a big celebration when they wanted to, but the Independence Day festivities of 1882 were not repeated in following years. Perhaps residents decided it was too much effort for event that could have been rained out.

Township Plans to Celebrate Bicentennial Early and Often

Anyone who wants to celebrate Olmsted's bicentennial in both 2014 and 2015, and perhaps for years in the future, will have that opportunity thanks to plans being made by Olmsted Township officials. Trustee Sherri Lippus writes in an email that the township will host the "Olmsted Cornerstone Festival" July 4-6. Unlike their counterparts of a century ago, the current trustees recognize the wisdom in connecting a celebration of the community with the celebration of the nation's independence.

"Yes, the inaugural event is this year, but our hope is that this is an event for years to come," Lippus writes. "The weekend festivities will be centered on the corners of Bagley and Stearns (future town center)."

The festival will incorporate the corners containing Swings-N-Things, Golden Tee, Razzles and Shaker's Marketplace.

Lippus explains the name of the festival includes parts of what others suggested for a title. One reason she likes the name is that the festival will be held at four corners. Another reason is that "cornerstone" means "foundation, bedrock, bookends." She calls

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that "a perfect name for the transformation we are embarking on in Olmsted. Plus in 1814 the first crop was planted with the following year settling and I see this as the planting in 2014 for the 2015 transformation that is about to occur."

The committee planning the event also intends to hold an event in the fall at Lenau Park, the German-American cultural center along Columbia Road. It will be a murder mystery/dinner called "Spirits of Olmsted" followed by music from a band or DJ. "Dressing in costume from any period will be encouraged," Lippus says.

The Olmsted bicentennial celebration now has a website, www.olmstedbicentennial.org, as well as a Facebook page, which Lippus urges people to "like."

Another development in the preparations for celebrating Olmsted's bicentennial is the recent selection of a logo.



Spencer McCoy, a 17-year-old senior who attends Olmsted Falls High School and Polaris Career Center, had the winning design.

Trustees Have Ideas, Need Help

The Olmsted Township trustees are interested in identifying historic buildings around the township and learning more about them. Issue 4 of *Olmsted 200*, which came out in September, included an article about several buildings of interest. (If you want to refer to it, see the article, “Township Website Now Has Issues of *Olmsted 200*” below.) But there likely are more. Trustee Jeanene Kress is looking for help in this effort. She notes that many buildings dating back to the 1800s and early 1900s have been identified in Olmsted Falls, but fewer in Olmsted Township have received much attention. “I think [it is] primarily because it was ‘town’ and the Township was ‘country’ and farms,” she writes.

That’s a reasonable assumption. Also, the historic buildings in Olmsted Falls are more concentrated, so keeping track of them has been easier. In addition, the Berea-based newspapers of the late 19th century and early 20th century tended to have regular correspondents from Olmsted Falls and West View, which then was part of the township but now is part of Olmsted Falls, but reports from the more rural township were less frequent. Thus, township residents and their buildings received less attention.

Now is a good time to change that. Kress has suggested that census records could be a good start. But it would help to get information from anyone who might have personal knowledge or family records about old buildings. Contact Kress or one of the other trustees if you have such information, and please share it with *Olmsted 200*.

Most of the old buildings are probably houses, but don’t overlook barns. One, for example, is the red barn near the entrance to The Renaissance on John Road.

The barn is what is left from the farm of John Hall (for whom the road is named). His three-story, brick house stood next to the barn for many years. When the land was Homelinks Golf Course, the house served as the clubhouse. But it was torn down in the



1980s, when The Renaissance was built and the golf course was reconfigured as The Links. The barn also is a symbol of agriculture, which was more prominent around the township until the last few decades, when housing developments have replace much farmland. The barn surely is well more than a century old, but can anyone put a year on when it was built?

A good bicentennial project would be to not only identify the old buildings around Olmsted Township and Olmsted Falls but to put up signs marking them. Many of the Century Home signs in front of Olmsted Falls houses (some of which are approaching the two-century mark) have deteriorated and fallen down. It would be nice to have them restored and see others put up.

Another trustee, Sherri Lippus, has been looking into a program that could help owners restore and rehabilitate historic homes. It's the Heritage Home Program of the Cleveland Restoration Society, which recently celebrated the 1,000th loan that the organization and its financial partners have made available in the 21 years since the program began. Program information is available at: www.heritagehomeprogram.org. What do you think? Let a trustee know or share your thoughts with *Olmsted 200*.

