



# Olmsted 200

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

Issue 105

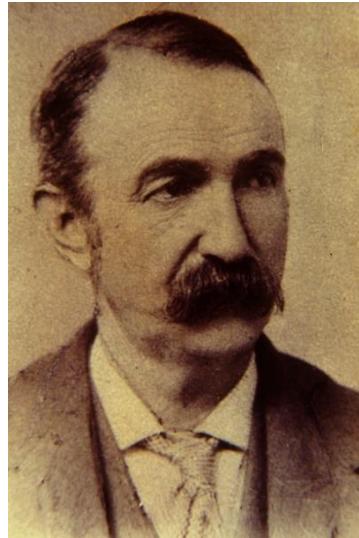
February 1, 2022

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## Ed Kidney Was Olmsted's "Man in Motion"

If anyone in Olmsted Falls in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was poised to become an inventor and entrepreneur, it was Edward Wade Kidney. His father, Peter, who was the subject of the lead story in last month's issue of *Olmsted 200*, set up a tool-making shop and sawmill not long after arriving in Olmsted Township in the 1830s. He also invented and patented a design for fences. Thus, he was a good role model for his son.



As Walter Holzworth wrote in his 1966 book of Olmsted history, Ed Kidney "was practically brought up in a machine shop and saw mills."

Although Ed wasn't the only son of Peter and Asenath Kidney, he was the only one of the four who lived beyond early adulthood. He was fortunate he did because he was the one who served in the Civil War. Having been born on January 22, 1842, Ed Kidney was 20 years old when he enlisted in the Independent Battery Light Guard Artillery of the Union Army on August 9, 1862 – just seven days after he married Angeline Hewitt Broady of Elyria.

*Ed Kidney had a head for business and inventions.*

More on Kidney's Civil War service can be found in Issue 96 of *Olmsted 200* from May 2021, but the short version is he saw action in significant battles and, late in the war, was wounded by a bullet in his hip. He also suffered from cholera in a Columbus, Ohio, hospital before a friend of the family brought him home in such a condition that he was not expected to

live another year. Fortunately, he lived a long life and became the father of eight children. They included Maude and Marian – who died as infants – as well as Myrtle, Norris, Charles, Archer, Alice and Harry.

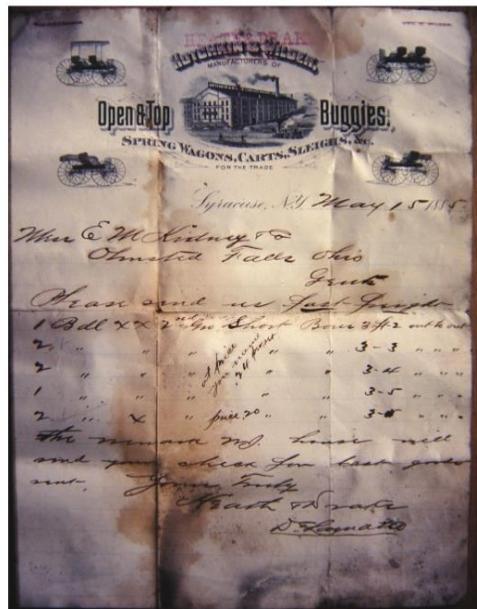
After healing from his war wounds, Ed Kidney followed in his father's footsteps by getting into manufacturing. As early as 1875, he established his own shop at the site of Peter Kidney's tool-making shop east of River Street (now River Road) to make felloes, the curved outer parts of wagon wheels that attached to the spokes.

“Barnum & Kidney have a large amount of material on hand which they will work up into bent felloes,” an item in the Olmsted column of Berea’s *Grindstone City Advertiser* said in the March 1, 1877, edition. The Barnum presumably was Luther Barnum who operated the sandstone quarry in what now is David Fortier River Park. He was just one of several men who partnered with Kidney in different enterprises over the years.

By the early 1880s, Kidney moved past making just felloes to establishing a bending works behind his house on the west side of River Street. Back then, a bending works was a shop that used steam to make wood pliable, so that it could be bent and stretched into desired shapes. In the case of Kidney’s plant, the desired shapes were all sorts of pieces used in making wagons and buggies.

