Olmsted 200

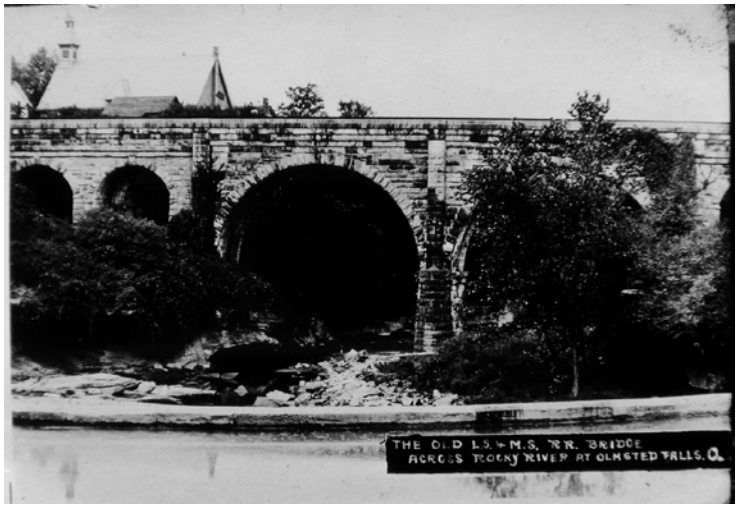
Bicentennial Notes about Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township –
First Farmed in 1814 and Settled in 1815

Issue 87 August 1, 2020

Contents

Olmsted's Second Railroad Bisected the Community

Just a few years after the first railroad – the Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati Railroad – cut through the West View section of southeastern Olmsted Township, a second railroad went east-west right through the middle of the township in 1853.

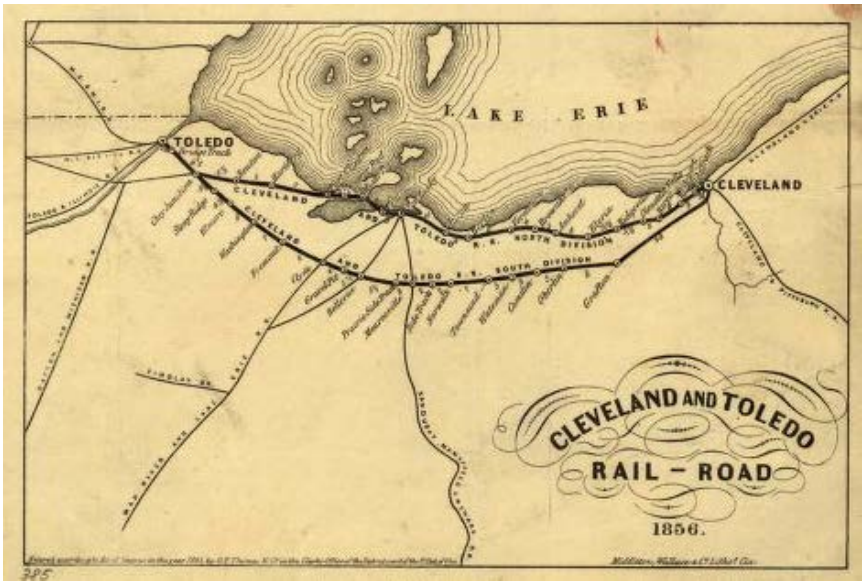


The railroad bridge built over Rocky River in Olmsted Falls in 1853 stood until the early 1900s, when the railroad replaced it. Shortly after it was built, it seems to have been used to move a former seminary building across to the west side of the river, where it became the Grand Pacific Hotel.

Its path took the railroad right though Olmsted Falls, which did not incorporate as a village until a few years later in 1856. As Walter Holzworth wrote in his 1966 book of Olmsted history, Olmsted Falls reaped benefits from having the railroad: "It soon outgrew other nearby settlements of Ridgeville, Dover and Columbia."

