

Olmsted 200

Two Centuries and More History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township –
First Farmed in 1814 and Settled in 1815

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Two Tales Are Told by Gravestones

It's not unusual when moving into a previously owned property to find things left by former residents. But how about a gravestone?

Although that's not typical, it has happened in Olmsted Township – twice. And each time, the gravestone was for a member of the Fitch family.

That might seem strange, but it's not too strange that, if any family was involved, it was the Fitch family. The Fitches were one of the most prominent families in Olmsted Township and Olmsted Falls during much of the 19th century beginning in 1831, when seven Fitch brothers – Chester, Eli, Horace, Chauncey, Elisha, Daniel and Sanford – moved to the township with their wives from Connecticut. For several decades, they and their offspring were involved in all facets of Olmsted life, but they didn't leave much behind through the 20th century and into the 21st century, except for the name of Fitch Road – and their gravestones.

One of those gravestones turned up on a property along Fitch Road. Juliette Kovalik and her husband moved



This gravestone for Emma Rosell Fitch was left in the barn at 6394 Fitch Road. Photo courtesy of Juliette Kovalik.

into their new home at 6394 Fitch Road in 2022. By the time she sent an email to *Olmsted 200* on September 8 of that year, they had questions about the property. For example, they knew the original part of the house was built in 1860, but they wondered which member of the Fitch family erected it. Also, why was there a gravestone for Emma Rosell Fitch in their barn?



The top photo, which was apparently taken in the 19th century, shows the house that Charles C. Fitch built in 1860. It faced east on the west side of Fitch Road just north of the intersection with John Road. Behind it was a big farm that spread out over more than 156 acres by 1876. Charles Fitch was regarded as a “prosperous farmer.” He lived there with family until his death in 1897. The bottom photo shows the house at 6394 Fitch Road as it looked in 2024. In the 21st century, it no longer is part of a big farm. Instead, it now sits among many other houses that were built during the past several decades. The top photo is courtesy of Juliette Kovalik.



It turns out the gravestone gave a clue to the answer to the first question. It says Emma Rosell was the daughter of C.C. & L.H. Fitch. She died October 19, 1850, at the age of two years, two months and 15 days. Her father was Charles C. Fitch, and there is little doubt that he built the house a decade after her death.

Charles Fitch was the second born of the 10 children of Chester and Betsy Edmonds Fitch. He was born on May 29, 1815, when the family was still living in Connecticut. (Coincidentally, that was about the time when James Geer and his family, the first settlers of European descent, moved into Olmsted Township. However, it was 14 years before the township took the Olmsted name after another Connecticut family.)

On May 3, 1842, Charles married Lydia H. Willson, who was originally from Vermont. Emma, who was born August 4, 1848, was their fourth child. Unfortunately for them, two of their other children also died young. Lucy Marion, who was born on February 24, 1862, died on March 28, 1864. Gertrude May, who was born on September 12, 1866, died on February 24, 1867. The three of them now share a gravestone at Butternut Ridge Cemetery. Perhaps the original gravestone for Emma was put into the family's barn after it was replaced by the joint gravestone for her and her two sisters who also died young.



This portion of an 1876 Olmsted Township map shows the Charles Fitch farm along Fitch Road. The small black square almost directly across from the intersection with John Road is the location of the house.

According to a genealogy of the Fitch family, Charles and Lydia Fitch had seven other children who survived into adulthood. However, Lydia died at age 45 on October 19, 1867. The cause of her death was what then was called consumption but is today known as tuberculosis. On March 10, 1870, Charles married Ellen Dryden, a daughter of Captain Cyrus Perry Dryden and Harriet Howe Dryden, who lived along what was first called Seminary Road and later called Lewis Road in a house that still stands at 7993 Lewis Road, which now is home to North Shore Services.



On the left is the gravestone for Emma, Lucy and Gertrude Fitch, who all died young. On the right is the gravestone for their parents, Charles and Lydia Fitch. Both are at Butternut Ridge Cemetery in North Olmsted.

