



Olmsted 200

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

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Quarries Reshaped Olmsted Beginning 150 Years Ago

Canada and Olmsted Falls have something in common. It is sandstone, specifically Berea sandstone, which was quarried over a wide area of northeastern Ohio, including Olmsted Falls and West View (which now is the southern half of Olmsted



Berea sandstone was one of the materials used in building the seat of Canada's national government on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

Falls). When Canada celebrated its sesquicentennial in 2017, much attention was directed to Parliament Hill, the seat of the national government in Ottawa. The materials for the Parliament buildings include Berea sandstone, also known as

Berea grit. And now it is time to mark another sesquicentennial: the beginning of significant quarrying in West View and Olmsted Falls 150 years ago in 1870. At least, 1870 seems to be the likely year the quarrying began (more on that later). For decades, quarrying was one of the biggest local industries, and it had lasting effects on Olmsted's development.



Grotesque Old & New

This grand grotesque was removed from the West Block courtyard for safety reasons. The stress cracks and even open seams along bedding lines made the weathered grotesque rather dangerous – even with that curious expression!

Created in the Picaresque Gothic Revival style, the stone is fine-grained sandstone, Berea (Carboniferous Period - 359 to 299 million years ago) – a durable building stone that holds carved details well.

The grotesque was given a light mechanical cleaning of any loose material. Plaster repairs – still visible – served to guide the replacement carvers in 2013.

Berea (sandstone), approx. 900 x 600 x 500 mm, 350 kg

An information center across the street from Parliament Hill displays the “grand grotesque” seen at the left that was removed from one of the Parliament buildings because of safety concerns. The accompanying sign seen on the right identifies it as being made of Berea sandstone, which it calls “a durable building stone that holds carved details well.” Although it is unlikely the stone came from quarries in either Olmsted Falls or West View, it did come from northeastern Ohio and is the same type of sandstone that was quarried in Olmsted Falls and West View, as well as neighboring communities.

Canada’s Gothic Revival-style Parliament buildings are fine examples of many buildings throughout much of Canada and the United States that used Berea sandstone in their construction. Others include the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago, the Michigan Capitol in Lansing and the New York Capitol in Albany, as well as numerous courthouses, hotels, bank buildings, opera houses, schools and churches.

That’s not to say any particular sandstone quarried in Olmsted Falls or West View was used in the Canadian Parliament or those other buildings. It would be hard to trace where any specific stone went, but those buildings are enduring monuments to the widespread use of Berea sandstone. In fact, when the original Parliament buildings were constructed in 1859 to 1866, it was before significant quarrying in Olmsted Falls and West View had begun. But a February 1916 fire destroyed the Victoria Tower and all but the library of the original Centre Block, so the Centre Block had to be rebuilt and the Victoria Tower was replaced with the Peace Tower. Again, the Canadian government turned to sandstone from northeastern Ohio for use in dressings, gables, pinnacles, turrets, towers, and trimming around doors and windows. (Sandstone, limestone and marble from other places in Canada and the United States also were used in the Parliament buildings.) Records show most of the Berea sandstone for that project came from a Birmingham, Ohio, quarry (near the Erie County-Lorain County border), but it’s possible stones from Olmsted Falls or West View could have made it into the mix because most quarries in northeastern Ohio had common ownership by then.

The use of Berea sandstone in Canada’s Parliament buildings was a form of repatriation. According to a paper written by James F. Pepper, Wallace De Witt, Jr., and David F. Demarest for the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1954, most of the sand that was deposited in northeastern Ohio to form Berea sandstone came from the highlands of eastern Canada and flowed south to Ohio and other states in a great river. Later experts came to believe that occurred in the Late Devonian period, 375 million to 360 million years ago, although at the time of the 1954 paper, the authors and others thought it