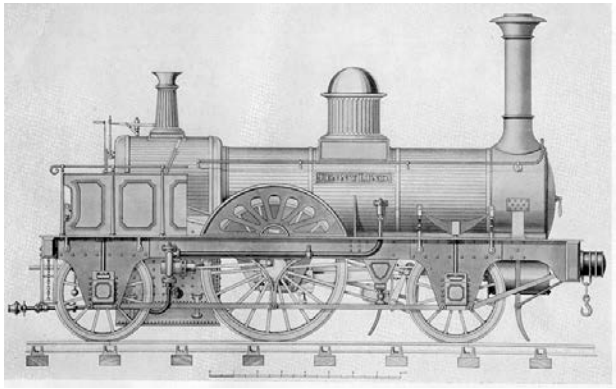
Building the railroad through Olmsted Falls required the building of a bridge there to cross the west branch of Rocky River. It is believed that the bridge was used sometime in the mid-1850s to roll a seminary building across the river from

Seminary Road (now Lewis Road) on the east side of the river to the west side, where it became a hotel and later a longtime hardware store. That building is now known as the Grand Pacific Hotel, a reception hall at the corner of Columbia Road and Mill Street that anchors the section of restored buildings known as Grand Pacific Junction. Although the bridge was built in 1853, the first train reportedly did not pass over it until 1854, so perhaps that provided enough time with no traffic for the former seminary building to be rolled on logs safely across it. The railroad rebuilt the bridge in 1909, making it wider to accommodate another set of tracks.



This map of the Cleveland and Toledo Railroad from the collection of the Library of Congress came out in 1856, the same year Olmsted Falls incorporated as a village. It shows Olmsted Falls as a stop between Berea and Ridgeville on the Northern Division of the railroad's tracks.

Olmsted's section of tracks initially was part of the Junction Railroad, which built tracks west from Cleveland to Toledo. On September 1, 1853, that railroad merged with the Toledo, Norwalk and Cleveland Railroad, which had built tracks west from Toledo. Together, they became the Cleveland and Toledo Railroad. The Junction tracks, which ran through Olmsted Township, became the Northern Division, while the other tracks became the Southern Division. The Southern Division's tracks connected at Grafton with the Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati Railroad, the railroad that ran through West View, so Cleveland and Toledo Railroad trains used both of the tracks that passed through Olmsted Township.

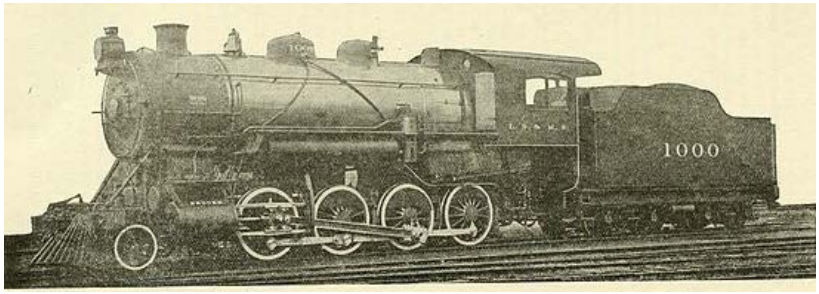


This drawing shows a Jenny Lind, the type of locomotive that reportedly was the first to use the Cleveland and Toledo tracks in 1854.

According to Walter Holzworth in his 1970 book on Berea and Middleburgh Township history, *Men of Grit and Greatness*, the first locomotive to use the new tracks through Berea and Olmsted Falls was of the type known as a Jennie Lind,

which had a high-pitched whistle. Such locomotives originated in England in 1847 and were named for a popular opera singer of the time. The design worked so well that it became the first type of locomotive to go into mass production.

On February 11, 1869, the Lake Shore Railway (formerly the Cleveland, Painesville and Ashtabula Railroad) acquired the Cleveland and Toledo Railroad. Less than two months later on April 6, 1869, it merged with the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana Railroad to form the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway. That remained the identity of the railroad that ran through Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township for the rest of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century. After the company took over the Buffalo and Erie Railroad on June 22 of 1869, it controlled a route all the way from Buffalo to Chicago.



This photo from American Engineer and Railroad Journal *shows a Lake Shore and Michigan Southern locomotive that was used in 1893.*

In about 1877, Cornelius Vanderbilt and his New York Central and Hudson River Railroad acquired the majority of the stock of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway, which allowed him to control rail routes from New York to Chicago. On December 22, 1914, the two railroads merged to form the New York Central Railroad. Initially, the railroad's main line ran on the southern tracks between Elyria and Toledo, but eventually the northern tracks that ran through Sandusky became the main line, which increased the number of trains running through Olmsted Falls.

This gold bond of the Lake Shore and Michigan Railway Company was issued June 1, 1897.