The Fitch genealogy called Charles Fitch a “prosperous farmer.” An 1866 Olmsted Township tax list showed he owned two plots, one of 78 acres and another of 39 acres. An 1876 map shows he then owned 156.62 acres. He died on October 12, 1897, when he was 82 years old. He was buried next to his first wife, Lydia, at Butternut Ridge Cemetery. After his death, his son, Melvin, was given the right to take possession of “the potatoes and other crops” on the farm. In his will, Charles left one-fourth of his land to his widow, Ellen, one-fourth to Melvin, one-fourth to a daughter, Maryette Arundell, and the other one-fourth to another daughter, Martha Kennedy.

Charles’s second wife, Ellen, lived until December 20, 1912, when she was 81 years old. She was buried at the old Chestnut Grove (Turkeyfoot) Cemetery.

The other gravestone for a member of the Fitch family lies on the property of Mary M. Mularo at 26164 Cook Road. It is for Gilbert L. Fitch, who was 27 years old when he died on August 20, 1865.

“I was told it was covering a well,” Mularo told *Olmsted 200*. “Now, there’s a second well that was built that is still there.”

The gravestone was covering a well when her grandfather bought the property and built the house there, she said. In recent years, it has served as a steppingstone for a side door into a garage.

“It’s very heavy,” Mularo said. “It’s been face down, so the writing has been protected.”

The full name of the deceased man was Gilbert Loomis Fitch. Loomis was the maiden name of his mother, Clarissa Loomis Fitch. His father was Chauncey Fitch, one of the original Fitch brothers who moved to Olmsted Township in 1831. When he embarked on his trip to Ohio, he was married to Clarissa’s sister, Anna Loomis Fitch, of East Windsor, Connecticut. They had married on December 30, 1819. They had a rough trip from Connecticut in 1831. Here is how Walter Holzworth described it in his 1966 Olmsted history book, *Township 6, Range 15*:



This is the gravestone for Gilbert Fitch that has been at Mary Mularo’s house for many years. One reason it is preserved well is that it was placed faced down on the ground for a long time.

They traveled overland as far as Buffalo, and then embarked on a sailing vessel which was driven ashore by bad weather at Dunkirk, New York. His wife was taken ill and died at the home of her uncle near Fredonia, New York, on December 8, 1831. She was buried at Pomfret, New York.

Mr. Fitch, his mother and his family then came by sleigh in the dead of the winter to Olmsted from Fredonia, and arrived December 25, 1831. He purchased a tract of land in the central part of the township. In the fall of 1833 he returned to Connecticut and on August 18th married Clarissa Loomis, a sister of his first wife.



The left photo shows Gilbert Fitch's gravestone next to Mary Mularo's garage, where it served as a steppingstone for the side door for many years. The right photo shows the house her grandfather built at 26164 Cook Road.

Gilbert Fitch was born on November 12, 1838, five years after his mother married his father and returned with him to Olmsted Township.



Mary Mularo owns the Cook Road property with Gilbert Fitch's gravestone.

Somehow, Gilbert made his way to Wisconsin as a young man because he died at age 27 in La Crosse, which lies along the Mississippi River across from Minnesota. What he was doing there and why he died is not clear, but his body was returned to Ohio and was buried at Butternut Ridge Cemetery, which then was still in Olmsted Township but now is in North Olmsted. The grave is marked with an obelisk that is engraved with the same information as the half round-top stone at the Mularo house.

It's not known why Gilbert Fitch got a second gravestone. Perhaps, sometime after the first one was engraved and set up, his family wanted something more prominent and had the obelisk made. Jim Boddy, who has contributed much over the years to *Olmsted 200* stories,



This obelisk at Butternut Ridge Cemetery replaced Gilbert Fitch's original gravestone.

did a little investigation into the matter, including speaking to a woman at Milano Monuments, which has its main showroom on Brookpark Road. This is what he shared in an email:

She said often families will have a larger stone made and then they're given two options. Milano can destroy the original or give it back to the family. She said companies were doing that even in 1865.

Mary Mularo would be glad to give the discarded gravestone on her property a more suitable home, but leaders of the Historical Society of Olmsted Falls told Boddy they have no suitable place for it. Likewise, local cemeteries don't want it.



This photo catches David Kennedy examining Gilbert Fitch's original gravestone next to Mary Mularo's garage.

"It does not have to be removed at all," Mularo said. "If it meant anything to the historical society

or family, I would give it up, otherwise it's part of my property. I'm happy just to lean it against my garage & enjoy it. Does that make sense?"