The factory might initially have been called Kidney Bending Works, but eventually, it became known as the Cleveland Bending Works, perhaps because using the name of the big city helped position the company in the minds of its customers. The company fit right into a manufacturing trend in the region.

“The 1870s and 1880s saw the rise of enormous wagon and carriage factories which began mass producing inexpensive vehicles for the wholesale market,” an entry on the wagon and carriage industry in Case Western Reserve University’s *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* says. “While Cleveland never hosted large wholesale vehicle factories, it was home to some of the world’s largest producers of wagon and carriage parts which became vital for carriage shops and factories of all sizes. Widespread application of machinery and factory principles from mid century onward had encouraged the separate manufacture of nearly every part used in the construction of a typical wagon or carriage.”



*This is an order for buggy bows sent by Hotchkin & Wilder, a buggy manufacturer in Syracuse, New York, on May 15, 1885, to Ed Kidney. The order was found inside a wall in Kidney’s former Olmsted Falls home when the house was renovated. Bows were curved pieces of wood that held up the fabric tops of buggies. Photo courtesy of Bruce Banks.*

The Cleveland area was an ideal location for such specialty manufacturers because of its proximity to raw materials, labor and excellent shipping facilities, the article says.



*This undated photo shows Ed Kidney (front and center) with some of his workers, men and boys, with stacks of the curved parts, perhaps bows for buggies, they produced. Someone wrote at the bottom of the photo, "Bendix works gang."*

*Photo courtesy of Bruce Banks.*

“Some, like the Cleveland Bending Works, specialized in the production of bent wood vehicle parts such as shafts, reaches and top bows,” the *Encyclopedia* says.

Kidney’s partner in that enterprise initially was a man named Broadey (or Broady), perhaps a relative of his wife, but it’s not clear from the newspaper, which had a tendency of not giving full names, assuming local readers at the time would know who was being referred to. It might have been Samuel Broadey, who partnered with Kidney in a later enterprise.

The newspaper, by then called the *Berea Advertiser*, had these items about the bending works in the early 1880s:

- September 7, 1882: “Kidney & Broadey are building to their factory.”
- September 21, 1882: “Kidney & Broadey have built the neatest little office in the township, in a new bay window at their factory. They have purchased a new engine and portable sawmill both of which will be taken to Indiana to get out fellow [sic] timber.”
- January 4, 1883: “Mr. Ed Kidney is perfecting a patent buggy fill.”

At its peak, the bending works employed about 30 men to saw lumber and shape pieces of wood into felloes, spokes, spindles and other curved parts for wagon and buggy makers in the region. In 1882, the company bought a portable sawmill to take to Indiana and elsewhere to collect lumber for its operations. A February 1887 report provides an example of how busy the bending works was: the company shipped out eight train carloads of products, which required using two teams of horses pulling a heavy wagon through roads with mud as deep as the axles to get to the railroad depot.

About Kidney, Holzworth wrote: “His inventive genius produced many of the articles that he made in his factory, which developed into one of the largest bending works in the Cleveland area.” Kidney also invented many of the machines and tools used

in his factory. The story of Ed Kidney's life might be called "A Man in Motion," Holzworth suggested.

"He seemed to be everywhere at the same time. He was proprietor, boss, timber scout, purchasing agent, and sales manager," Holzworth wrote. "His head for the most part was the office file. He helped in the cutting of timber and the finishing of products and furnished news reporters of Olmsted Falls with something to fill their weekly columns, by his travels on business trips throughout Michigan, Indiana, and Tennessee."

But running the bending works didn't occupy all his time, and the buggy fill mentioned in that 1883 newspaper item wasn't Kidney's first attempt at patenting an invention. By 1878, he had invented a device to cool and purify water without using ice or ammonia. He displayed a model of it in a tin goods shop operated by Louis Adams in downtown Olmsted Falls.