Many of America's railroads struggled in the latter half of the 20th century after most passenger service ended and interstate trucking and expanded air transportation changed the face of the competition. Changing commerce patterns also affected some of them. That resulted in a series of mergers and realignments among railroads. In 1968, the New York Central merged with the Penn Central Railroad. That lasted less than a decade before the combined railroad became part of Conrail in 1976. Conrail, or the Consolidated Rail Corporation, was formed by Congress as a government-funded private company to prevent the collapse of rail traffic in the northeastern portion of the country as a result of several railroad bankruptcies. In

1987, another act of Congress authorized a public stock offering that returned Conrail to the private sector without government funding.

A big corporate deal in 1997 put the tracks running through Olmsted Falls in the hands of the Norfolk Southern Corporation.

A decade later, in 1997, Norfolk Southern Corporation and CSX Corporation agreed to acquire Conrail and split its assets. That acquisition took effect in 1998. At that time, the east-west tracks running through Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township became part of Norfolk Southern's Chicago Line, while the other tracks that cut diagonally northeast-southwest through southern Olmsted Falls (formerly West View) became part of CSX's Chicago Line. Those corporate changes affected the level of train traffic passing through Olmsted, which will be covered in a future part of this series in *Olmsted 200*.

During the early years, when Olmsted's east-west line was part of the Cleveland and Toledo Railroad, Olmsted Falls was merely a "flag station." That meant trains would stop at the railroad's crossing along Columbia Street (now Columbia Road) at what Holzworth called "a dinky little station" only when they were flagged down to do so. It wasn't until the 1870s, after the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway took over, that talk began about the possibility that the railroad would build a depot for Olmsted Falls. However, the railroad first contemplated building a depot on the west side of Berea to serve both Berea and Olmsted Falls. Instead, city leaders in Berea prevailed upon the railroad to build a stately depot made out of locally quarried sandstone blocks for their community, and Olmsted Falls got its own, wooden depot. Both were built in 1876. According to Holzworth, the *Plain Dealer* called the Berea depot the finest one outside of a large city, and Olmsted Falls was "equally proud" of its new depot.


Instead of having to share a depot with Olmsted Falls, Berea got this depot made out of sandstone that was quarried locally.

According to Holzworth in his 1966 book on Olmsted history, Olmsted Falls was fortunate to get a depot that was better than those in other nearby communities.

"The new station was hailed with pride and praise for the railroad," he wrote. "In comparison to the stations at West View, Eaton, Columbia, and Shawville it was a spacious structure 108 feet long and 30 feet wide. It contained a [ladies']

waiting room and separate waiting room for gents, a ticket office, telegraph office and a baggage room. The building was furnished in a fine style of architecture and considered an ornament to the village and credit to the railroad."

The Olmsted Falls Depot has stood since 1876.

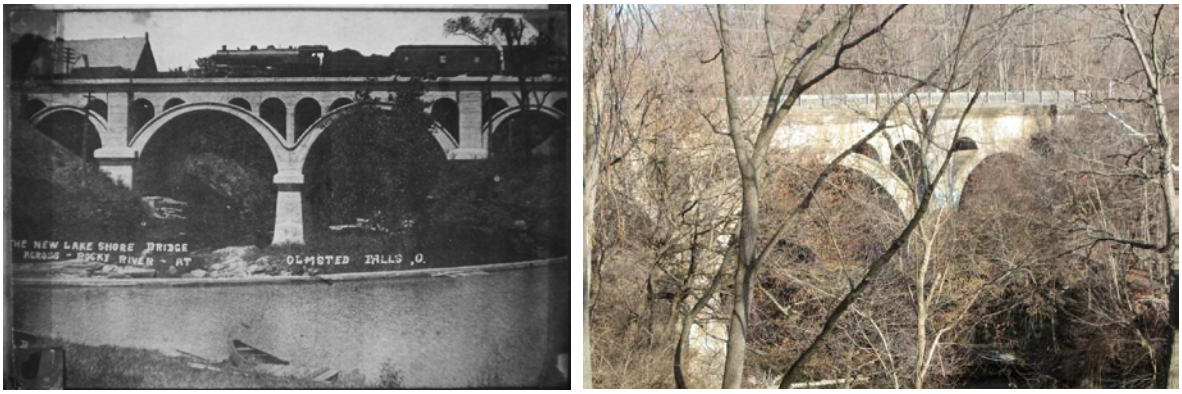
A short version of the Olmsted Falls Depot's history is that it was moved in the early 1900s from near Division Street (now Mapleway Avenue) to near Brookside Avenue after residents had complained for decades that it was too far from the center of town. Passenger rail service ended in the late 1940s and freight service ended in 1954. The New York Central used the depot for storage and as a maintenance-of-way facility until about 1965. It then became home to a business that sold and restored antiques and survived a brief fire in 1972. The Cuyahoga Valley & West Shore Model Railroad Club began leasing the depot from Conrail in 1977, bought it in 1996 and continues to use it today for its extensive collection of model trains.

