



Olmsted 200

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

Issue 152

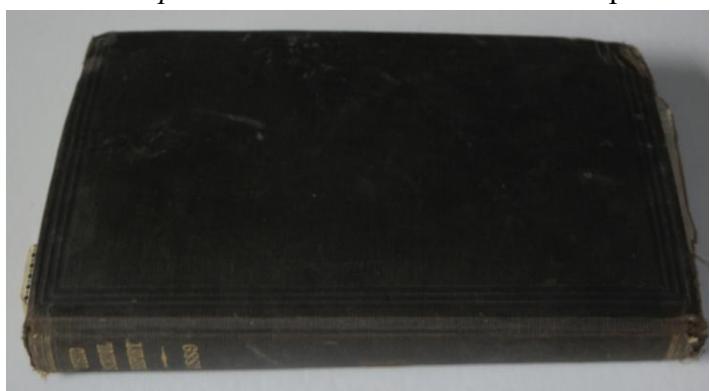
January 1, 2026

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Book Filled with Receipts Tells Tales of Olmsted Life

Perhaps on some dusty shelf, such as in a state building in Columbus, someone has a copy of a book called *Ohio School Report 1889*. It was the 36th annual report from the state commissioner of common schools for the Ohio General Assembly. It contains 194 pages of reports and statistics about public schools for the school year that ended August 31, 1889, plus a 14-page appendix with additions and amendments to the state's school laws passed by the 69th General Assembly in 1890. But even if someone could lay a hand on a copy of that book right now, chances are that no one has bothered to do so for a long, long time.



This battered brown book was published to preserve records about Ohio schools from 1889, but Olmsted Township resident George Gage used it to store receipts and contracts from the early 20th century.

Likewise, probably few people have given any thought for a long time to a one-time Olmsted Township resident named George Gage, although he apparently was a common sight around Olmsted and neighboring communities about a century ago. He was born in 1867 and died in 1935.



This receipt from the Standard Oil Company for five gallons of Rayolight Oil at 16 cents per gallon for a total of 80 cents is an example of how George Gage pinned receipts to the pages of the old book of school records. The receipt is dated March 17, 1921. It refers to "tank wagon delivery" and lists Gage's address as Ruple Rd.

Others are held to the pages through the use of straight pins. They are not arranged in any apparent order, but perhaps Gage considered them to be ordered in some manner that made sense to him.

Although the preserved records don't tell a coherent story of the Gages' life together, they do provide some interesting glimpses into what life was like for a rural farming couple in the early years of the 20th century when automobiles, trucks and tractors were playing increasingly bigger roles in agricultural life, but such mechanization was still relatively new.

The Gages lived in the northeastern corner of Olmsted Township. George Gage was the grandson of another George Gage and his wife, Maria Reublin Gage, who moved to Olmsted from Vergennes, Vermont, sometime in the early half of the 19th century. The elder George Gage was born in 1798 in Vermont and died July 15, 1865, in Ohio, according to his grave at Butternut Ridge Cemetery. His wife, Maria, was born in 1804 in New York and died in 1868 in Ohio. Walter Holzworth wrote in his 1966 history book, *Township 6, Range 15*, that they "settled on a tract of land at the top of Spafford Hill, where it meets Barrett Road."

George and Maria Gage had three sons and four daughters. Their eldest son, Truman, eventually acquired the family homestead. His name shows up as "T. Gage" on the property on an 1876 map of Olmsted Township.

The younger George Gage was among two sons and three daughters of Truman Gage and his wife, Frances. After the younger George Gage grew up and married Alice

However, both the *Ohio School Report 1889* and George Gage are of interest to Olmsted history now because of a discovery made not long ago at the Berea Historical Society and brought to the attention of *Olmsted 200* by BHS member Dennis Kushlak. It's not clear why Gage had a copy of *Ohio School Report 1889*. Perhaps it was because he worked as a teacher at one time or that he served on the Olmsted Township school board. But the value of the book for him was apparently not the facts and figures contained within it. Instead, he used the book to store contracts and receipts for himself and his wife, Alice, who lived from 1867 until 1946.

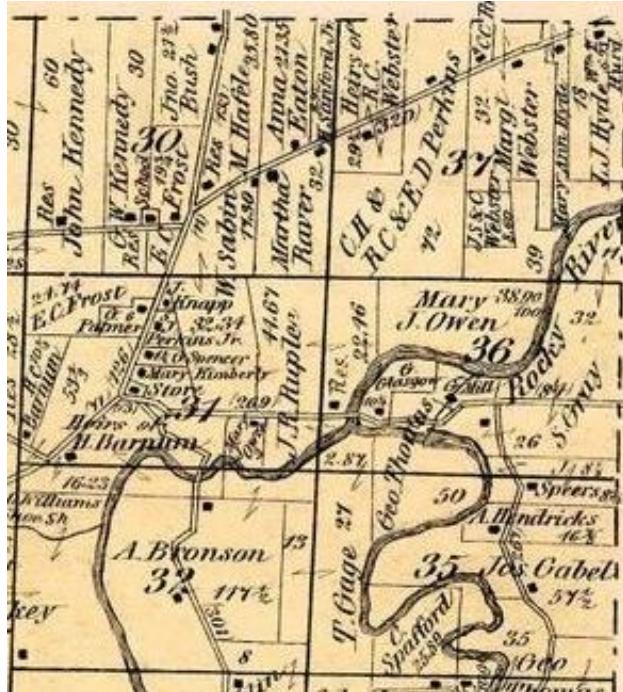
Some documents are tucked loosely between the pages of the book.

