



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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Newspaper Stories Depict Olmsted Falls Life in 1885

Many people have wondered what it would be like to travel through time to see what life was like in an earlier era.

Although H.G. Wells wrote in his 1895 novella, *The Time Machine*, about an invention that could transport its operator backward or forward in time, no such invention has ever been created. However, short of having a time machine, a few stories published in the *Berea Advertiser* 140 years ago offer the modern reader the best glimpse available of what life was like in Olmsted Falls in December 1885.

The first was a five-paragraph story, titled “AN HOUR AT THE FALLS,” in the *Advertiser* for

December 4, 1885. It perhaps was written by the newspaper’s editor, E.D. Peebles, because the first few sentences are about traveling to Olmsted Falls from the east, and he was based in Berea. It goes on to describe a few people and places he saw during his brief visit:



This photo of the Union Schoolhouse on the Village Green was taken in 1886, so the school would have looked like this when a reporter visited in December 1885. Photo courtesy of Mike Gibson.

Railroad facilities for getting to Olmsted Falls from the east before five o’clock, p.m., are somewhat limited. You have your choice, however,

between walking, stealing a ride on the express and break your neck when you jump off (the train does not stop at the station) or take the local freight which leaves Cleveland after breakfast and arrives at the Falls before milking time in the afternoon. We chose the latter Wednesday, and arrived in the village just as Charley Harding's school bell was ringing. We found the village schools running smoothly under the supervision of



This photo shows the Congregational Church in 1920. Photo courtesy of Mike Gibson.

Mr. C.W. Harding, the popular and efficient superintendent. The churches are enjoying the acquisition of two new ministers. The Congregational church has recently secured for the coming year, the services of Rev. R.J. Smith, who was born in Berea, and spent his boyhood and school life there. He has entered the theological department of Oberlin College and is serving the church at the Falls very acceptably. Rev. J.W. Eastman of Shelby was assigned by the North Ohio Conference to the M.E. church at Olmsted Falls. R.

Eastman came with the prestige of a very successful ministry in former charges and received a hearty welcome by all the people of the place irrespective of church relationship. Rev. J.T. Carroll of Berea officiates at the Catholic church.

We spent but one hour in the village and of course had not time to visit all the business houses. Postmaster Osborn, who has been carrying on a general grocery and crockery store in connection with the post office, has recently taken a partner, Mr. J.L. Landphair, and the firm have in contemplation some important changes in their business, of which more anon. The telephone office is located in their store.

Calling at J.P. Peltz, we found the store full of customers, and were informed that genial Joe has worked up a large trade in drugs, hardware, etc. Owing to failing health, Mr. Peltz has concluded to spend the winter in a more salubrious climate – and will shortly start for Texas. Every man, woman and child in Olmsted will wish him a successful journey, improved health and a safe return when the springtime comes. Mr. Peltz's business, during his absence, will be conducted by Mr. Stanley Wright, the accommodating and gentlemanly assistant.

Mr. H. Moley is keeping the citizens warm with coal and clothing, while L.B. Adams, the youthful and enterprising dealer in stoves, tinware, etc., supplies the people with these useful and necessary commodities.

The ten o'clock whistled for Olmsted and we were obliged to end our visit short, without calling at other business houses, and manufactories. S'mother day perhaps.

The Charley Harding – or C.W. Harding – the writer referred to in the first paragraph was the superintendent of the village school system in Olmsted Falls. Although the writer referred to the “village schools,” Olmsted Falls had just one school, the Union Schoolhouse, that opened in 1874 on the Village Green and served the community for four decades. Back then, Olmsted Township had a separate school system with eight small schools scattered around the township.

Although the village tore down the Union Schoolhouse in 1960 (more than 45 years after the building ceased to be used as a school), it saved the school bell – presumably the same one Harding rang as the writer passed by in 1885. That bell now is mounted atop the pavilion on the Village Green that is meant to look somewhat like the old schoolhouse.

The Charles W. Harding who was school superintendent in the late 1800s was the grandfather of Charles A. Harding, the U.S. Army captain who died in 1945 after being wounded during the Allies’ invasion at Normandy. The covered bridge along Main Street in Olmsted Falls and the football stadium at Olmsted Falls High School are named for Charles A. Harding thanks to donations made by his sisters, Amelia and Clara. Amelia Harding followed in her grandfather’s footsteps as a teacher in the school system from the 1930s until the 1970s. (For more on the history of the Harding family, see Issue 138 of *Olmsted 200* from November 2024.)