A full story about the depot, including a woodcut print of it from an 1876 newspaper, can be found in Issue 2 of *Olmsted 200* from July 2013. Instead of rehashing all the details in that story, let's consider what such a depot meant to a community like Olmsted Falls. This is from an introduction written by Clay Lancaster for the 1977 book, *Waiting for the 5:05 – Terminal, Station and Depot in America*:

> *Broadly considered, the railroad station was the focus of the American community from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. Whether in the populous city of the East or West Coast, Great Lakes or inland waterways, or in the small town or village of New England, the South or the prairie, the train depot occupied the central position. In the city it could be distinguished by the hustle and activity around it, and it was the one place in the grim metropolis where the inhabitants unleashed their emotions publicly, at the meeting with or separation from loved ones. In smaller settlements it was where the natives congregated to get news and swap gossip, and scrutinize arriving and departing passengers, as bringing a welcome, wider vista to their limited, humdrum existence. The train station was the image of the community, presenting at a glance something about its size, affluence, livelihood, and social range of the citizens, their taste in architecture, and even where their local pride last came to fruition, in the building of the depot. The steamboat landing before it and the airport afterward were located at the edge or outside of the population area; but the tracks of the train were brought to the nucleus, wending their way through the streets*

of the hamlet or small city, and taken underground in the great metropolis. The architecture of the depot ranged from a shelter, usually slightly more pretentious and up-to-date than the courthouse or town hall of the village, to the magnificence of a temple or palace in the capitals of wealth, industry, and learning. Today the city expands in an aggregate manner, its buildings lacking style and distinction, an aimless continuity of construction without conclusion. This throws into sharper perspective the role that the railroad station played in unifying, in giving a core to American communities maintaining individuality and local character prior to the decline of the railroads. The iron rails and the trains that shuttled from one place to another tied them together, but to each place the railroad terminal was its hallmark, standing for all of the cultural, productive, and commercial facets of which the people were capable. The railroad depot is the foremost symbol of the evolving period of American civilization, of which there has been no replacement.

In addition to moving the Olmsted Falls Depot in the early 1900s, the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway also added a third set of tracks. The railroad began surveying and acquiring the extra land it needed in 1906 for what then was expected to be two more sets of tracks, but by 1907 the plans were for just one more set of tracks. An item in the April 19, 1907, edition of the *Berea Advertiser* noted that the railroad had sent "a half dozen Italians to Olmsted" to work on the tracks.



The Lake Shore and Southern Michigan Railway's 1909 bridge was new when the postcard on the left was issued. As the December 7, 2019, photo on the right shows, that bridge still serves the current railroad, Norfolk Southern.

The wider right-of-way to accommodate the third set of tracks required the construction of a new bridge in Olmsted Falls to replace the original bridge built in 1853. One consequence was that the local International Order of Odd Fellows lodge had to move its building from just north of the tracks on the east side of Columbia Street (now Columbia Road) a short distance south to a lot on the other side of the road. That building became the Olmsted Falls Grange Hall during much of the 20th century and now is home to a restaurant, Gibbs Butcher & Brews. The bridge, which was completed in 1909, still serves the railroad.

Olmsted's two railroads brought residents better access to Cleveland, other neighboring communities and the rest of the nation, as well as new opportunities from the access they made possible, but they also caused many problems over the decades. Future issues of *Olmsted 200* will go into the advantages and struggles of living with the railroads. But before that, the next issue will consider other railroads that were planned but never built through Olmsted. One of those projects even left behind a pair of reminders of what might have been in Olmsted Falls.

David Kennedy of Olmsted Falls helped with research for this story.

Gazebo: Former Mayor's Dream Serves Olmsted for 40 Years

This month marks the 40th anniversary of an Olmsted Falls landmark that has become so ingrained in community activities that it seems as though it has been there forever. It was on August 13, 1980, that a group of volunteers that included members of civic organizations and other individuals completed two months of work to build a gazebo at the southwestern corner of the Village Green.