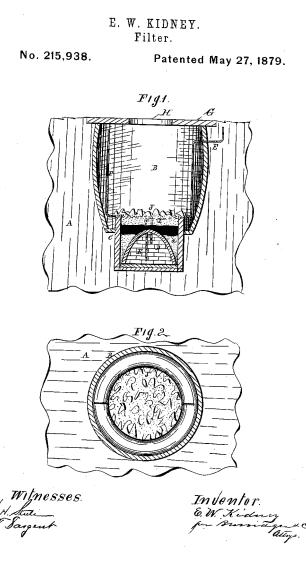
"The patent cooler," an item in the Olmsted Falls column of the *Advertiser* for January 31, 1878, said, "This is being built by E.W. Kidney, A.R. Locke and L.B. Adams; will soon be finished and then will come the test. The question is often asked will it be a success?"

On May 8, 1879, the paper included this item: "One of Kidney's Patent Filters will be placed on trial in Mr. Andrew Locke's cistern. A stock company has been formed for the purpose of manufacturing these filters."

In those years, Kidney was one of two Olmsted Falls men known to be inventors. It was regarded as a rivalry by the newspaper, which ran this item on October 28, 1880: "Next – Joseph Lay has recently invented a new and improved washing machine. This brings Ed Kidney on deck, and Ed will have to brush the dust off of his inventive faculties or take a back seat." The inventions and enterprises of Joseph Lay will be the subject of a later story in this series about Olmsted's inventors and entrepreneurs.

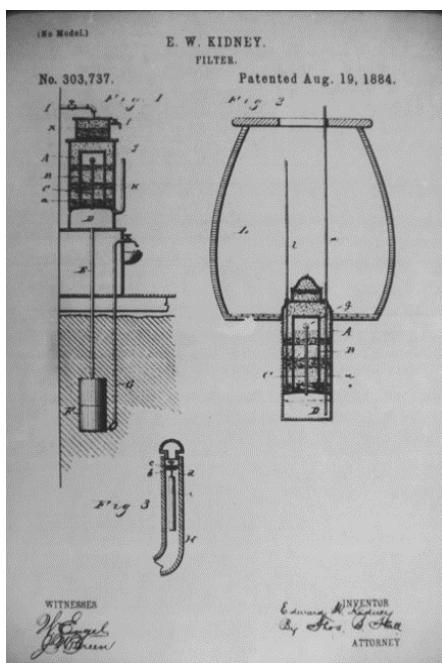
In 1883, Kidney patented a smaller version of the water filter that was meant for use in homes. The cost was \$25.00. He partnered with Adams and Barnum to sell it. They exhibited it at the Berea Agricultural Fair, a precursor to the Cuyahoga County Fair. The water filter venture frequently was mentioned in items in the *Advertiser*, such as these:

- June 21, 1883: "Messrs. Kidney, Adams and Barnum, the gentlemen interested in Kidney's patent water filter have commenced manufacturing that article in the tin shop."



*This is the drawing of Ed Kidney's water filter that was included in the patent issued to him on May 27, 1879.*

- July 5, 1883: “The Filter Company are attaching some of their filters to the Cleveland water works for trial.”
- August 16, 1883: “The gentlemen interested in Kidney’s filter intend to organize a stock company with \$5,000 and manufacture the filters in the village.”
- September 13, 1883: “The Filter Company has been in existence since Saturday evening. Ed Kidney is President; Samuel Broadey, Sec.; J.P. Peltz, Treas. L.B. Adams, Sup. They will manufacture Kidney’s patented water filter, said to be one of the best articles of the kind known.”
- November 15, 1883: “The filter recently patented by the Olmsted Falls Filter Co., has been subjected to sufficient tests to establish its usefulness beyond a doubt. Although intended only for cisterns and hydrants, yet it is no less useful when adapted to wells. Being placed in the bottom of cisterns or wells it not only cleanses and purifies the water, but also reduces its temperature. Pure, cold water is indeed a luxury, and it is now placed within the reach of every family for its expense is only \$15, which is very trifling compared to the effects of using impure water, which probably produces more sickness than any other cause. The company has several of its filters in good working order in Berea and all give the best of satisfaction.”