The two Protestant churches mentioned by the writer in the first paragraph were the Congregational Church, which was located at what now is the south end of the parking lot next to the Moosehead Hoof and Ladder No. 3 restaurant, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, which now is the Grand Pacific Wedding Chapel. The Catholic church referred to at the end of the paragraph was the original St. Mary of the Falls Church that was moved in 1873 from the northern end of downtown Olmsted Falls (where the Olmsted Community Church is now) to the corner of what now are Bagley Road (then Hamlin Street) and Columbia Road (then Columbia Street).

The Postmaster Osborn mentioned in the second paragraph was Aschel Osborn, who operated a general store on the first floor of the original Odd Fellows Hall. It was located just north of the railroad tracks on the east side of Columbia Street (now



This was the original St. Mary of the Falls Catholic Church, which was destroyed by fire in 1948. Photo courtesy of Mike Gibson.

Columbia Road). The writer referred to Osborn's partner as J.L. Landphair. He was John Landphair. Little is known about him.

The original Odd Fellows Hall burned down in 1903, apparently after sparks from a passing train started a fire. Although the Odd Fellows built their second hall in the same location, it was moved south and to the other side of the street in 1909 to give the railroad room to expand to four tracks running through Olmsted Falls. The second Odd Fellows Hall became the Olmsted Grange Hall during most of the 20th century. Clint Williams later renovated the building, which now is home to a restaurant, Gibbs Butcher and Brews.



This was the drugstore Joseph Peltz operated on the east side of Columbia Street before he and his brother-in-law, Philip Simmerer, opened a hardware store across the street in the former Grand Pacific Hotel in 1893.

Photo courtesy of Doug Peltz

In the third paragraph, the writer referred to visiting the store of Joseph Peltz, who sold drugs and hardware. That was when Peltz's store was still located on the east side of Columbia Street. Three years after the story appeared, Stanley Wright no longer was Peltz's assistant because Peltz's brother-in-law, Philip Simmerer, joined him in 1888 in working at the store. Half a decade later, they moved their goods across the street, and in 1893, they opened their store in what previously was the Grand Pacific Hotel – and then a hotel with different names – and is today again called the Grand Pacific Hotel, although it is just a reception hall now.

Peltz and Simmerer operated their store together in the former hotel until 1912, when Peltz left that business and re-established his drugstore across the street. He worked there until he and his second wife moved to Los Angeles in 1920, perhaps in search of another warm climate to benefit his health, just as he planned in 1885 to head to Texas for a while.

Simmerer and then three of his four sons kept the hardware store going in the former hotel for several decades until it was closed in 1971.

In the fourth paragraph, the writer referred to H. Moley and L.B. Adams. The first one was Hypolite Moley, an immigrant from France, who operated a clothing store on the south side of the railroad tracks where the Grand Pacific Popcorn Company is located now. During the Civil War, Moley had a government contract to supply uniforms to the Union Army. He was the grandfather of Raymond Moley, who served as a key advisor to President Franklin Roosevelt until they fell into disagreement and he opposed Roosevelt.

Moley's store, which his son operated after him, burned down in the early 1900s. (For more about the Moley family, see *Olmsted 200* Issue 144 from May 2025.)

L.B. Adams also ran a shop along Columbia Street. An Olmsted Falls Business Directory on an 1874 map listed him as a "Dealer in Stoves and Hardware, and Manufacturer of Tin, Copper and Sheet-iron Ware, Eave-troughing, Milk Cans and Dairy Tinware generally."

In the final paragraph, the timing of the story's writer seems to be off. He referred to cutting his visit to Olmsted Falls short after he heard the "ten o'clock" whistle. However, in the first paragraph, he referred to arriving in the village in the afternoon, and the headline indicated he spent just an hour in town. Perhaps that time reference made more sense to someone in 1885, or perhaps the time reference in the final paragraph was just an error.

A few other items published in the *Advertiser* during December 1885 also provide interesting glimpses into life in Olmsted Falls at that time. Two of them appeared in that same December 4 edition of the paper in the Olmsted Falls column, although they are dated November 27, which was apparently when the local columnist filed them. This was the first one:

Tuesday was, we think, first "pay day" in LeDuke's quarry. This new quarry is near the site of "the old mill on the green." Although men have been at work but a short time, it has much the appearance of an old quarry; much channeling has been done and quite a large surface has been cleared of earth. There is no trouble with the water, as the creek flows near and 20 ft. below. Should the owner succeed in getting a railway to it, it will be one of the first quarries in town. The success of the quarries means good times for Olmsted. Mr. L. Barnum can hardly keep pace for orders for grindstone. The past week many carloads have been shipped — one to Nebraska — Hayden has an ax to grind. Mr. Barnum has done a good business this summer in all kinds of stone. His sons, Tom and Harry, do the turning. Business men dealing with Mr. Barnum will always find good quality and good measure.