As the *News Sun* reported in its August 14, 1980, issue, the Village Green had a bandstand for many years until it was torn down in the 1950s. "This is the first time we have had one since," Mayor William Mahoney, who led the effort to build the gazebo, said at the time. He estimated its value to be $15,000 to $20,000. The construction crew used blueprints for a similar gazebo at Cedar Point.

This photo from the 1950s, courtesy of Denny Shirer, shows both the old bandstand and the Union Schoolhouse on the Village Green. Both were torn down in following years.

"There must have been a total of 60 people who worked on it," the newspaper quoted Mahoney as saying. "There are individuals who donated as much as 100 hours to this." He said their service included sharing expertise in carpentry, brick-laying and electrical installation.

Unfortunately, rain forced the cancellation of a dedication picnic on Sunday, August 17, so the dedication was rescheduled for three weeks later on September 7 as part of an ice cream social put on by the Olmsted Falls Music Association. It included performances by the Olmsted Falls High School band and the Golden Bullets drill team.

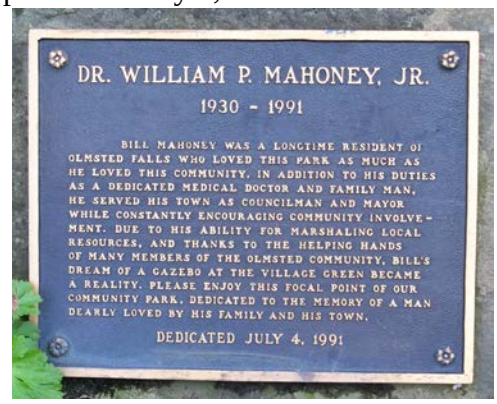
However, even though the gazebo was a welcome addition to the Village Green, it lasted only a decade before it needed significant structural renovations. In July 1990, a heavy-duty crane removed the three-ton roof. After that, cement footers were poured into

the base support to hold six new steel pipes that replaced wooden beams, which had become weathered inside the decorative columns. Following that, the crane put the roof back on the gazebo.

This is what the gazebo on the Village Green looked like eight years ago on August 12, 2012.

In July 1990, the cost of the renovation was estimated to be about $6,000, as Joanne DuMound reported in the *News Sun*, but that September, she reported the cost actually turned out to be about $9,500. She also reported that Water Street resident Ted Lorek helped keep the cost down by providing free labor using several laid-off General Motors workers from the GM Jobs Bank program.

On March 9, 1991, former Mayor Mahoney died at age 60 at his home at the corner of Water Street and Main Street, just a short walk from the Village Green. In addition to serving on Olmsted Falls City Council for a decade and two terms as mayor, Mahoney was a popular physician who took over the local practice of Dr. Forrest Adams in 1961. Within four months of Mahoney's death, the city named the gazebo after him and held a dedication ceremony following the community's Independence Day parade on July 4, 1991.



This is the plaque for former Mayor William Mahoney on a rock near the gazebo dedicated to him.

"Due to his ability for marshaling local resources, and thanks to the helping hands of many members of the Olmsted community, Bill's dream of a gazebo at the Village Green became a reality," a plaque installed on a rock near the gazebo says in part. "Please enjoy this focal point of our community park, dedicated to the memory of a man dearly loved by his family and his town."

The gazebo at the Village Green remains a focal point of many community activities on holidays and other occasions.

West View Quarry Might Have Exhausted Good Stone

One of the issues left unresolved in the *Olmsted 200* series on quarries earlier this year was when the West View quarry closed in the early 1900s. Further research through the newspapers of that time has not found a definitive item pinpointing when the quarry

closed, but a few items indicate the quarry's operations might have sputtered toward a permanent closure over at least a few years.

For example, the West View column in the *Berea Advertiser* for April 14, 1905, included this item: "The north quarry, which had commenced work, closed last week. Some of the workmen have found employment at the south quarry."

To understand that reference to the north quarry and the south quarry, it is necessary to recognize that, until West View incorporated as a village entirely within Cuyahoga County in 1927, it was generally considered to be a community that straddled the border of Olmsted Township and Columbia Township. Thus, the West View columnist in 1905 would have regarded the north quarry as the one in Olmsted Township and the south quarry as the next one south in Columbia Township.