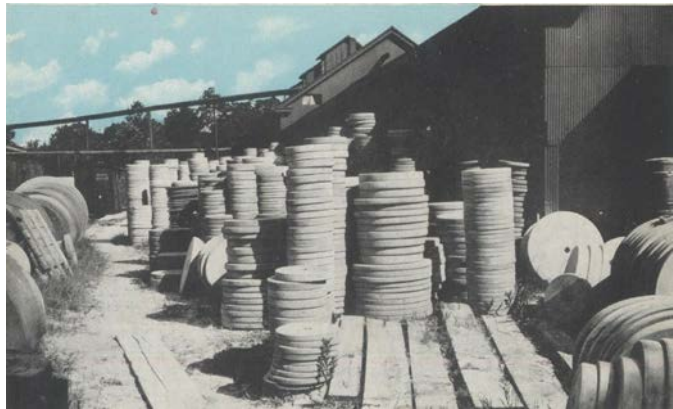
occurred in the Mississippian period, which lasted from 358.9 million to 323.2 million years ago. However, the sign for the pictured grotesque above says the sandstone was created in the Carboniferous Period from 359 million to 299 million years ago.

In a March 2001 article for *Geoscience Canada*, D.E. Lawrence of the Geological Survey of Canada wrote Berea sandstone's "use as a building stone in North America is widespread. It is a medium to fine-grained, clay bonded, quartz sandstone with a fairly uniform composition, and silica usually in excess of 90 %. The colour is normally a blue-grey, however, near-surface rock may be buff or yellow."

A report published by the Ohio Geological Survey in 1874 praised Berea sandstone for durability, strength, color and texture. "These qualities are rarely found in great perfection combined in one stone, and are such as fully warrant the high reputation it enjoys," the report said.

Of course, Berea sandstone gets its name because it was first quarried in Berea as early as 1833 by John Baldwin, a native of Connecticut who came to Ohio in 1828 to farm 200 acres he had purchased.

About five years after he arrived in Berea, he discovered sandstone on his property had the quality to make good grindstones for sharpening tools. He initially used a mallet and chisels in the cellar of his home to craft grindstones out of sheets of sandstone. He then took them in an oxcart to Cleveland, where he sold them.

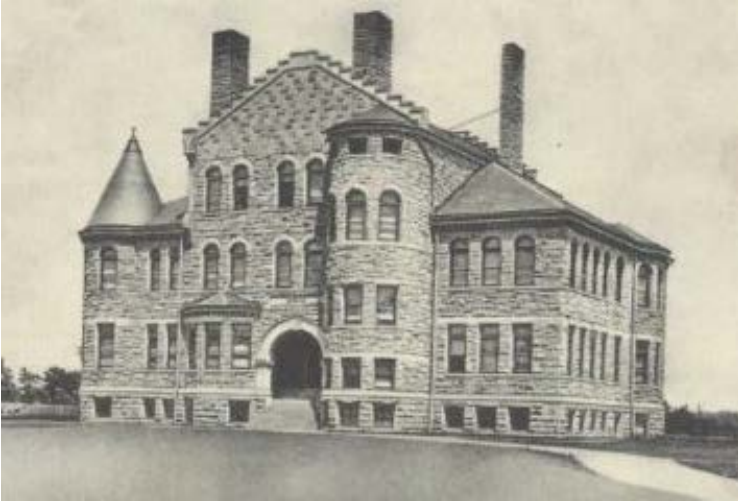


This undated photo from an old postcard was labeled "GRINDSTONE FACTORY, BEREA, OHIO." It illustrates how many grindstones came out of Berea's quarries at one time.

But eventually, Baldwin leased his land for quarrying, which made him a rich man. He used much of his wealth to improve the community, including the founding of the Baldwin Institute, which became Baldwin University, then Baldwin-Wallace College and finally Baldwin-Wallace University. Quarrying on Baldwin's land was just the beginning of quarrying that spread throughout Berea, changing the contours of the community, and then to other communities that had the same type of sandstone.

"The best grindstones produced in the United States come from Berea, O.," Columbus historian J.M. Galbraith wrote in a story distributed by the Associated Press in 1926. He said Berea sandstone had "a peculiar quality, rarely found," that made it especially suitable for use as grindstones.