Harrison, they briefly moved to Dover Township, which was the township directly north of Olmsted Township, but they soon returned to Olmsted Township and settled directly across the East Branch of Rocky River from where George grew up when they bought a farm along Ruple Road from German immigrants, Joseph and Thersa Gabel. The 1876 map shows the name “Jos. Gabel” on the land that George and Alice Gage later bought.

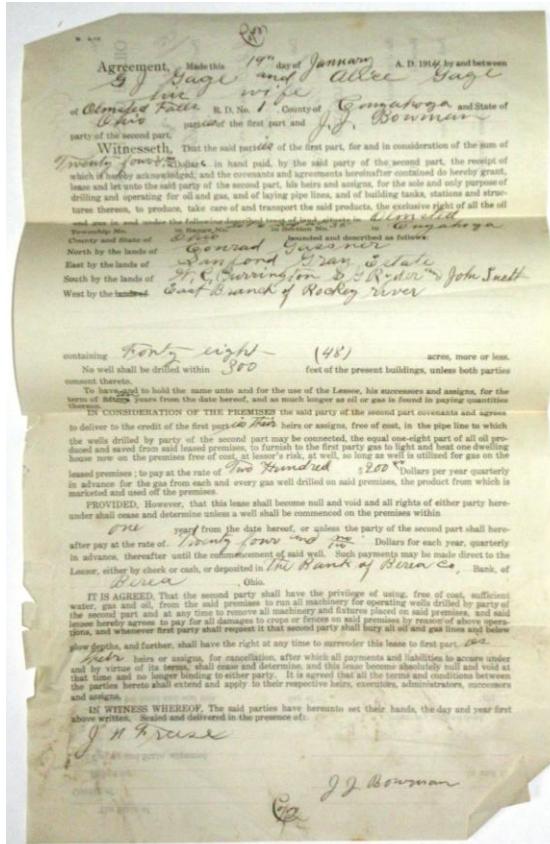
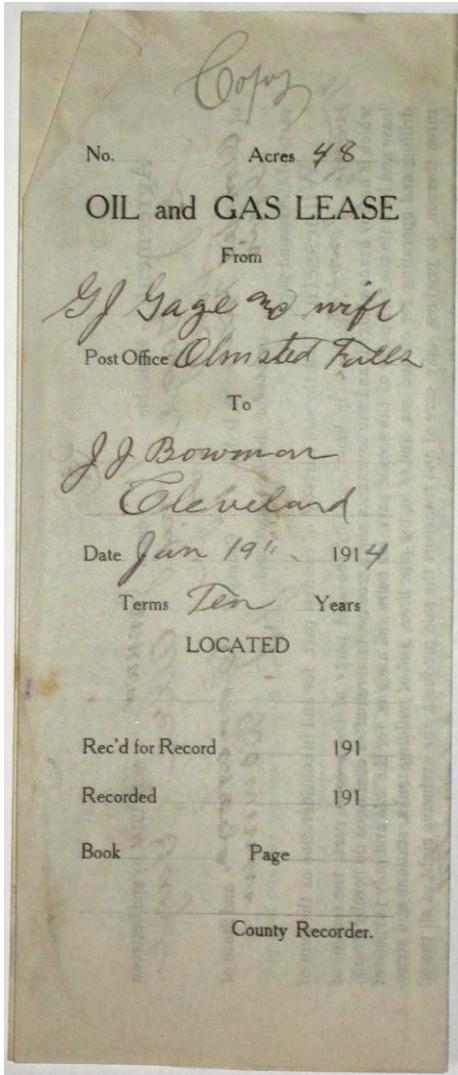
One indication of how far to the northeast in Olmsted Township the property of George and Alice Gage was located is that two contracts they entered into in 1914 and 1915 give the western boundary of their property as the East Branch of Rocky River – not the West Branch, which runs through Olmsted Falls. That location was a bit south of Cedar Point, where the West Branch and the East Branch meet before flowing north to Lake Erie in what now is part of the Rocky River Reservation of Cleveland Metroparks. That also was in a section of Olmsted Township that became part of Middleburgh Township in the early 20th century and later the Village of Brook Park and now the City of Brook Park.

