



Olmsted 200

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

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Quarries Changed in 20th Century – or Didn't

In the late 1800s, Olmsted Falls and West View were quarry towns. By the early 1900s, they were former quarry towns after the Cleveland Stone Company pulled out. What had been noisy, dusty industrial sites became quiet spots. The quarries were left with an assortment of sandstone blocks and grindstones in various stages of completion. But what happened after that with the two quarry sites was vastly different.

Olmsted Falls had the good fortune that its former quarry site was in a beautiful location next to both Plum Creek and the west branch of Rocky River in the middle of town. Fortunately, the location was situated so that, as quarrying removed many tons of sandstone, it lowered the level of the land closer to the level of the creek and the river without creating deep pits that would fill up with water.

To get an idea of how much the ground was lowered by quarrying over about three decades, consider that



The site of the former Olmsted Falls quarry is now David Fortier River Park, which has signs identifying where some quarrying took place.

Inscription Rock, also called Initial Rock, next to Plum Creek near where the creek flows into the river, is about 14 feet high. Before quarrying, the ground next to it probably also was about that high and got higher as it got closer to where the Olmsted Community Church now is located. That was the original site of St. Mary's Catholic Church, which Father Louis Fillier bought in 1858. In his 1966 Olmsted history book, Walter Holzworth wrote: "In 1858 this was a large knoll that sloped sharply to the river." It is reasonable to infer that the slope toward Plum Creek was more gradual. Thus, to get an idea of how much stone and overburden was removed by quarrying, a person could stand next to Inscription Rock and imagine the ground sloping up from the top of that mound to the Community Church property.



The photo on the left shows Inscription Rock, also called Initial Rock, from an early 1900s postcard. The man in it stands near where onetime quarry superintendent Tom Barnum chiseled his name. The photo on the right shows Inscription Rock today along with two grindstones repurposed for use as tables. Much of the ground next to Inscription Rock likely was just as tall before quarrying began in the 1870s.

That location now is known as David Fortier River Park. Although it acquired that name late in the 20th century in honor of an Olmsted Falls mayor who died in a vehicular accident at a young age, it seems to have become a park earlier in the century, not long after quarrying ended. Even before quarrying ceased, that area where Plum Creek meets Rocky River helped the community be recognized for its beauty.



"Olmsted Falls is one of the oldest villages in Northeast Ohio; it is likewise one of the prettiest and most romantic," a columnist wrote in the November 12, 1897, edition of the *Berea Advertiser*. "The natural scene along the rapids in the river is picturesque and worthy of the artist's pencil and brush."

This colorized version of a black-and-white photo from an early 1900s postcard is titled "Four Falls, Plum Creek, Olmsted Falls, Ohio."



This postcard shows the former Boy Scout cabin on the left along with shelters built by the WPA.

That column, which was written about two years before quarrying shut down in Olmsted Falls, gave an indication that the operation wasn't as active as in the past: "The Cleveland Stone Company's quarries located here are not worked as extensively as usual this season and the hundreds of laborers who formerly found employment in the quarries have found other means of earning a livelihood."

confirm the beauty of that location and indicate its transition to a park was smooth. One postcard shows a man standing on the side of Inscription Rock near where former quarry superintendent Tom Barnum chiseled his name. The location is identified on the card as "Initial Rock Olmsted Falls, O."

Another early 1900s postcard, which came in both black-and-white and colorized versions, shows Plum Creek waterfalls with a bit different contours than are seen today. That postcard is titled, "Four Falls, Plum Creek, Olmsted Falls, Ohio."



This mid-20th century postcard shows swimmers taking advantage of the "Swimming Pool" made by the dam built on Rocky River in 1930.

Through the years, the park gradually gained more amenities. Sometime after



The stone bridge over Plum Creek using blocks of sandstone left over from quarrying was a Works Progress Administration project in the 1930s.

Troop 201 of the Boy Scouts was established in 1925, as Holzworth wrote, "The new Scout troop tore down an old barn Henry Hoftyzer gave them and they used it to build a cabin at the Olmsted Falls Park, formerly the site of an old quarry." That cabin stood for decades until it was burned down by vandals in the 1960s.