"The particles of sand must be sharp, and they must not be too firmly cemented together in the stone or the grindstone will wear smooth and lose its cutting effect,"



Wheeler Hall (formerly Recitation Hall) at Baldwin Wallace University, as seen in a postcard from the early 1900s, is one of many buildings in Berea built from locally quarried sandstone. It was built in 1891.

Galbraith wrote. “Because of the importance of the sandstone quarries at Berea, the place has given its name to a stratum of sub-carboniferous formation that extends through the state, but nowhere else produces the valuable stone that is to be found there.”

Baldwin did more than just lease his land to spur the growth of sandstone quarrying in northeastern Ohio, according to Galbraith. “Prior to his time grindstones were cut by hand,” he wrote. “That was slow and expensive

work. He invented a device by which they could be cut out by steam power, more perfectly and at much less expense. He made his own model of the device and carried it on his back to Cleveland, where a machine shop constructed it for him.”

Berea became known as the Grindstone City. In his 1989 book, *Ohio and Its People*, George W. Knepper wrote, “For a time Ohio’s Berea sandstone was the source of over 80 percent of American grindstones; every farmer had one. Millstones were made of Berea sandstone also.”

In addition to grindstones and building stones, Berea sandstone also was used as flagstones, the stones used in many places, including Olmsted Falls and other neighboring communities, for sidewalks and walkways.

But being a quarrying center was rough on Berea because the quarries kept going after new territory, changing the look of the community. As Patricia M. Mote wrote in her 2004 book, *Berea*: “If an area contained sandstone, nothing would keep it from being quarried. Baldwin Creek was relocated by means of constructing a wooden flume. Many houses were moved from the land that was rich in the precious sandstone, and even a cemetery was desecrated.”



This sidewalk is one of many in Olmsted Falls using locally quarried flagstones.

Perhaps because of the proximity of Clough's quarry or perhaps because quarrying already had begun at West View, the West View column in the newspaper for July 29, 1870, reported: "THE railroad company is putting up a new depot building at this station – they have already put in some large scales for weighing stone."

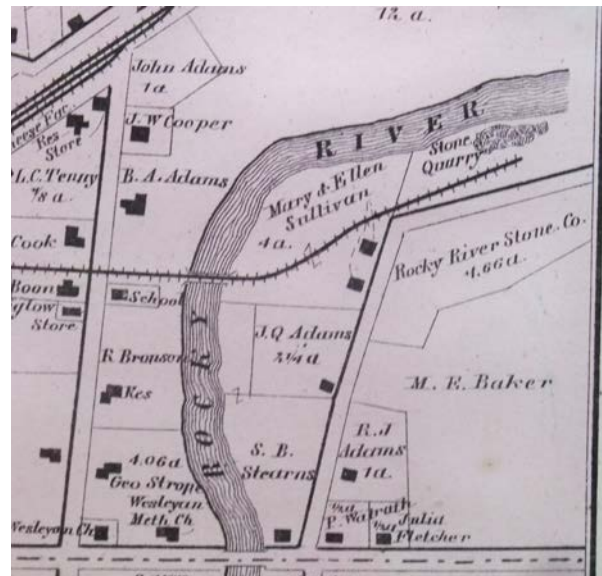
The newspaper's first reference to a quarry in Olmsted came in the May 26, 1871, edition with this item:

The stone business is on the increase in our village. The Lake Huron Stone Co., under the superintendence of O.W. Kendall, has made a beginning and expects soon to employ forty men. This company is now putting in an engine. Pelper & Perkins employ about fifteen men. McDonald, Barnum and House are running a good business with seventy men; they have lately put in steam power.