The 1914 and 1915 contracts that described the location of the Gages’ 48 acres of land allowed J.J. Bowman of Cleveland to pump oil and gas from their land. The contracts show they were paid \$200 per year for the gas extracted from their land, and they received free gas for lighting and heating their home. An earlier contract from 1907 granted the gas rights to the East Ohio Gas Company.

A 1919 insurance contract with the Hartford Fire Insurance Company of Connecticut shows the Gages’ house was a one-and-a-half-story frame-shingle building. They also had two frame-shingle barns and a frame-shingle granary on what was listed as 49 acres of land. The contract indicates they had livestock. It doesn’t say exactly what animals they owned, but it provides for them to have at least one horse or mule, at least one head of cattle, at least one sheep and at least one hog. Some of the contracts stored in the book indicate that George Gage bought feed for livestock from time to time. Others are for manure, presumably to fertilize crops, so the Gages apparently didn’t have enough livestock to be self-sufficient in supplying their manure needs.



On this portion of the 1876 Olmsted Township map, the land at the lower right with the name “Jos. Gabel” is the property later acquired by George and Alice Gage. Across the East Branch of Rocky River is the property labeled “T. Gage” for Truman Gage, George’s father.



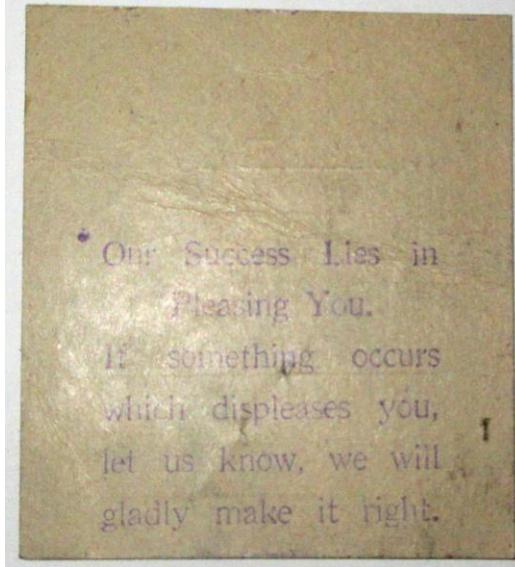
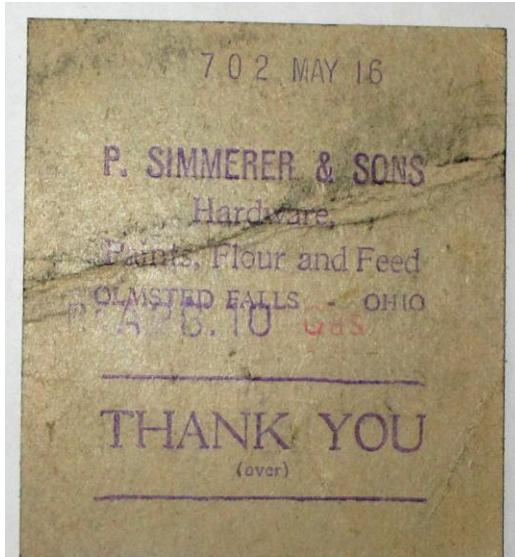
This is the 1914 contract that George and Alice Gage entered into with J.J. Bowman of Cleveland for rights to oil and gas on their property. It describes the western boundary of the Gages' land as the East Branch of Rocky River. Although the contract was for 10 years, they entered another 10-year contract with the same terms in 1915.

In another 1966 history book, *The Story of Cedar Point Valley*, Holzworth wrote that the younger George Gage engaged in farming and also taught in Olmsted Township's small District #4 school, which was near his home. Holzworth further wrote:

For several years he was tax assessor. This job required tact and a keen sense of values and could cause unpopularity and resentment as all tax officials are aware. Periodically he visited the farms and homes to determine the value of personal property for tax purposes.

Holzworth wrote that one popular gag at the time was: "Hide the piano under the rug" when the tax assessor came in sight.

In 1907, Gage was listed as a member of the Olmsted Township school board, and he might have served on the board for several years. Holzworth listed "Geo. T. Gage" as being a member of the township school board in 1915 when the Olmsted Falls village



Above, at top, is the front side of the receipt for gas from P. Simmerer & Sons. Below it is the reverse side of the receipt.

decades. But Peltz ended their partnership in 1912, when he re-established his previous drugstore on the opposite side of Columbia Street (now Columbia Road), so it's curious that a receipt dated five years later would still refer to "Peltz & Simmerer."

Three years after the date of the receipt, Peltz and his second wife, Minnie, left Olmsted Falls and moved to Los Angeles, where they spent the rest of their lives. (For a photo of the old Peltz drugstore, see page 4 of Issue 151 of *Olmsted 200* from last month.)

school board was disbanded and its assets turned over to the township school board. That might have been a typographical error by Holzworth because J. was George Gage's middle initial, and Holzworth's book, *Township 6, Range 15*, didn't mention another George Gage at that time.