Many thanks go to David Kennedy, Jim Boddy, Juliette Kovalik and Mary Mularo for their help with this story – especially David Kennedy who searched through many old records and had to work through such problems as finding three individuals named Charles Fitch.

A Longtime Clothing Merchant Died a Century Ago

A century ago this month, a man who had been one of the most prominent merchants in Olmsted Falls and Berea for decades, died in Berea. An obituary that appeared in the *Berea News* on May 9, 1925, began this way:

F.J. Moley, 78, a clothing merchant at Olmsted Falls for fifty years, ex-councilman and mayor, and former president of the board of education there, died at his home on West Grand street, Saturday, May 2nd, after several months of illness.

Felix James Moley, who was known as Phil to friends, was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1846 to a French father and an Irish mother. He was the father to Raymond Moley, who was one of the most prominent advisors to President Franklin Roosevelt during his early years in the White House.

His father was Hypolite Moley, who was born in France and became a tailor in Paris after serving an apprenticeship. Later, he migrated to Dublin, where he set up another tailor shop. One of his patrons was Daniel O'Connell, who was a leader of Ireland's Roman Catholics in the first half of the 19th century. Moley also taught French at Trinity College. One of his students was Mary Ann Kane, who became his wife.

Felix was born in Ireland and came with his parents to the United States in 1847. The family initially settled in New York before moving to Cleveland. In 1863, they arrived in Olmsted Falls. That was just seven years after Olmsted Falls had been incorporated as a village – and in the middle of the Civil War. Hypolite profited from the war by getting a government contract to supply uniforms to the Union Army. He employed 25 women in his tailor shop.

Hypolite Moley also played another role during the Civil War by training “young recruits in the rudiments of military discipline,” according to Walter Holzworth in his 1966 Olmsted history book, *Township 6, Range, 15*. Moley had received compulsory military training in France. Holzworth wrote that his help was needed because basic military training was limited during the Civil War, and volunteers often saw action just two weeks after they enlisted.

Felix Moley learned to be a tailor in his father's shop and worked as a clothing merchant in Olmsted Falls or Berea or both communities for several decades. “He was a kind person, easy to make friends and took a keen delight and interest in being of some service to his home towns,” Holzworth wrote.

In 1872, Felix married Agnes Fairchild, the daughter of a Berea man, John Ansel Fairchild, who manufactured wooden bowls, platters and other wooden items that he sold in several states. Among the four children of Felix and Agnes was Raymond, who became a teacher and then served as superintendent of the schools in both Olmsted Falls



This is Raymond Moley, son of son of Felix and Agnes Moley. He played prominent roles in both local and national affairs.



These were the ruins after a fire destroyed the Moley clothing store in Olmsted Falls in the early 1900s. Photo courtesy of Mike Gibson.

and Olmsted Township before their school districts merged into one. Later, he served as mayor of Olmsted Falls and negotiated a contract to bring electric power to the community.

After leaving Olmsted Falls, Raymond Moley served in many positions, including as a law professor at Columbia University in New York. During the election of 1932, he became the leader of what was known as Franklin Roosevelt's "Brain Trust," a group of advisors who helped define issues and write speeches for the candidate. Moley continued to serve Roosevelt for six months after

Roosevelt entered the White House as what *Time* magazine called the president's "most intimate adviser." His official position was assistant secretary of state. Later, he had a falling out with Roosevelt and became a critic of him and a conservative Republican. (More information about Raymond Moley can be found in Issue 73 of *Olmsted 200* from June 2019.)

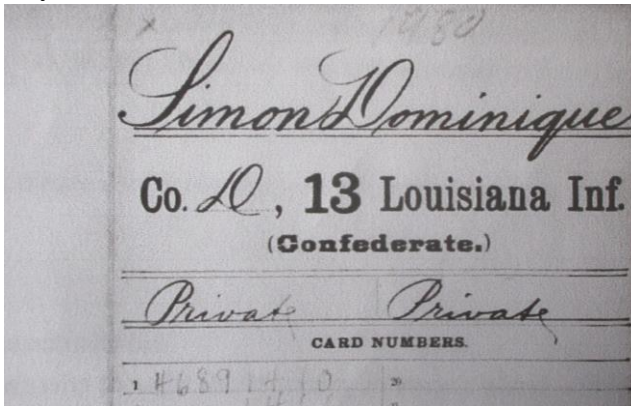
The Moley store, where both Hypolite, who died in 1886, and Felix worked, stood just south of the railroad tracks along the east side of Columbia Street (now Columbia Road) in Olmsted Falls. It burned down in the early 1900s. The Barnum Super Market later occupied the site until it burned down in the 1960s. In 2014, Clint Williams built a replica of an 1880s train depot on the site that now is home to the Grand Pacific Popcorn Company.