That indicates that, while one new quarry was getting ready to open in mid-1871, two others already were running in Olmsted Falls, so they likely began at least by 1870. The Barnum in the name of the last company mentioned is likely Luther Barnum. Another item in the paper a few weeks later, June 4, 1871, gives an account of a six-year-old boy who died on a Sunday morning after he loosened the brake on "some stone cars that were standing on the side track which leads into Barnum's quarry." If Barnum was operating a quarry with a railroad spur by mid-1871, it surely must have been established by 1870, if not earlier.

In the August 25, 1871, edition of the *Grindstone City Advertiser*, an item in the Olmsted column said: "The number of laborers in our quarries and on our public works is more than 'thribbled' this season." (Presumably 'thribbled' was just a quirky way of saying "tripled.")

Another item in the paper on September 8, 1871, indicated how dangerous quarrying could be. It said Luther Barnum had been sitting and talking with some of his workers the previous Monday when he dropped a lighter match into what he thought was an empty keg. But the keg still had some blasting powder clinging to its side, so it exploded. It scorched off his heavy beard, burned his skin and caused breathing problems, but he survived. The reporter wrote, "The force of the powder may be judged from the fact, that a large hole was blown in the crown of Mr. B.'s hat. Dr. Knowlton,



This section of the 1874 map shows a quarry at West View next to Rocky River and at the end of a railroad spur. Across the road from it is land marked as owned by the Rocky River Stone Co.



The rock that forms the bed of Plum Creek and Rocky River is the same Berea sandstone that was quarried in the area now known as David Fortier River Park.

Columbia Township, he added: “Another quarry was started in West View along the river north of the Town Line Road [now Sprague Road]. Both of the quarries had railroad spurs running through them and quarrying became [a] mainstay of the surrounding area.” He didn’t indicate when the West View quarry opened.

An item in the West View column in the February 7, 1873, edition of the *Advertiser*, indicates at least one quarry had operated there before then. Here is what it said:

NEW QUARRY – A company has organized and chartered having a capital basis of \$60,000 to open a quarry on the site of one begun by White & McAllen.

The company has been prospecting for a side track from this station across the river to their quarry, but owing to the exorbitant price demanded for the right of way by two of the land owners, it is thought they will lay a track on the other side of the river, and make Berea their shipping point.

That indicates there was a previous quarry at West View operated by White & McAllen, so quarrying at West View had to begin before 1873. It also indicates how much it cost to start a quarry back then. The impasse over the right-of-way for the railroad spur did not last long, as this item from the paper on March 21, 1873, shows:

SIDE TRACK – A right of way has been secured by the new Quarry Co., to run a side track from the west switch to the river, passing near the school house, crossing the river and thence to the Quarry. It is

attending physician, informs us to-day, that Mr. Barnum is doing well, and that there is no doubt of his recovery.”

By August 1872, another quarry was operating in Olmsted Falls. “The firm of Wallace & Russell have commenced work in their new quarry and have shipped some block stone,” the *Advertiser* reported on August 16, 1872.

Those items shed some light on when a few quarries began operating in Olmsted Falls. The start of quarrying in West View is less clear. When Holzworth wrote about Baxter Clough’s quarry in

expected that operations will commence as soon as the weather will permit.

The West View schoolhouse referred to in that item is the building that later served for decades as the town hall for the Village of West View and then as one of two town halls for Olmsted Falls after the 1971 merger of West View and Olmsted Falls. (The building at 9722 Columbia Road now houses the Emerald & Violet Studio owned by artist Barbara Richardson.)



A former quarry at West View where many tons of sandstone was removed is now filled with water. It is along East River Road near Sprague Road in Olmsted Falls.

So when did sandstone quarrying begin in Olmsted Falls and West View? Those newspaper items make it clear there was a flurry of quarrying activity in the early 1870s. Different quarries began at different times, but it seems likely the first of the quarries must have begun operating in 1870, if not a bit sooner. Thus, 2020 seems as good as any time to mark the 150th anniversary of Olmsted's quarries.