LeDuke was Jeremiah LeDuke. Walter Holzworth, in his 1966 history book, *Township 6, Range 15*, wrote little about him except to say that he was a quarry operator who also was "a contractor in the construction of railroads."



This 2010 photo of the pond in David Fortier River Park shows the area where Jeremiah LeDuke might have started a sandstone quarry late in 1885.

The location of the new quarry near “the old mill on the green” seems to indicate it was not far from the Village Green, but the green was not known as a site for a mill. However, there was a mill nearby along Plum Creek. The reference to having the creek nearby and 20 feet below seems to indicate that the new quarry was on the north side of Plum Creek, perhaps near where the parking lot off of Water Street for David Fortier River Park now is located. That would have put it on the opposite side of the creek from the quarry operated by Luther Barnum, who also was referred to in the newspaper item. He had operated his quarry since 1874 with the help of two sons. A little more than two years after the item was published, Barnum died in March 1888 at the age of 58. (For more about the quarries in Olmsted Falls, see *Olmsted 200* Issues 80 through 85 from January through June 2020.)

That Olmsted Falls column in the December 4 edition of the *Advertiser* also included this item: “Ed. Kidney has built quite an addition to his house, thus making his house quite commodious. The whole house has received a coat of paint.”

Kidney was a Civil War veteran, inventor and manufacturer of felloes, the curved



This was Ed Kidney's house as it looked in the late 1800s. It still stands at 7562 River Road. Photo courtesy of Bruce Banks.

outer parts of wagon wheels that attached to the spokes, and then he made cured wooden bows that held up the fabric tops of buggies. He maintained one of the most modern homes in Olmsted Falls late in the 19th century. It still stands at 7562 River Road – which was called River Street in the late 1800s. (For more on Edward Kidney and his home, see Issue 105 of *Olmsted 200* from February 2022.)

One week later on December 11, the Olmsted Falls column in the *Advertiser* contained an item that is of special interest because of renewed national debate on the subject in the 21st century: “The question of vaccination is being agitated here. There are nearly one hundred scholars in the public schools who have never been vaccinated. We think they should be at once.”

In 1885, the most common vaccinations were to prevent the spread of smallpox. In that year, Louis Pasteur used a vaccine against rabies for the first time, but it took a while to catch on. Vaccines against other diseases came later, mostly in the 20th century.

One more item of interest appeared in the Olmsted Falls column of the *Advertiser* on Christmas, December 25, 1885: “Olmsted is to have the streets lighted – Mr. Mead the mover of the project.”

Mr. Mead was W.W. Mead, who operated a harness-making shop at the corner of Main Street (now Columbia Road) and Water Street where Schady's Shell gas station was located during most of the 20th century and Clint Williams established his real estate office in 1978. Holzworth, in his 1966 book, called Mead "a popular and prominent businessman" who also was an auctioneer and "active in civic affairs of the village."

In the 1880s, streetlights in American communities generally were illuminated by gas, so that is probably what Mead and others wanted for Olmsted Falls. However, Cleveland had already become the first city in the United States to have electric streetlights when inventor Charles Bruch installed 12 electric arc lamps around Public Square in 1879. Today, it would seem odd if the streets of Olmsted Falls were not illuminated at night by electric lights.

Some Sought Relief from Olmsted's Saloons

Anyone who thinks that life was quiet in Olmsted Falls 150 years ago is not aware of the turmoil that stirred in the community for many years over saloons and the effects they had on many local men.

Perhaps the earliest item about Olmsted Falls in the Berea weekly newspaper originally called the *Grindstone City Advertiser* appeared in the November 29, 1869, edition and was about the staging of two pro-Temperance plays. By 1870, when L.B. Adams became the first Olmsted columnist for the newspaper, he ran items mentioning local saloon owners favorably, and the paper included advertisements for such establishments as the Olmsted Falls Saloon and the Dew-Drop Inn Saloon.