Other changes came in the 1930s. First, in 1930, the village built a dam across Rocky River not far south from the mouth of Plum Creek to back up the water to form a swimming hole

in the summer and a skating pond in the winter. At some point, a diving board was even fastened to the rock next to the river. The place where the rock was carved out to accommodate the diving board can still be seen today. In later years, not only diving but also swimming there was made illegal, but many young people still enjoy sliding down the slick, short falls where Plum Creek flows into Rocky River.



For decades, this gnarly tree along Rocky River near the mouth of Plum Creek had a piece of rail left over from the railroad spur that once carried sandstone out of the Olmsted Falls quarry lodged in its base, as seen on the left. But sometime in the past few years, that rail disappeared, perhaps as a result of high water that loosened it and swept it away, as the more recent photo on the right indicates.

Later in the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration, one of the agencies created during President Franklin Roosevelt's administration to put people to work, came in to make further improvements to the park. The WPA workers used many of the leftover grindstones and sandstone blocks to create steps, a picnic pavilion, restrooms and the stone bridge that crosses Plum Creek near Inscription Rock. In the early 1940s, the WPA also used some of the sandstone blocks to build Olmsted Falls a new Village Hall, the building that now houses the Moosehead Hoof and Ladder No. 3 restaurant.

More recently, other improvements have been made in the park, such as signage identifying certain points of historical interest and the types of trees that grow there. The signs identifying the trees were a project of Boy Scout Troop 201. With all the sandstone blocks and grindstones left over, park visitors can easily see that the site was used for many years for quarrying.

The park even has a piece of rail on the path leading down from the Community Church that was left from the railroad spur that carried the quarried stones out to the main railroad track near the Olmsted Falls Depot. Until just two or three years ago, another piece of rail could be seen lodged in the base of a gnarly tree along the river near the mouth of Plum Creek, but it has disappeared, presumably swept away by high waters after dislodging from the tree.

Many people consider the park one of the most beautiful spots in northeastern Ohio. Wedding parties often go down in the park for photos. In 2004, an autumn photo showing the side of Inscription Rock, the stone bridge and the falls on Plum Creek just before it reaches Rocky River served both as the October photo and the cover photo for a

scenic calendar of Ohio.

By contrast, the site of the former West View quarry has remained idle since Cleveland Stone Company pulled out. Mounds of cut stones stand seemingly untouched for decades, and pits where quarrying removed many tons of sandstone have filled with water. Instead of becoming a park, its use for recreation and leisure activities has been discouraged.

For example, an item in the West View column of the *Berea Enterprise* on August 8, 1930, just three years after West View incorporated as a village, said this: “Large, stout poles with cables strung across have been placed over the driveway to the quarry to prevent parking and swimming on their property. \$25 fine will be imposed by West View officials for swimming in the quarry holes. Any member of council has authority to make arrests.”



This heron has been one of the frequent visitors to the former quarry site along Rocky River in Olmsted Falls.



This water-filled pit along East River Road is left from the former West View quarry.

“No Trespassing” signs along East River Road further deter people from entering the former quarry land today.

Perhaps the site’s obscure location along East River Road was a deterrent to the development of the former quarry. Or perhaps, even though trespassers wanted to go swimming there, the configuration of the water-filled pits with their sheer sides might have been deemed too unsafe for swimming for the general public.

The fact that the site had water-filled pits would not necessarily have disqualified it from use for recreation. Two former quarries nearby in Columbia Township became swimming parks during much of the 20th century – Jaquay Lake and Wildwood Lake.

Likewise, *Olmsted 200* reader Bob Marquard said his Olmsted Township family went to former Cleveland Stone Company land at North Amherst when he was a boy.

“The family spent many days at a private association that owned land that was former quarries,” he wrote. “A rather scary place, but the lakes were surrounded with mill stones and the like, and we fished, had clam bakes, and ice skated, and those former quarries were the center of the recreation. Membership was from my grandfather, who passed it on to my father. Membership was limited, but of course the key was copied and shared. You can see the place... just south of I-90... and opposite, to the north of I-90, is a motorcycle/dirt bike ‘course.’ My uncle as a boy (born 1919) lost a buddy to drowning out there.”