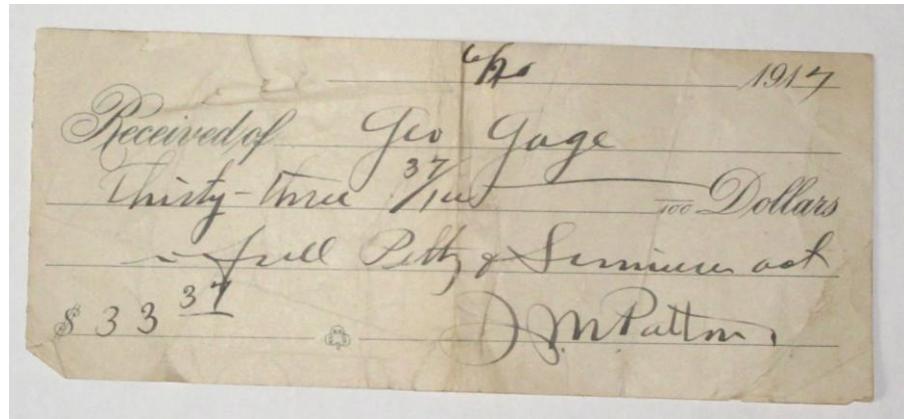
The receipts that George Gage left in the old school records book show that he patronized various businesses in Olmsted Falls, Berea and Cleveland.

One receipt in the book is from P. Simmerer & Sons Hardware, Paints, Flour and Feed. The Simmerer store was in the building now operated as a reception hall known as the Grand Pacific Hotel in downtown Olmsted Falls. The date on the receipt is May 16, but the year isn't indicated. The word "Gas" is printed in red letters, so the receipt might have been for gasoline from the pump the Simmerers once had in front of their store. The back of the receipt says:

Our Success Lies in
Pleasing You.
If something occurs
which displeases you,
let us know, we will
gladly make it right.

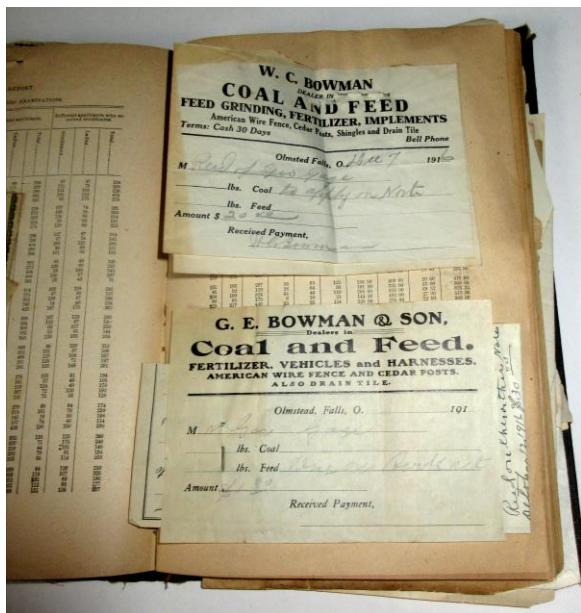
Another receipt is for \$33.37 spent at Peltz & Simmerer on June 20, 1917. Peltz & Simmerer was the name of the hardware store when Joseph Peltz and his brother-in-law, Philip Simmerer, operated it jointly for two

This is the receipt George Gage received in 1917 from "Peltz & Simmerer" even though Joseph Peltz and Philip Simmerer had ended their partnership in 1912.



Two other receipts are from a coal and feed business that George Enoch Bowman established in 1887 north of the railroad and on the east side of Brookside Drive. The

earlier receipt identifies the business as G.E. Bowman & Son, Dealers in Coal and Feed, Fertilizer, Vehicles and Harnesses, American Wire Fence and Cedar Posts, also Drain Tile. The receipt is from sometime after 1910, but the last digit of the year wasn't filled in. It was for \$1.80 in feed.



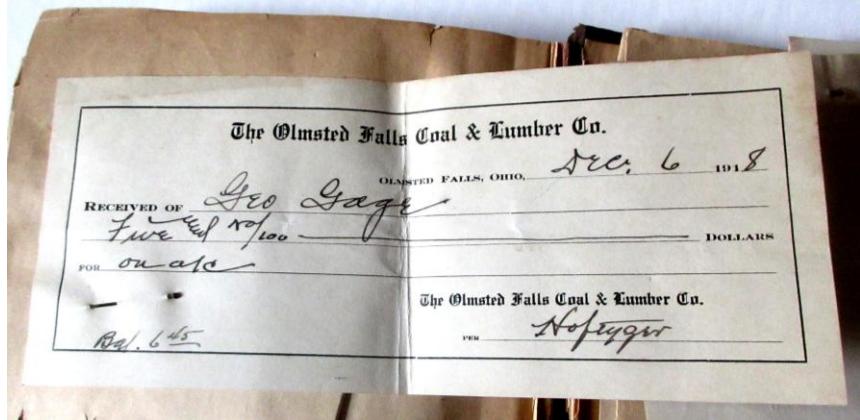
Two receipts from the Bowman coal and feed business in Olmsted Falls are found on this page of the 1889 school records book. The earlier one from when the business was called G.E. Bowman & Son is at the bottom. The later one from 1916, when the business was called W.C. Bowman, is at the top.