Olmsted's Lone Confederate Soldier Was Freed 160 Years Ago

Many young men from Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township served in the Union Army during the Civil War, but only one man who established residency in Olmsted is known to have served in the Confederate Army. It was 160 years ago this month on May 13, 1865, that that man, Dominique Simon, was released from imprisonment at Camp Chase in Columbus following the end of the war and after he pledged an oath of allegiance to the United States.

Simon was from Orleans Parish in Louisiana and served as a private in Company D of the 13th Louisiana Infantry. He entered the service on September 17, 1861. He was wounded on July 28, 1864. After being hospitalized for some time, he apparently resumed his service until he was captured by Union soldiers on December 25, 1864, at Pulaski, Tennessee. After being imprisoned in Louisville, Kentucky, he was sent to Camp Chase by February 17, 1865. According to the Confederate Soldiers Index, which is

available online, he apparently never was imprisoned at Johnson's Island in Sandusky Bay, as some historical accounts had indicated.



On the left is a portion of the military record for Dominique Simon. On the right is the grave for him at Chestnut Grove Cemetery.

Instead of returning to Louisiana after the war, he traveled by train until he reached Olmsted Falls and met a young German woman, married her and settled down. They had 10 children, and he worked as a blacksmith. He died October 22, 1897, at age 77. On August 18, 2013, the Historical Society of Olmsted Falls held a ceremony to dedicate a new headstone for him at Chestnut Grove (Turkeyfoot) Cemetery. (For more information about Simon, see Issue 96 of *Olmsted 200* from May 2021.)

Thanks go to David Kennedy for finding the records of Dominique Simon's service in the Confederate Army and determining he never was imprisoned at Johnson's Island.

A Fire Truck for Olmsted Falls Was Notable a Century Ago

Firetrucks are quite common in every community in the 21st century, but they were still novel 100 years ago, when the *Plain Dealer* ran a brief story titled "Fire Truck for Olmsted Falls" in its May 10, 1925, edition. Here is the entire story:

The Olmsted Falls fire department's equipment will be augmented today with a new truck carrying two large chemical tanks, four small tanks, a reel of hose and sectional ladders carried on either side.

It was significant because, although Olmsted Falls had had a fire department as early as 1878, the village didn't get its first automotive firetruck until 1920, when the community acquired one that was a modified Ford Model T. The one mentioned by the *Plain Dealer* in 1925 was the village's second firetruck. A few years later, Olmsted Falls acquired a 1928 Whippet firetruck that served the community for decades.

Story Describes Historical Building in Transition 50 Years Ago

An interesting story appeared in the *Berea News* 50 years ago on May 1, 1975, with the headline: "Falls Warehouse Stores History." It is interesting because it provides

descriptions of an important Olmsted Falls building during a period of transition. It's also interesting because of the errors it included about Olmsted history.

The story by Carol Jordan was about the building now known as the Grand Pacific Hotel. Back then, it was just a few years past its former role as the Simmerer family's hardware store, which it had been in one form or another for 78 years. After the Simmerers closed the store in September 1971, Bill Kucklick used it to store and display some of the furniture he sold in his Kucklick's Village Square Shoppe in the Depositors Building.



This September 1963 photo shows Philip Simmerer with three sons in front of their hardware store. Photo courtesy of Bruce Banks.

"It seems only right that the tall frame building at 8112 Columbia Rd. in Olmsted Falls is filled with early American style furniture," Jordan wrote. "While customers browse among the rockers and sofas, they can get a fascinating commentary on the background of the building from Fred Shirey, knowledgeable member of the Olmsted Historical Society, who works at the warehouse during afternoon store hours."

It was fascinating but not always correct. For example, Shirey said the building dated back to 1811 or 1812. He probably didn't realize that the first settlers of European heritage did not move into the township that became Olmsted until 1815. However, he was right that the building had been constructed on the other side of Rocky River.