That 1905 item seemed to mark the end of the north quarry's operations, but another item appeared one year later in the West View column on April 20, 1906: "Many are pleased that the North quarry, which has been closed a year, again opened for work; Mr. Frank Shepard is in command."

Part of a grindstone and some blocks of sandstone remain in Baker's Creek, but the high-quality sandstone might have been exhausted at the West View quarry by the time it ceased operations in the early 1900s.

However, another item in the column for July 6, 1906, offers a new wrinkle in the story of that quarry. It refers to "the stone being quarried for the breakwater." Readers of the series on quarries might recall that the massive quarries in Berea closed seemingly permanently in 1932 when it apeared that all of the high-quality sandstone that could be reached, without tearing up Berea's business district, had been quarried out. But then, in 1934, quarrying resumed for a while in Berea to supply stone for the breakwater off of Cleveland's Lake Erie shore because it didn't need to be the high-quality sandstone used for building blocks or grindstones. Therefore, it seems reasonable to infer that, if stone was being taken out of the West View quarry in 1906 for use in the breakwater, perhaps only lesser-quality stone was left at that quarry.

News of the West View quarry, or north quarry, vanished from the newspapers after that. It was not mentioned again in 1906. In 1907, there was no item in the spring indicating the quarry had opened again for the year. Such items had been common in prior years. Likewise, no such item appeared in the West View column in 1908.

In the July 31, 1908, issue of the *Advertiser*, a column of Berea news included an item that said this: “John Sasak had his hand smashed in the West View quarry, and Dr. Perry amputated the member.” But was that a reference to West View’s north quarry, the one in Olmsted Township, or the south quarry in Columbia Township? Without further information, it is impossible to say for sure. But one possibility, and this is just speculation, is that the north quarry extracted some low-quality sandstone for a while in 1906 and then quietly ceased operation. Perhaps a more definitive answer is out there, but it hasn’t turned up yet.

Thanks again go to David Kennedy for help in research for this story.

Virus Tames Roaring Revival of Twenties at Heritage Days

Someday, histories of Olmsted will include accounts of how Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township have coped with the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. Unfortunately for the present, the coronavirus has forced the cancellation of many activities, including the annual festival dedicated to recognition of the community’s past, Olmsted Heritage Days.

This was the logo created for the now-cancelled Olmsted Heritage Days for 2020.

Judging by the logo created for the festival long before organizers realized it would have to be cancelled, it seems they were hoping to celebrate the beginning of the 2020s with reference to the Roaring Twenties of a century ago. Perhaps the rest of the 2020s will be more roaring than the decade’s first year, and Heritage Days will return to help everyone reflect on Olmsted’s past, present and future.

The late Clint Williams started Olmsted Heritage Days in 1992 shortly after he renovated and reopened the first group of buildings that made up Grand Pacific Junction. Year after year until this year, the Grand Pacific Junction Merchants Association and other businesses in downtown Olmsted Falls have organized and operated the festival, which is a big task.

This year, the Heritage Days organizing committee held out until late May before cancelling the 2020 festival. As Liz Marshall, co-chairperson of the committee, explained

in a Facebook post, that was well after the cancellation of other festivals and celebrations, but just after the cancellation of the Ohio State Fair, which was scheduled for about the same time as Heritage Days, and the committee "took that as a sign that things on the horizon may not work out in our favor."

One of the most popular features of Olmsted Heritage Days has been the parade on the opening evening of the festival. The marching band from Olmsted Falls High School always plays an important role in that parade, as seen here on August 1, 2019.

Marshall also explained that it takes much work to schedule entertainment and vendors and make other preparations, and to wait longer could have made it difficult to get refunds for deposits. In addition, she wrote, the $25,000 budget for this year's festival depended on donations, but with the shutdown of many businesses during much of the pandemic, the committee thought it would be "insensitive and in poor taste to even ask" for such donations. She welcomed anyone who wants to make a donation for the 2021 Olmsted Heritage Days to contact the committee by email at: olmstedheritagedays@gmail.com.

"We look forward to continuing the legacy and tradition in 2021!" Marshall concluded.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include a story about the railroads planned but not built through Olmsted. It also will have a story about the creation of a swimming hole in Olmsted Falls several decades ago and a flashback to high school football half a century ago.

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. Thanks also go to David Kennedy for frequently contributing research and insight for some stories. 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 Angelina's Pizza in Olmsted Falls and the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.*