1918, which was five years after the company was founded. In those years, the company was one of the biggest businesses in Olmsted Falls with a sawmill, a lumberyard, a wood-finishing shop and a coal yard. The receipt for \$5.00 was signed simply "Hoftyzer." That would have been Henry Hoftyzer, one of the business's owners.

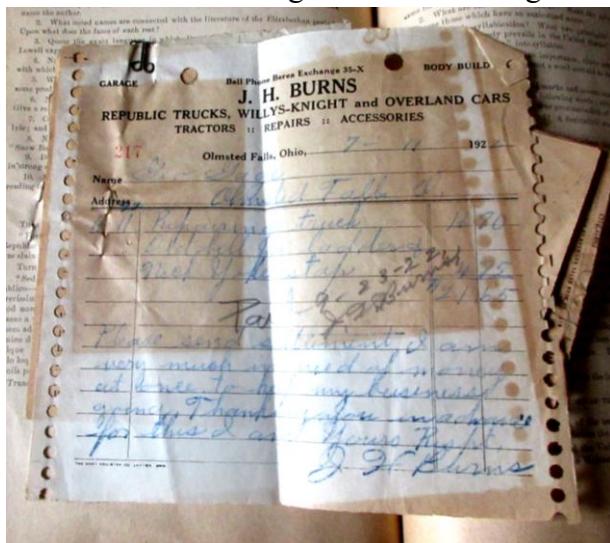
The latter receipt is dated December 7, 1916, and the name of the business is then listed as W.C. Bowman, Dealer in Coal and Feed, Feed Grinding, Fertilizer, Implements, American Wire Fence, Cedar Posts, Shingles and Drain Tile. George's son, Watson, also known as Watt, took over the business from his father in 1913. On that occasion in 1916, Gage paid \$20.10 on his account.

Gage also bought supplies from the Olmsted Falls Coal & Lumber Company, which was located along the railroad tracks near the Olmsted Falls depot. The receipt is dated December 6,

This is the receipt that George Gage received from the Olmsted Falls Coal & Lumber Company for spending five dollars. It is dated December 6, 1918. Henry Hoftyzer's signature is at the bottom.



Yet another Olmsted Falls business that Gage patronized was a garage operated by J.H. Burns. That was James Burns. At the time of the receipt, July 11, 1922, his business had a building where the Cutting Garden at 25561 Mill Street is now located



On this invoice, James Burns pleaded with George Gage to settle his bill soon because Burns needed the money. After Burns signed and dated it, it became a receipt.

22" and added his signature.

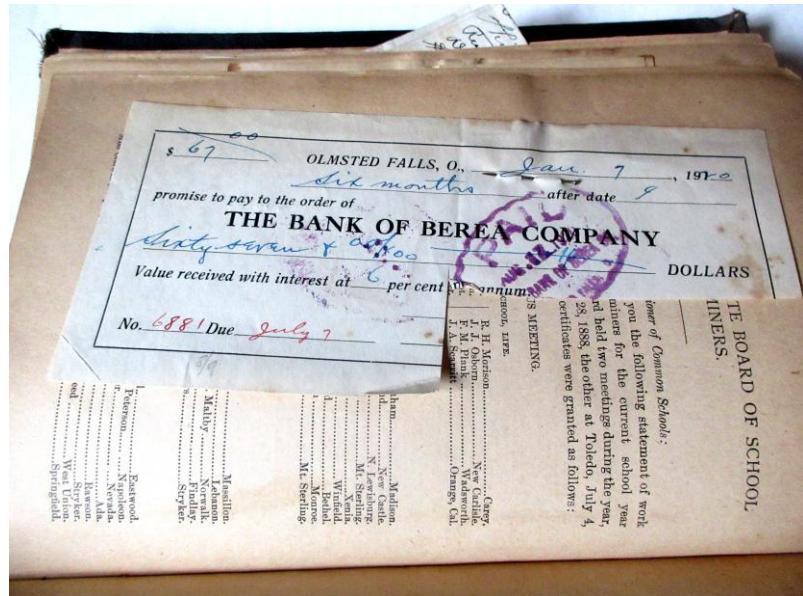
Gage also did business with the Olmsted Falls branch of the Bank of Berea. A form dated January 7, 1920, shows that Gage borrowed \$67.00 from the bank and promised to repay the loan with 6 percent interest within six months. That meant the loan was due by July 7, but a stamp on the paper indicates it was paid on August 12, 1920.

Five years later, Gage took out a \$250.00 loan at 7 percent interest on March 8, 1925, for four months from the Commercial & Savings Bank of Berea. Perhaps he needed the money for seeds or other supplies heading into the planting season.