"About 1850 we think it was taken apart in sections and moved across the river – perhaps on logs when the river was frozen – and became the Grand Pacific Hotel," Shirey was quoted as saying. "It served the Grand Pacific Railroad, the main east-west route through here. That became the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern line, then the New York Central and of course, now the Penn Central line."

In fact, there was never a Grand Pacific Railroad. It was the Toledo, Norwalk and Cleveland Railroad that built the tracks through Olmsted Falls in 1853. It later became the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway. It is now believed that the building was rolled intact across the railroad bridge instead of being carried in pieces across the frozen river.

Although the historical references weren't all accurate, the story's descriptions of the building's appearance in 1975, a few years after its conversion from a hardware store into a furniture warehouse, are useful: "Shirey points out where the bins for hardware items were mounted alongside the store. Narrow wooden ladders, stamped with the date 1880, hang from metal tracks on the ceiling. Clerks used them to reach top bins."

Later in the story, Jordan wrote this:

Phillip Simmerer's sons Clarence, Oscar and Russell owned and operated the hardware until September, 1971, when Kucklick's bought it to provide additional storage space for their store at 8088 Columbia Rd.

Clarence, now retired, lives a few doors south on Columbia and Oscar lives just around the corner on Orchard. Russell is a Berea resident.

"I remember crawling around on that metal roof when I was a kid," Clarence recalled. "You know they used to have dances up on the third floor when it was a hotel."

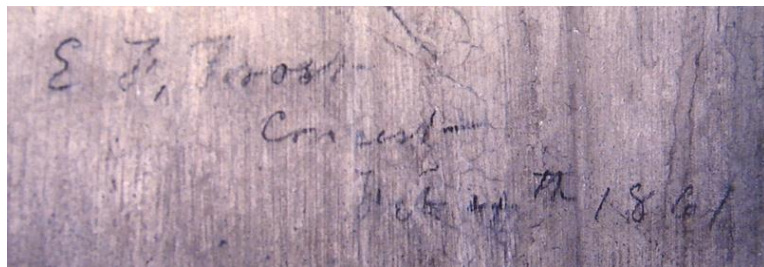
The plaster has fallen off the walls on the third floor, revealing narrow wooden lathe. The wooden floor is still intact, showing the wear from the dancing feet of neighborhood folks and travelers. Ties-rods have been added to strengthen the building.

In his prowling about the building, Shirey found a penciled name at the top of the stairs to the third floor. "A.F. Frost" [actually E.F. Frost] is clearly visible, with the date Feb. 24 a bit blurred, but the year, 1861, quite distinct. Shirey speculated it was written when Frost attended a dance in the hotel. Frost was named postmaster and mail soon came addressed to Frostville, now the name of the Olmsted Historical Society's Museum in Cleveland Metropolitan Park. A photograph of the hardware, taken in the 1890s hangs in the museum.

The original double doors at the entrance to the warehouse are crusty with layers of paint. The metal protective strip across the threshold has worn through. Original hinges can be seen in the open doorway. Shirey will point out to the visitor wavy images through the original glass in several panels of the bay windows facing Columbia Road.

That story provides a glimpse of what the building looked like about a decade and a half before Clint Williams restored it as the centerpiece of his Grand Pacific Junction development.

The inscription left by E.F. [not A.F.] Frost in 1861 was still there more than a century later when Bruce Banks took this photo in the former hotel that became a hardware store.



Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include stories from 70 years ago about how hard state law made it to police Olmsted Township, a new library for Olmsted, and West View leaders who believed silence was golden.

Anyone who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: wallacestar@hotmail.com. *Olmsted 200* has readers Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin, and as well as overseas in the Netherlands, Germany and Japan.

Your questions and comments about *Olmsted 200* are welcome. So are photos and information to share about Olmsted's history.

All issues of *Olmsted 200* are available in two online locations. One is on Olmsted Township's website at: <https://www.olmstedtownshipohio.gov/290/Past-Newsletters-Olmsted-200>. The other is the website of the City of Olmsted Falls at: http://www.olmstedfalls.org/olmsted_falls_history/olmsted_200_issues.php.

Except where otherwise noted, all articles in *Olmsted 200* are written by Jim Wallace. Thanks go to Mary Louise King for helping 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 Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.

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