Unlike in later years, when all the quarries were consolidated under one owner, there seemed to be much fluctuation in the quarry operations in the early years. For example, in the September 5, 1873, edition of the *Advertiser*, the Olmsted column included this item: "ONE day last week, a grindstone was turned out from Wallace and Baker's quarry, weighing seventy-nine hundred and seventy-two pounds. Who beats it?" While that was intended to be an expression of local pride, it also indicated that the firm of Wallace and Russell that had begun quarrying in 1872 had become Wallace and Baker one year later. The newspaper never explained why Baker had replaced Russell as Wallace's partner.

Several months later, the May 1, 1874, edition of the paper had this item in the Olmsted column: "BUSINESS seems to be rather dull here yet, the quarries have not opened, and the proprietors dont [*sic*] seem to be in any great hurry about it either." Four weeks later, the Olmsted column had this item: "THE quarries have not opened business yet, and business of all kinds is very dull." It was late summer when the August 13, 1874, edition of the *Advertiser* reported: "L. BARNUM has commenced work in his quarry with a small force of men." Those items might indicate that quarrying was a boom-and-bust industry, but another possibility is that the local quarries were suffering like many businesses because of a national recession that began with the Panic of 1873.

In the middle of 1875, the newspaper's Olmsted columnist was still complaining that business was dull, but his June 3 column also included an item indicating a change at

one local quarry: “THE property known as Barnum’s Mill and Quarry has been purchased by Mr. Caldwell of Cleveland. The use he intends to make of it we have not learned.” In the September 2, 1875, paper the column reported: “Mr. Caldwell has his stone in running order.”

Months later, the West View column in the November 4, 1875, paper revealed the quarry there was doing well:

In spite of the hard times and closeness of money the Rocky River Stone Co. are pushing their work along at a brisk and lively rate in getting out grindstones, which are said to be equal if not superior to any stone now in the market by those that have used them. By the energy of H.M. Townsend, President, and H.D. Chase, Supt., they have worked up a fair trade. They cannot supply the demand for their blue stone for grinding. They are running one large lathe and will put in another one this month for small stone. The success of the enterprise is safely established.

The reporting on quarries was spotty in those days, but those items from the *Grindstone City Advertiser* give us some idea of how sandstone quarrying got started in Olmsted Falls and West View in the 1870s. The following decades would bring more changes as sandstone quarrying increased in importance to the communities of Olmsted Falls and West View. *Olmsted 200* will have more on those developments in coming months.

Olmsted Quarries Had another Canadian Connection

As explained in the above story, the Berea sandstone quarried at Olmsted Falls, West View and other northeastern Ohio communities originated from sand that flowed down from Canada in prehistoric times, and some of it went back to Canada to build the Parliament Hill buildings in Ottawa. But that’s not the only Canadian connection to Berea sandstone and Olmsted Falls.

The other connection is through Joseph Gibson, who was born in Scotland in 1836 but spent much of his adult life going back and forth between Grimsby, Ontario, Canada, and Olmsted Falls. Information about his life comes to *Olmsted 200* from one of his descendants, Mike Gibson, who now lives in Oregon but lived in Olmsted Falls until he was 17.

“Joseph came to the USA and Olmsted Falls about 1866,” Mike Gibson wrote. “But he



Joseph Gibson was a Scottish stonemason who spent much of adult life going back and forth between Olmsted Falls and Canada.

kept returning to Canada and back at least three times. Two of Joseph's children, Alexander and Josephine (wife of Art Atkinson), were born in Olmsted Falls and remained US citizens. Other siblings were born in Canada and became US citizens. Other siblings were born in the USA but became Canadians. It's complicated."

Joseph Gibson and other members of his Scottish family followed his brother, Robert Lillie Gibson, to Canada. Robert eventually settled at Grimsby, Ontario, along Lake Ontario in the Niagara Peninsula, where he built his fortune quarrying limestone. His son, William, became a member of the Canadian Senate. Joseph arrived in Canada in 1855.