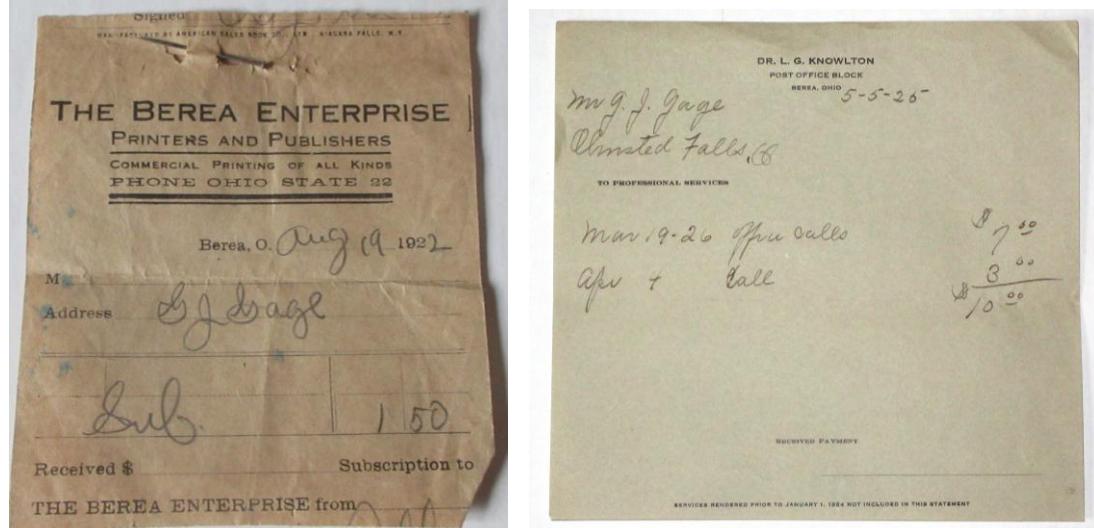
with the garage located around the corner at what now is Second Thyme Around at 8153 Orchard Street. (For more about those buildings, see Issue 31 of *Olmsted 200* from December 2015.)

As the invoice/receipt indicates, Burns was an agent for Republic Trucks and Willys-Knight and Overland Cars and performed repairs on those vehicles and on tractors. Gage's bill was for a total of \$21.65, which included \$16.80 for reframing a truck and an old bill for ladders and other equipment. At the bottom, Burns wrote: "Please send settlement. I am very much in need of money at once to keep my business going. Thank you in advance for this." Burns subsequently wrote "Paid 9-23-

This slip of paper shows that George Gage took out a \$67.00 loan from the Olmsted Falls branch of the Bank of Berea on January 7, 1920. The stamp shows he paid the money back on August 12, 1920. That was a bit beyond the six-month term of the loan. It is pinned to page 174 of the school records book from 1889.



Although Gage did much of his business in Olmsted Falls, he also patronized companies in Berea and Cleveland. For example, one receipt is from Johnson's Feed Store at 2133-35 East Ninth Street in Cleveland. Another receipt dated August 19, 1922, shows Gage paid \$1.50 for a subscription to the *Berea Enterprise*.



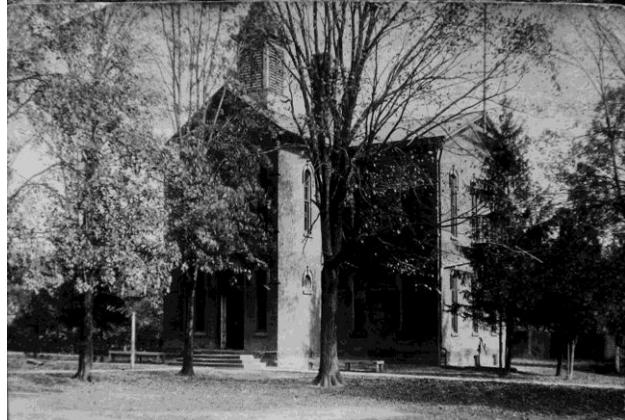
On the left is the receipt for \$1.50 that George Gage received for a subscription to the *Berea Enterprise*. On the right is a receipt for medical care from Dr. Louis Knowlton.

For medical care, he visited Dr. L.G. Knowlton, who had an address in the Post Office Block in Berea. Dr. Louis G. Knowlton was a native of Olmsted Falls. He also was the grandson of Dr. William Knowlton, who became Olmsted's first physician in 1838 after he and his wife moved from upstate New York. Both Louis's father, Dr. Augustus P. Knowlton, and his uncle, Dr. William A. Knowlton, also were physicians.

Many more receipts and other documents are contained in the old school records book, although not all of them are as easy to decipher as those mentioned here. The story

they tell about one man and his wife is a bit disorganized, but it still provides some insights into what life was like for Olmsted residents several decades ago.