However, by the mid-1870s, the editorial slant of the *Advertiser* was clearly against the saloons and the trouble their patrons stirred up. It was in that vein that this item appeared in the newspaper's Olmsted Falls column on December 16, 1875:

ED. ADVERTISER: A few people of our town, on the side of temperance, lately put forth another effort, to keep young men and old from going the way of the intemperate. A petition to the village council, asking that all saloons and places for the playing of games of chance and skill, be closed at a certain early hour in the evening, was circulated extensively for signatures, of which it received but very few. Our foremost, respected business men refused to sign it, for reasons obvious to themselves. But this cannot be considered evidence that they are drunkards, or that they wish to see their sons such. We doubt very much



This is what the Fenderbosch Saloon looked like before a pool hall was added. The former saloon now houses Millstone Mercantile at 7990 Columbia Road. Photo courtesy of Mike Gibson.

that these people, with their petition, are employing the best means to accomplish their end; but we do not at all doubt their zeal or sincerity. Still we much remind them that zeal must be accompanied by good judgement and enterprise, for over-zeal harms itself and does no one good. A healthy mind is active and must have recreation in sport, etc., after labor, and when a saloon is in the most attractive place in a village, it will in consequence receive the majority of patronage.

It seems to us that these well-meaning temperance people would succeed better, if they would start a counter attraction, to out-do the saloons in the town. Make your homes more attractive, if that may be. Or, have a reading room, where all classes can meet, to spend a little time reading or conversing. It could be easily supported, for all who attend saloons are willing to pay for comforts they enjoy. It is also a fact, "restrictions" and "coldness" of society drives many boys from what we call "good society." Then, there being no other resort, they at first, reluctantly, enter the saloons. Such cases are numerous. We put the question here: who is to blame if they finally come out topers and ruined men?

J. & C.

It is not clear who J. & C. were at the end of that item. But there is no record in subsequent years that anyone established a reading room that provided any competition for the saloons. Even though the Temperance movement was strong in Olmsted Falls for many years, the saloons survived and prospered until May 1908, when voters approved a ballot item for the village to go dry. Olmsted Township voters followed up by approving a similar ballot option in November 1908. (For more on Olmsted's history of saloons, see *Olmsted 200* Issues 9 through 11 from February through April 2014 and Issues 13 through 15 from June through August 2014.)

Streetcars Helped Carry North Olmsted Residents Away



The first streetcars ran along Butternut Ridge 130 years ago this month.

A significant development occurred in northern Olmsted Township 130 years ago this month that helped lead to that area's separation from the rest of the township by incorporating North Olmsted as a municipality. That development was heralded by this item in the Butternut Ridge column of the *Berea Advertiser* on December 20, 1895: "The first train over the new electric road gave us all a surprise last Friday. On Saturday quite a crowd took the train into the city...."

One week later on December 17, 1895, the same column reported this: "The electric road is a big institution in spite of the rather enormous fares that are charged. Of course every one expects to take one ride for the novelty of it...."

The "electric road" referred to in those items was the electric streetcar line that ran along Butternut Ridge. It connected the area to Cleveland to the east and eventually to Elyria to the west.

Although the fares might have been considered enormous at the time, the easy access the streetcars provided local residents to points east and west helped to increase the alienation they felt toward the rest of Olmsted Township to the south that had been growing for years. In 1908, residents of 10 square miles of northern Olmsted Township voted to join four square miles of southern Dover Township and create North Olmsted, which began 1909 as Ohio's newest village. (For more about North Olmsted's split from Olmsted Township, see *Olmsted 200* Issue 67 from December 2018.)

Olmsted Welcomed a New Factory 70 Years Ago

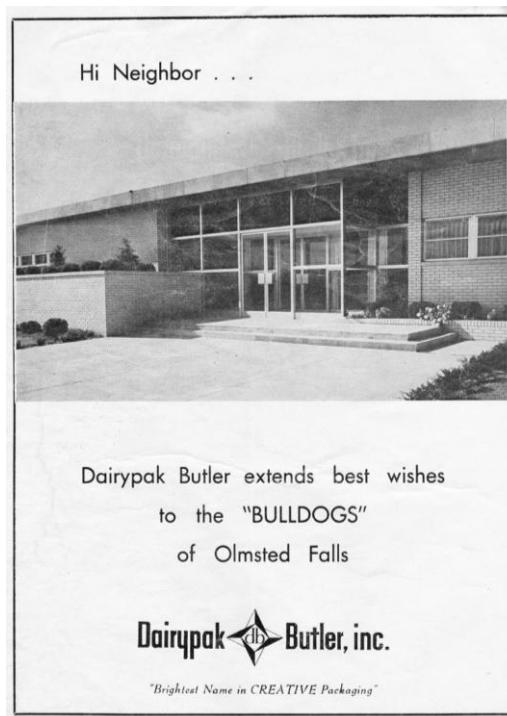
Seven decades ago this month, Olmsted Falls residents learned they were about to receive a new industrial neighbor. On December 7, 1955, the *Plain Dealer* ran a story with the headline: "\$1,000,000 Plant Set for Olmsted Falls." This is what it said:

Dairypak, Inc., manufacturers of milk and ice cream containers announced plans for a million-dollar plant and headquarters office in Olmsted Falls, Mayor Charles L. Bickle reported.