Joseph Gibson brought stonemasonry skills to Olmsted Falls. One of his notable accomplishments was rebuilding the dam for Damp's Mill after the devastating flood of February 3, 1883, destroyed the original dam. The new dam was 13 feet high, 175 feet long, 3½ feet thick at the base and 2 feet thick at the top. That dam was high enough to back up enough of Rocky River's water to form a lake, which many local residents used for boating and swimming for many years until another flood in 1913 destroyed the dam. Gibson, in a sense, signed his work by carving his name in a stone there.



Joseph Gibson left his name carved in a stone where he rebuilt the dam for Damp's Mill in 1883. Photos in this story are courtesy of Tom Atkinson.

Gibson married Margaret McGill, another native of Scotland who was born in 1838 and lived until 1912. Their daughter, Josephine, married Arthur Atkinson in 1891, so the Gibsons, McGills and Atkinsons all were related. Mike Gibson has found his great-grandfather, Alexander, listed in the 1900 Census as living next door to an uncle, Hugh McGill, in Black River

Township in Lorain County – and both were listed as “stone cutters,” so they carried on the family profession. Joseph Gibson lived until 1914. He and his wife were buried at Chestnut Grove Cemetery in Olmsted Falls.

Mike Gibson's late father gathered information on the family's Canadian history by writing to the Grimsby Historical Society about 15 years ago and buying a book about Grimsby's history.

Another Map Shows a Less-Populated Olmsted

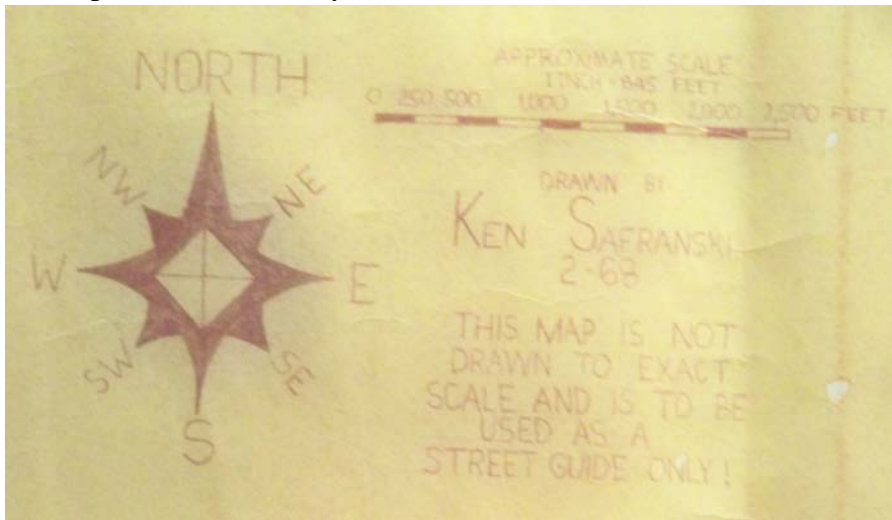
The *Olmsted 200* series about how Olmsted Township's borders have changed over the last two centuries ended last month with a story that featured several maps

showing the changes. Another map that has come to *Olmsted 200* reveals changes in the township, Olmsted Falls and the former West View over a little more than half a century.

The map turned up when Susan Kalamajka-Ramer cleaned out the family home at 6880 Fitch Road last fall. She said her father saved many things. In this case, the thing he saved was a map drawn by Ken Safranski in February 1968, perhaps as a school project. The blueprint-style map is faded and has a water stain in the upper center, but even in that condition it shows that the Olmsted communities were much emptier back then. That was before housing developments added many streets and homes in areas that were farmland or vacant land.



This 1968 map by Ken Safranski shows many fewer streets in Olmsted than exist today. The map is courtesy of Susan Kalamajka-Ramer on behalf of the Kalamajka family, who at 6880 Fitch Road in Olmsted Township.



The lower left of the map identifies it as having been drawn by Ken Safranski in February 1968. It says it was not drawn to exact scale and should be used only as a street guide.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include the next story about the development of quarries in Olmsted Falls and West View.

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, Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Michigan, 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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