Although George Gage used the *Ohio School Report 1889* as a place to store receipts and contracts, some of the information on its pages also are of Olmsted historical interest. For example, in a table of statistics about village school districts, the book reveals that, in the district for Olmsted Falls in 1889, when the sole school was the Union Schoolhouse on the Village Green, only one room of the school was used for high school classes. It also says the school's principal was paid a salary of \$500 and spent all of his time teaching. That principal was Charles Harding, who also was the school superintendent. (For more about him, see Issue 151 of *Olmsted 200* from last month.) The old record book says the school spent \$576 on elementary instruction, but the chart doesn't indicate how many teachers provided that instruction.



This 1912 photo shows the Union Schoolhouse on the Village Green. The school records book that George Gage used for storing receipts contains some statistics about the school from early in its history. Its use as a school ended in 1914. It was demolished in 1960.

One boy and one girl graduated from the school in 1889, while 27 boys and 23 girls remained in high school classes. It gives the average age of graduates, so it's clear the boy who graduated in 1889 was 17 years old and the girl was 18 years old. The table reveals that, in the history of the school, which opened in 1874, only 11 students had graduated from it. They included seven girls and four boys.

Another table shows the school had a total of 171 students with 121 of them in elementary grades and 50 in high school grades. The average daily attendance was 109, including 73 elementary students and 26 high school students.

The book does not include separate statistics for the eight smaller schools that were scattered around Olmsted Township. They were lumped into statistics for schools throughout Cuyahoga County.

Thanks go to Dennis Kushlak for sharing George Gage's book of receipts and also to David Kennedy, who did some additional research into the Gage family.

New Year Brought a Municipal Merger 55 Years Ago

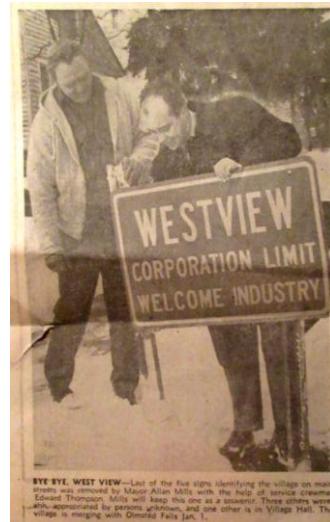
The map of southwestern Cuyahoga County changed on New Year's Day 55 years ago. It was on January 1, 1971, that the Village of Westview annexed the Village of Olmsted Falls with the new municipality taking the Olmsted Falls name, as approved by

voters in 1970. The Westview name then was retired from the maps and from roadside signs.

Norman “Ron” Sherbert, a Westview councilman who was one of the leaders to merge the two communities, shared with *Olmsted 200* a newspaper clipping of a photo showing Allan Mills, who was mayor of Westview and then mayor of the new Olmsted Falls, taking down one of the Westview corporation limit signs with the help of Edward Thompson, a member of the village’s service crew.

One year later in 1972, Mills applied to the state for Olmsted Falls to be declared a city because the merger put it over the 5,000-person population minimum needed for that designation. State officials agreed, and Olmsted Falls has been a city ever since then.

Sherbert also shared another newspaper clipping from the November 15, 1970, *Plain Dealer*, showing the newly elected leaders for the combined Westview-Olmsted Falls.



BYE-BYE, WEST VIEW—One of the five signs identifying the village on main streets was removed by Mayor Allan Mills with the help of service crewman Edward Thompson, holding the one as a souvenir. Three others were also appropriated by persons unknown, and the other is in Village Hall. The village is merging with Olmsted Falls Jan. 1.

This clipping shows Mayor Allan Mills as he removes a Westview sign from the roadside.



This clipping shows the men elected to lead the new Olmsted Falls after the merger of Olmsted Falls and Westview. From left to right, they are Councilman G. Mervin Ault, Sherbert, Councilman Jan Castora, Mills, Council President William Mahoney, Councilman B. Holmes Neal and Councilman David Fortier. Mahoney and Fortier later served as mayor. Both clippings are from the collection of Norman “Ron” Sherbert.

Former Church Was Retired Seven Decades Ago

It was a time of farewell for many Olmsted residents 70 years ago this month. On January 15, 1956, the congregation of the Olmsted Community Church said farewell to a building that had served it for 103 years. Today that building is known as the Grand Pacific Wedding Chapel, but when it was built in 1852-1853 at a cost of \$1,500, it was the Methodist Episcopal Church. It remained that way until 1917, when its members agreed to unite with the members of the Congregational Church directly across the street

to form the Olmsted Community Church.

For the next few decades, the Community Church operated with two buildings. The former Methodist Episcopal Church was used for Sunday morning services while the former Congregational Church was used for Sunday school classes and other meetings. Thus, it became known as the Community House.

From 1934 until 1956, the congregation of the Community Church grew from about 200 to about 800. That led to the decision in the mid-1950s to construct a new church building.