Sandstone blocks left over from the former West View quarry sit atop a hill with a sheer side that resulted from quarrying.

That spot is owned by the Amherst Outdoor Life Association at 280 Crosse Road.

An even better example of water-filled quarries now used for parks and recreation



This set of steps at a residence near the former West View quarry makes use of three grindstones and long sandstone blocks evidently from the quarry.

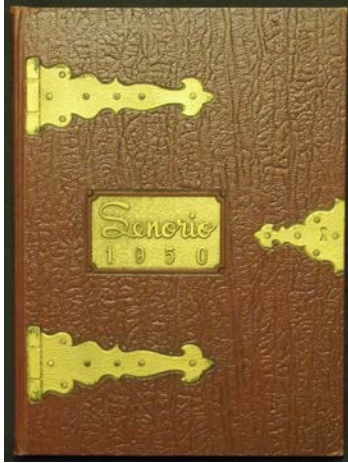
can be found in Berea where Coe Lake, Baldwin Lake and Wallace Lake all are former quarry pits. Coe Lake is where Cleveland Stone once operated its “Big Quarry.”

One of the legacies of being a former quarry town is having an abundance of sandstone blocks and grindstones that have been repurposed for building foundations, steps and decorative pieces. In the case of the Olmsted Falls Village Hall (now the

Moosehead restaurant) built in the early 1940s, the WPA was able to take leftover blocks from the quarry to make a complete building. For several decades, a World War II memorial was mounted on a grindstone at the corner of Water Street and Columbia Road at the Village Green in Olmsted Falls. Last year, that memorial was remounted on a piece of black granite to make room for the new Vietnam Veterans Memorial with a promise the grindstone would return to display in another spot later. All these stones stand as silent, sturdy, stoic symbols of the noisy, noxious industrial process that began in Olmsted Falls and West View a century and a half ago.

Yearbook Is Time Capsule of Olmsted 70 Years Ago

Seventy years ago on June 2, 1950, 34 seniors graduated from Olmsted Falls High School. Their 1950 *Senorio*, the yearbook put out each year by a club at the high school, preserves the sights and memories of a time 70 years ago when Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township were much smaller communities. *Olmsted 200* recently acquired a copy of it.



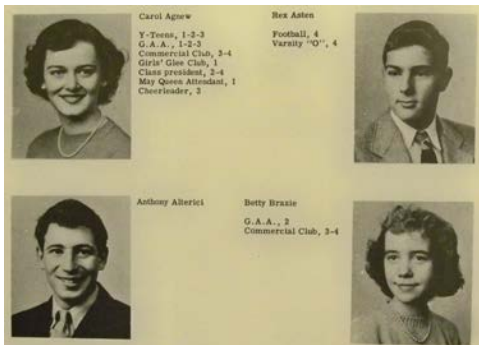
This is the cover of the 1950 OFHS yearbook.

photos of the seventh and eighth grade students is another sign of how small the school was back then.

A history of the Class of 1950 on pages 40 and 41 of the 64-page yearbook, says the class began in September 1937 with 57 members, but only 13 of the original members made it all the way to graduation. Although the class lost 44 of the original members over the years, others joined it along the way. However, the *Senorio* includes a photo from May 1939 (when the Class of 1950 was in second grade)



This yearbook photo shows first- and second-grade students in May 1939.



Carol Agnew, Rex Asten, Anthony Alterici and Betty Brazie came first alphabetically in the yearbook. Agnew also was class president.

This yearbook photo shows first- and second-grade students in May 1939. labeled “GRADES 1+2 – OLMSTED FALLS SCHOOL” that includes just 30 students. There is no explanation for why so few students were in that photo covering two grades.

In 1950, only the seniors were depicted with individual photos. The other classes were shown in either a single group photo in the case of the sophomores or two group photos for each of the other classes.

In addition to the changes in class sizes, two other photos show the school was preparing for further growth that was coming as the Baby

Boomers, who were born in the post-World War II years, and new housing developments steadily increased class sizes. Those two photos show the construction of the first of two wings that were added to the western end of the high school. Those wings now house the KidsFirst Learning Center, a child care and preschool facility. (For more on those wings, see Issue 66 of *Olmsted 200* from November 2018.)