President Clarke Marion said the plant would be located on a 66-acre parcel to be purchased from Albert A. Levin on Division Street north of the New York Central tracks and adjacent to Olmsted Falls High School. It will be a one-story building containing 250,000 square feet. About 250 people are to be employed.

Marion said present quarters at 5250 Brookpark Road S.W. were becoming cramped, forcing the move.

Bickle said a question of rezoning the property would come before Council Monday for referral



This Dairypak ad appeared in high school football programs in the early 1960s when the plant was less than a decade old. Program courtesy of Mike Gibson.

to the planning commission.

Dairpak opened its plant in 1957. Although the address was listed as Division Street in the 1955 announcement, Olmsted Falls soon changed the name of the street to Mapleway Drive.

In June 1957, the *Plain Dealer* reported that the plant was a bit smaller than what was announced in December 1955. Instead of having 250,000 square feet, it had 144,000 square feet, and instead of employing about 250 people, it employed about 150 people. Even so, it reportedly produced 70 million milk cartons each month.

The plant operated at 7620 Mapleway Drive for 66 years, although its corporate ownership and name changed several times. By the end, it was known as Evergreen Packaging, part of Pactiv Evergreen. In March 2023, the company announced that it planned to close its Olmsted Falls plant, which then employed about 160 people.

In July 2024, Premier Development Partners announced it had acquired the plant with “plans to invest significant capital in updating the building to attract a new manufacturing company to the area.”

Readers Share Turnpike Memories

The story in *Olmsted 200* Issue 149 about the construction of the Ohio Turnpike and its effects on the Olmsted communities evoked memories from many readers who commented through email messages and Facebook posts.



This was one of the souvenirs that were sold after the Ohio Turnpike opened 70 years ago. It is part of the collection of Dave Miller, who worked for the Turnpike Commission for 31 years.

owed back taxes on a portion of land still on turnpike property. The land was useless and landlocked. We never knew about it, and it all worked out as it got reverted back to the state, but you can imagine our surprise. [The story] brought back many memories of living there for my mom. I just heard about living in the middle of the Ohio Turnpike before it was built.”

“Another great article...very nice!” Rick Baker wrote. “My Dad built his first home off Jennings Road right in the middle of the turnpike. We had to move it when the turnpike came through and my dad ended up buying 4 lots on Bagley Road between Stearns Road and Jennings. The house from the turnpike still stands along with the home I grew up [in] just three houses away.”

In addition, he said, “Years later, long after my father died, the state said we

Baker further explained that the house displaced by the turnpike was moved by experts, but his father was a carpenter, so he built the other houses himself.

Mark Peepers wrote about growing up next to the part of the turnpike near Lynn Drive. "I can almost remember it being so new and UNBUSY that once me and the neighbor kid climbed the fence and wrote dirty words on the new road with a huge piece of plaster we found. I'm sure we weren't writing any actual words because my family moved from there in 1960, I think, so I'm guessing I couldn't hardly spell yet. But I like to believe I was."

Ann Matthews recalled sledding in winter on the Jennings Road hill. "Also, [I] remember lying in bed on a summer night listening to the occasional semi across the field," she wrote. "Best memory was standing on the bridge and saying to myself, I don't know where these cars are going, but someday I'm gonna go there, too. And I did."

Peepers asked on Facebook, "Did anyone else used to slide down the turnpike hills on cardboard during the summer months??? LOL"

Mathews replied, "Sure did."

Betty Albano wrote: "The turnpike bought land from my grandparents, and when it was built, us kids rode our bikes on it before traffic was allowed. It was a thrill!!

Pamela Reakoff Anderson, who grew up along John Road, also remembers the turnpike well. "Took us 5-6 hours to get to Detroit to see family and then down to 3 hours with the opening of the Ohio Turnpike!" she wrote. "A game changer! I remember stopping at the rest stops. So cool."

Those are not all of the reactions to the story about the Ohio Turnpike. Look for more in *Olmsted 200* early in 2026.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include a story about an Olmsted resident who left an unusual book of records from a century ago, one about the big change that



This pillow, which was sold a few years ago at Millstone Mercantile, displays an old highway map of the Olmsted communities. The pair of dashed lines in the lower left indicates that the map must have been made in the early to mid-1950s because those lines mark the path of the Ohio Turnpike, which opened October 1, 1955.

occurred in Olmsted 55 years ago and one with a newly discovered photo providing a glimpse into Olmsted life more than 70 years ago.

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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