According to a story in the *Berea News* for January 12, 1956, the congregation planned to follow the 11:00 a.m. service in the new church building on January 15 by going back to the old building.

“A prayer of thanksgiving for the blessings received through the old church will be offered,” columnist Bea Smith wrote. “The future of the building has not been decided, but its 103-year history as a church is ended.”

However, it didn’t take long for the future of the old building to be decided. Later in 1956, the local Masons bought the building for \$25,000. They then used it as the Olmsted Masonic Lodge for more than four decades. In 2001, they sold it to Clint Williams who then restored it as a wedding chapel and incorporated it into his Grand Pacific Junction development of restored and repurposed buildings in downtown Olmsted Falls.

By chance, Mike Gibson, who grew up mostly in Olmsted Falls until his parents moved him to California in the mid-1960s just after his junior year at Olmsted Falls High School, recently acquired a fascinating photo that helps illustrate that time in the mid-1950s when the Community Church was making changes in facilities that altered the appearance of the northern end of downtown Olmsted Falls. Over the past few years, he has shared with *Olmsted 200* many photos from Olmsted history from records of his father, William Hugh Gibson, who died in 2015. Recently, Mike’s brother in Idaho passed away, and Mike received more of his father’s records, including another batch of photos.

Most of the photos in the new batch are of the Gibson family, but Mike thought one of them would be of wider interest. It was taken in 1954 or 1955 in front of the



This was the former Methodist Episcopal Church building in the early half of the 20th century when it was the main building for the Olmsted Community Church. It later became the Olmsted Masonic Lodge. Photo courtesy of Mike Gibson.

Community House – the former Congregational Church. That was shortly before that building was torn down in the process of constructing the new Community Church building. The place where the former church stood is now part of the parking lot between the Community Church and the Moosehead restaurant.

The photo Gibson has shared shows what was called the “all-church canvas.” That seems to have been a get-together of all the leading men of the Olmsted Community Church but no women. Gibson said he recognizes only his father and his mother’s father, Wilbur Staten. The Reverend Richard Mapes was the church’s minister at the time.



This is the Olmsted Community Church’s “all-church canvas” photo from 1954 or 1955 that Mike Gibson shared from the photographs his father, William Hugh Gibson, kept.

The photo also includes another historical gem. Behind the assembly of men can be seen the old house that Newton Loomis built shortly after he moved to Olmsted in 1834. It originally stood a bit farther south along what is now Columbia Road but was moved in the 20th century to the location seen in this photo.

Before the new Olmsted Community Church was built, the church donated the Loomis house to the community for use as a library. It was then moved to the other side of Main Street. It served as the Olmsted Falls Branch of the Cuyahoga County Public Library until the current library along Mapleway Drive opened in 2013. Recently, it was renovated to serve as Gunselman’s Steakhouse & Bar, but inside the restaurant are several photos showing the building as a library and before it was a library. (A few of those photos can be seen in a story about the renovated building in Issue 127 of *Olmsted 200* from December 2023.)

Gibson said the quality of the photo from his father’s collection is good because he scanned it from an 8x10 glossy print. It provides a clear view of a scene that is long gone, as are most, if not all, of the men who assembled there.

Turnpike Helped Olmsted Family Go Sailing



This was one of the postcards from the early years of the Ohio Turnpike.

dock at Pier #3 at Cedar Point. Here is the rest of what he wrote in a Facebook post:

Every weekend we would hop on the turnpike off old Rt. 8 and head west getting off at Rt. 250. I think they were numbered exit 8 and exit 7 back then. [Interstate] 480 did not exist nor did [the] Baumhart [Road] exit. In Elyria, we got to see movies playing on the big screens driving past, and I remember the sloped roofs on the housing just west of the Turnpike administrative building. I asked dad what they were, and he said Army barracks. I thought that for decades LOL. Every weekend back and forth, and to think I now live in North Olmsted driving over the new highway I one time came down every weekend. When I lived in Huron, [Interstate] 90 ended in Vermillion, so getting to Cleveland was a challenge, up Lake Rd., to Baumhart Rd., over Rt. 90 to Crocker [Road] where 90 ended, getting on Detroit and over to Clifton Blvd. then onto the Shoreway. To get to UH [University Hospital] where my sister was being treated took almost two hours!

That's not the last of readers' memories of the effects the Ohio Turnpike had on Olmsted residents. More will come in *Olmsted 200*.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include more stories about the history of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township, including one about a one-time prominent Olmsted citizen, one about a Leap Year prank from 150 years ago, one about the death 40 years ago of an Olmsted Falls mayor and more memories of the early years of the Ohio Turnpike.

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

Some stories in *Olmsted 200* evoke more reaction than others. One of those was the story in Issue 149 from October about the construction of the Ohio Turnpike, which opened 70 years ago.

Among the responses that have not previously appeared in *Olmsted 200*, one came from Michael Richardson. He wrote that he was born in Akron but grew up in Olmsted Falls. He said his father's hobby was building sailboats, so the family had a

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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