Except for two absent members, the entire sophomore class was shown in one photo in the 1950 yearbook.



When the school district put a bond issue on the November 1948 ballot to fund the expansion, which initially was intended to be just one wing with seven classrooms, the *Berea Enterprise* reported that enrollment already was up to 834 students for a school that had been expected to accommodate only 500 students.

Those wings were the last additions to the old school, which was built in 1916 and received an addition that doubled its size in 1926 followed by the addition of a gymnasium in 1938. The new wings weren't enough to handle the growth very long, however.

In 1953, construction began on Falls Elementary School, which opened for classes on

The photos above and to the right from the 1950 yearbook show the first of two wings added to the western side of the old school in the 1950s to accommodate growth in enrollment for a while.



September 8, 1954. Four years later, Fitch Elementary School opened. In January 1961, Lenox Elementary School opened. The new high school opened in September 1968 and was greatly expanded 50 years later. The old school became a middle school for a few

decades until the new Olmsted Falls Middle School replaced it in 1996, leading to the sale of the old building in 1997 and its current use as City Hall and the Olmsted Community Center. More recently, the district built Olmsted Falls Intermediate School for the fourth and fifth grades in 2009. Other schools also have been reconfigured to accommodate a district that now educates about 3,900 students with close to 1,300 of them in the high school. In 2019, 345 seniors graduated from the high school, which was more than 10 times the number of seniors who graduated 70 years ago.

The yearbook has a nautical theme, which seems to explain why the cover resembles the outside of a trunk that might have been used for overseas trips. The history of the Class of 1950 is titled “Ship’s Log.” The name of the ship is O.F.S. ’50, and it is said to be under the management of “Olmsted Falls Institute of Erudition.” Its destination is “Isle of Graduation.” The time of departure was September 6, 1937 (when the class entered first grade), and its estimated length of voyage was twelve years.



The yearbook includes photos of longtime teacher Amelia Harding and longtime principal Gordon Boddy, along with W.W. Zinser, who was then superintendent (right), above the letters they wrote for the graduating class in 1950.

The *Senorio* includes letters from the class’s faulty advisor, the school’s principal and the school district’s superintendent. The faculty advisor, teacher Amelia Harding, and the principal, Gordon Boddy, remained with the school system for a few more decades and lived through the transition to the new high school that opened in 1968. Boddy had come to the school as a teacher and coach in 1947 and became the school’s principal just two years later, which would mean the Class of 1950 was the first to graduate when he was principal. He still taught classes until he later became the school’s first fulltime principal. He died in 1994 at age 82. Harding died in 2011 at age 97.

“It’s ‘Anchors Aweigh’ for you, the Class of 1950, and time for you to embark over smooth and troubled waters on a most difficult journey on the sea of life,” Harding wrote in the first of three paragraphs of her letter. “As Captain of the 1950 sailing of your ship, I want to share with you in a small portion of your faith and hope for the future.”

In his two-sentence letter, Boddy wrote, “The ‘All Ashore’ call has been given, and you, the crew, have been briefed by the captain and the mates. Although you can’t possibly be conditioned for all the eventualities of the trip, I am sure that you will make proper adjustment to changes in wind and tide, and ride the crest of the waves to a full life.”

The longest letter with eight paragraphs came from Superintendent W.W. Zinser, who said life was more like a fleet of ships instead of just one. He also referred to life as “a force greater than the atomic bomb.” He wrote that just a couple of months shy of the fifth anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bombs in Japan that ended World War II.

A section about activities includes photographs for these student organizations: Student Council, National Honor Society, Commercial Club, Senior Staff, Hi-Y, Senior Y-Teens, Varsity O, Junior Y-Teens, Girls’ Glee Club, Boys’ Glee Club, Band, A Cappella Choir, Varsity Singers, Future Teachers of America, Photography Club, Gym Leaders, Junior Dramatics, Girls’ Tumbling, and Boys’ Tumbling. That section also included photos of the May queen and her senior attendants and the Homecoming queen and her court.