*The water filter patent issued to Ed Kidney on August 19, 1884, included these sketches of it. He filed for the patent September 25, 1883.*

*the filter when it went to Cincinnati to be shown off.*

- November 22, 1883: “The Filter Co. desire to say that the price quoted in last week’s Advertiser simply includes the filter and not the pump. They furnish everything and put the filter in for \$25.”
- January 3, 1884: “The Filter Co. has shipped a filter to Florida.”
- May 29, 1884: “It is worth while to investigate the philosophy of Kidney’s patent Hydrant filter.”

Not all went well in promoting the water filter, however. The September 5, 1884, edition of the *Advertiser* mentioned: “Ed Kidney is at the Cincinnati exposition exhibiting filters.” But that doesn’t begin to tell the story of what happened to

As Holzworth wrote, Kidney believed the industrial fair in Cincinnati “would be an excellent place to demonstrate his water cooler and filter by running Ohio River water through it and have it come out pure and cold with no germs or odor. He sent a crew of Olmsted men to the fair to set up the machine properly. They were Guy Fitch, Gene Taylor, Art Barnard, Frank Hickey and Andrew Locke. They took slickers and boots with them to keep themselves dry when climbing the river banks to carry up the pails of water, which they claimed was so filthy thick they could walk on it. They expected to transform this water before the eyes of an amazed crowd into water as pure as Distallata.” (Holzworth likely meant Distillata, the longtime Cleveland bottled water company.)

However, when the Olmsted men arrived at the exposition, “they found the machine previously shipped to be completely dismantled and the parts strewn about,” Holzworth wrote. “The managers of the fair didn’t want any such contraption on their premises. They had kegs of beer to sell and also a large supply of ice cold pop. So the dejected Olmsted boys picked up the pieces and returned home.”

It’s not clear what happened to the filter company after that. Mentions of it disappeared from the newspaper after the mid-1880s. However, Holzworth wrote that the setback in Cincinnati did not dishearten Ed Kidney as an inventor. He even hoped to develop a perpetual motion machine.

“His optimism was elevated by the fact that in 1878 Daniel Drawbaugh of Milltown, Penna. had assembled a machine that depended upon magnetic influence to run it,” Holzworth wrote. “It did run for a period of three weeks. Drawbough was highly elated and predicted that it could be made to run until the end of the world; or at least until the earth magnetism was all used up. Kidney’s idea was to synchronize the movements to hard steel balls using a shifting in gravity to accomplish eternal motion.”

But Kidney couldn’t devote all his attention to inventions. He had a growing bending works to run with a constant need for more wood. These items from the *Advertiser* give an impression of how the factory fared in the late 1880s:

- January 2, 1885: “Kidney & Broady have begun running their bending works again after lying idle for several months.”
- February 5, 1886: “Mr. E.W. Kidney is in Indiana, buying timber for the manufacture of bows.”



*This is a silver medal from the 1884 Cincinnati Industrial Exposition. If Ed Kidney had any hope of receiving such a medal, certain saboteurs made sure that wouldn’t happen.*

- December 17, 1886: “An accident at the bending works Tuesday necessitated shutting down for repairs.”
- December 24, 1886: “Mr. E.W. Kidney has purchased all timber standing upon a tract in Middleburgh and has ten teams busily engaged. Will be made into bows.”
- February 25, 1887: “Notwithstanding bad roads E.W. Kidney succeeded in loading eight cars with bows in three days of last week.”
- March 2, 1888: “Kidney’s bending works are running a double force of men.”
- October 26, 1888: “Ed Kidney is building another addition to his works – this time half brick and very substantial. This is about fifty additions and still there is land in the neighborhood not under cover. Build away, Ned.”
- November 23, 1888: “Mr. E.W. Kidney left Wednesday for Mich. on business.”
- March 1, 1889: “Mr. E.W. Kidney had 82 loads of logs dumped at his mill in one day recently.”
- November 8, 1889: “Mr. E.W. Kidney went to Chicago on business this week.”
- February 7, 1890: “Mr. E.W. Kidney has been in the southern part of the state the past few days looking for timber.”
- March 7, 1890: “E.W. Kidney made a business trip to Cincinnati and Indiana this week.”
- March 28, 1890: “E.W. Kidney visited Millbury and Bellevue last week on business.”
- June 20, 1890: “Mr. E.W. Kidney went to Schockton Tuesday on business.”  
[Perhaps the writer meant Coshocton.]