Artist Captured Long-Gone Scene along Columbia Road

After the December issue of *Olmsted 200* featured photos from Carolyn (Kucklick) Petlowany and her daughter Carrie Moore showing scenes of Olmsted Falls from the 1930s and 1940s, another member of the family, Ted Kucklick provided a different view of downtown Olmsted Falls from the past.



“This is a painting by Herb Erisman that my grandparents had in their home for many years,” he writes. It shows the east side of Columbia Road looking south from about where the Myers and Lasch building is. As Kucklick notes, it shows Columbia Road was still paved with bricks until just south of the railroad tracks. Buildings shown include Barnum’s Supermarket, Kaufman’s Delicatessen and the drug store. Kucklick believes Erisman painted the scene sometime around 1960.

Ted Kucklick also has contributed photos he took around Olmsted Falls a few decades ago and historical information about buildings that now are part of Grand Pacific Junction. Those contributions likely will find their way into articles in future issues of *Olmsted 200*. Anyone else with such historical information or photos is encouraged to send them to wallacestar@hotmail.com. Sharing is a good way to preserve Olmsted’s history.

Women Take Charge in Olmsted

The new year brings new leaders for both Olmsted Township and Olmsted Falls – in particular, female leaders. The election in November of Tiffany Fischbach as a township trustee to join incumbents Sherri Lippus and Jeanene Kress means that, for the first time in the township’s history, all three trustees are women. That led them to wonder if that had happened before elsewhere in Ohio. It has – at least several times – but it still is a notable first for the township.

Also taking office at the beginning of 2014 is a female mayor of Olmsted Falls, Ann Marie Donegan. The city still has men on council so it isn’t governed completely by women, but it is interesting to note that the top spots in both the township and the Falls are filled by women for the first time in history.

Township Website Now Has Issues of *Olmsted 200*

If you have missed any of the past issues of *Olmsted 200* or want to share them with someone else, all of them now can be found on Olmsted Township’s website. Go to <http://www.egovlink.com/olmsted/docs/menu/home.asp> and click on “Bicentennial Committee.” Thanks go to the township trustees, especially Sherri Lippus, for making *Olmsted 200* available this way.

Still to Come

At least one reader has requested an article about the history of Olmsted’s greenhouses, so work on it has begun, and it should appear in a future issue. Anyone with information about greenhouses, present or past, is invited to share it. Also, old photos of greenhouses or anything relating to them would be welcome.

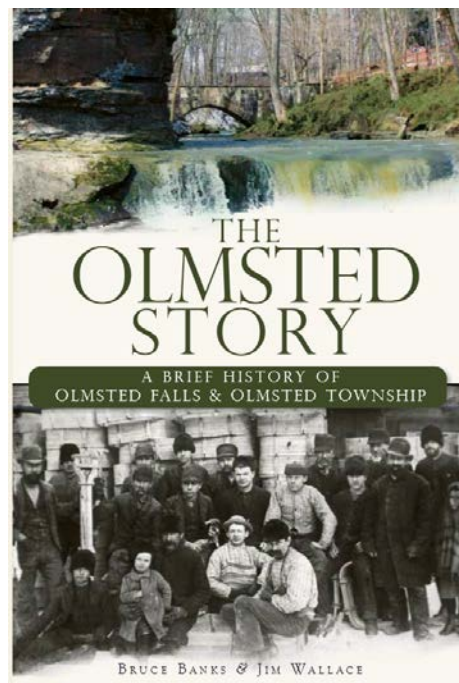
Other subjects being considered for issues of *Olmsted 200* during 2014 include the fierce battles that raged over whether the community should allow saloons to operate during the late 1800s and early 1900s, the creation of Grand Pacific Junction, and the present and past bridges on Main Street.

If you know of others 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.

Your questions and comments about *Olmsted 200* are welcome. Perhaps there is something about Olmsted's history that you would like me to pull out of my extensive archives. Or perhaps you have information or photos about the community's history that you would like to share.

Except where otherwise noted, all articles in *Olmsted 200* are written by Jim Wallace. Written contributions and photos, as well as comments and questions about items in this newsletter, will be considered for publication. Send any correspondence by email to: wallacestar@hotmail.com.

Olmsted 200 is written, researched and edited by Jim Wallace, who is solely responsible for its content. He is co-author (with Bruce Banks) of ***The Olmsted Story: A Brief History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township***, published in 2010 by The History Press of Charleston, S.C. ***The Olmsted Story*** is available at Clementine's Victorian Restaurant at Grand Pacific Junction and through online booksellers.



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