The section on sports includes photos of the football team, the varsity basketball team, the junior varsity team, the baseball team and the track team and cheerleaders. The sports teams were all boys back then and the cheerleaders were all girls. The football



This photo is not in the 1950 yearbook but is from a mid-20th century postcard that shows what the Olmsted Falls School looked like back then.

team had three wins and five losses. The basketball team had 10 wins and nine losses. The basketball team’s record for games in its own league was seven wins and five losses, which left the Bulldogs in a tie for third place with Brooklyn. The yearbook does not include the records for the baseball and track teams, presumably because their seasons were not over by the time the *Seniorio* had to go be printed.

The end of the *Seniorio* includes 13 pages of advertisements from 91 businesses that provided financial support for the yearbook. Many of them were businesses from Berea, while a smaller number were from North Olmsted, Fairview Park, Columbia Station and even Cleveland. Those from Olmsted Falls, Olmsted Township and West View included: Fenderbosch’s Food Market, Russell Hall Home Remodeling and Cabinet Work, Parker’s Service Station, Miller’s Service (for autos), Olmsted Falls Drive-in,

Saumer's Shopping Center, Bauer's Food Center, Zapior's (tavern), P. Simmerer & Sons Hardware, Charles H. Bonsey (insurance), Dr. John V. Sammon (dentist), Bank of Berea (three branches, including Olmsted Falls), W.A. Jeffers Painting and Decorating, Kucklick's Appliances, Barnum's Super Market, Olmsted Falls Dry Cleaners, Schultz's Barber Shop, E.F. Hecker Plaster, Rudy's Barber Shop, West View Lumber & Supply Company, Olmsted Falls Lumber Company, Sheehan Air Conditioning Company, Hall Brothers (meats), Olmsted Greenhouse, Weekley's Mailing Service, Thorpe's Flowers, United Farmers' Exchange Association, and Reed's Inc. (real estate and insurance).

Reader Remembers West View from Several Decades Ago

Olmsted 200 reader Andy Jocke wrote recently with some of his memories of West View from when it was an independent village, years before it became the southern half of Olmsted Falls in 1971.

“About 200 ft. east of East River Rd. on the North side of Sprague Rd. and across from Miller's Gas Station, was a small blacksmith shop and it also contained a small country barber shop that had one barber chair,” he wrote. “Haircuts were 25 and 50 cents. It was called Cole's Barber Shop and Bud Cole was the barber and he also was a blacksmith. In the early 60s, or sooner, Bud Cole retired and sold the shop to Clint Williams. Clint was a barber and he cut hair there for a while, I'm not sure how long. Clint then tore down the buildings and built a small strip center that housed the Lawson's Milk store. That was about the same time that Clint started developing Real Estate. I lived [in] West View from 1942 until 1995 and moved to Marco Island, Fl., but I will always remember and have Olmsted Falls and West View in my memories”

That fills in a little information to the story of the late Clint Williams. To read what Williams said about that time in his life, see Issue 77 of *Olmsted 200* from October 2019.

Thanks go to Andy Jocke for sharing his memories. More memories like that from Olmsted's (or West View's) past are welcome.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include the beginning of a series of stories about the railroads of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township. Railroads have been part of Olmsted life for 170 years now.

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,

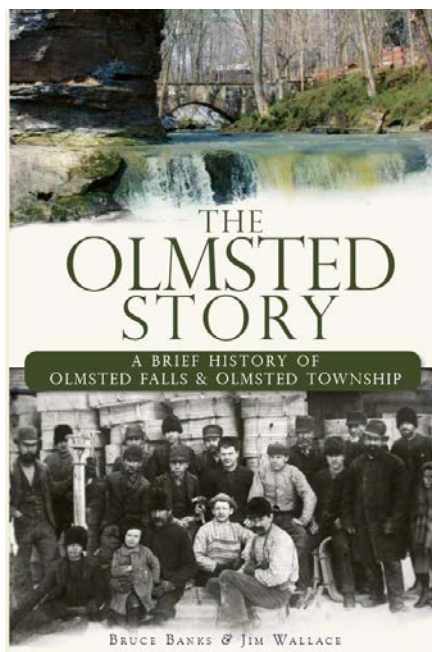
Massachusetts, Connecticut and Maine, as well as overseas in the Netherlands, Germany and Japan.

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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