*This undated photo shows the buildings of the bending works Edward Kidney built next to his home to the west of River Street (now called River Road) in Olmsted Falls. Such a factory would be out of place in that residential neighborhood today.*

All seemed to be going well for the bending works until disaster struck in late summer 1890, when fire destroyed the factory behind Kidney's River Street house. Only about \$4,000 of the estimated \$16,000 loss was covered by insurance.

Bernice Offenberg, who was Kidney's granddaughter, wrote in her 1964 book, *Over the Years in Olmsted*: "They saved the barn and three teams of work horses and a buggy horse, as their dog Tige wakened the whole Kidney family. The fire department put the fire out as the pond was close to the barn, but the shop was a complete loss."

Could Ed Kidney save the company? The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will tell the rest of his story.

*David Kennedy helped with research for this story. Bruce Banks shared photos he collected over years of research and lecturing on Olmsted history.*

## Kidneys Kept a Very Modern Home

Edward Kidney not only operated a factory near his house that was filled with the most up-to-date equipment – much of it created by him – but he and his family also had perhaps the most up-to-date home in Olmsted Falls at the time. He built it on the west side of River Street (now 7562 River Road) in 1866. That was the year after he returned from service in the Civil War.

Bernice Offenberg, who lived from 1890 to 1975, was the granddaughter of Ed and Angeline Kidney, so she knew the house well. She wrote about the house in her 1964 history book, *Over the Years in Olmsted*:

*The bathroom was off the kitchen. It had a built-in bathtub (the first in the village) made of wood, covered with copper-coated zinc. The washbowl was made of china, set in a wooden frame with a drain and cistern water from an iron pump which they put in a reservoir in the kitchen stove for their hot water supply. Mr. Kidney made a sewer system outside for his toilet. He dug down in the ground until he came to a spring, then drained the spring through a filter bed. It was used until city water and a new bathroom was put in the house.*



*This undated photo shows the home of Edward and Angeline Kidney along what then was River Street. Writing on the left side of the photo points to a windmill next to the house. Photo courtesy of Bruce Banks.*

*The well-water system was operated by a windmill that pumped water from a well into a big wooden tank outside the house. So, they had running water to a faucet over the kitchen sink which was also a china bowl with a drain. There was a dumb-waiter in the kitchen that was sealed so you could let it down under the house, which was a very satisfactory way for keeping all foods.*

*The water system operated two fountains. One in the yard of their home and one in a fifty foot square pond (with a canal running through the pasture lot south of the factory) which was well stocked with silver catfish.*

*Mrs. Angeline (Broady) Kidney, wife of Ed Kidney, was a wonderful person. She took in a thirteen year old orphan boy who had pneumonia and nursed him back to health. He lived with them until he was twenty-one. Mrs. Kidney raised Guy Fitch, her sister's boy, who was an orphan also, with six of her own children. She was a very good cook and homemaker.*

Offenberg also wrote that the Kidney home had the first telephone in Olmsted Falls. She said it was installed in about 1895.

“It was a pay telephone and Mrs. Kidney sent written messages by her granddaughters to people in the village for which they were paid by the Telephone Company when Mrs. Kidney settled up with the company once a month,” Offenberg wrote.



*The former home of Edward and Angeline Kidney still stands at 7562 River Road, as can be seen in this photo taken by Bruce Banks.*



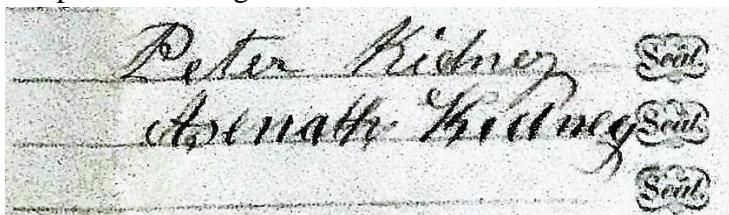
*Like many Olmsted Falls houses more than a century old, the Kidney house is marked with a sign.*

If the Kidneys did have a telephone as early as 1895, that was about six years before it became common for Olmsted residents to install phones in their homes and businesses. (More on the history of telephone service in Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township can be found in Issue 100 of *Olmsted 200* from September 2021.) Their early adoption of a telephone might have been a means for Ed Kidney to keep in contact with customers for his bending works and for him to stay in touch with his family when he was roaming the country in search of the massive amounts of timber he needed for his factory.

## Deeds Preserve Earlier Residents' Signatures

Among the readers who responded to the story about Peter Kidney and his family in last month's issue of *Olmsted 200* was Tom Atkinson, who offered something to further illustrate the story. He is a descendant of one branch of the Fitch family and has assembled many photos and documents from the family. It turns out that one set of Fitch family documents overlaps with the story of the Kidney family.

"When Elisha & MaryAnn Fitch decided to move closer to town in 1856, due to MaryAnn's involvement with teaching school and the Congregational Church, they bought land from Peter & Asenath Kidney, A.O. & C.E. Smith, John & Mary Barnum, and Luther & Ann Barnum, making up the 15-acre farm at 7555 Columbia Road," Atkinson wrote. "Attached are copies of the original deeds between these individuals which I thought you might be interested in cutting & pasting their 'signatures' to go along with this or any future articles."



That seems like a good idea. No photo of Peter or Asenath Kidney was available to include in last month's story. Without photos of the people, reproducing their signatures could be the next best way to add a personal touch to their story. The other individuals' signatures on the deeds might pop up from time to time in stories about them.

*These are the signatures of Peter and Asenath Kidney from a deed dated December 13, 1877, courtesy of Tom Atkinson.*

Other readers responded to the story about the wooden bridge that, in the 1930s, briefly spanned Plum Creek near where the stone bridge now stands in David Fortier River Park. That such a bridge ever existed came as a surprise to some readers.

On another note, in a Facebook post, Shari Trowbridge wrote, "There was also a wood bridge over Plum Creek at Bagley Road that was built by the Boy Scouts when the car bridge was closed by the county in the 70s much to the angst of the entire village. A protest was held on the bridge." That battle between the city and the county over what type of bridge would be built there was an interesting one. It might be the subject of a future *Olmsted 200* story. Anyone with memories of that dispute is welcome to share them.

## One Guy Got a Break, Another Got Busted

Two newspaper items from 150 years ago this month tell stories of two men who broke into Olmsted Falls buildings with different consequences. Both items appeared in the Olmsted column of Berea's weekly newspaper, the *Grindstone City Advertiser*, on February 9, 1872.

The first item was about a little excitement that broke out one winter night:

*On Tuesday night of last week, a small boy started out yelling fire! and continued to yell until he reached the harness shop. Harness-maker rushes out and wants to know where. Small boy answers – “school-house,” but upon looking in the direction of said school-house, they could see nothing that should excite a small boy. But, armed with a pail of water, they proceeded to the school-house to investigate. Upon entering the same, they found an old man who had got in there to spend the night, He had built a good fire and, thinking to have a little light on the occasion, had opened the stove door, but upon hearing the cry of fire had closed it again. Harness-maker and small boy, having nothing more to do, repaired to their homes, leaving the old man to enjoy his bed made of the downy side of an ash board, for the remainder of the night.*

The harness-maker would have been William Mead. In 1870, he took over from his father, Chauncey, in operating the harness shop at the corner of Water Street and Main Street (now Columbia Road), where Schady's Shell service station was located during much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, followed by the Clint Williams Realty office.

The schoolhouse was the wooden frame building constructed in 1830 on donated land from John and Eunice Barnum that became the Village Green. Two years after the news item above, in 1874, the Village of Olmsted Falls replaced the small wooden schoolhouse with a two-story brick building, known as the Union Schoolhouse, which stood until the village tore it down in 1960.

The other item from the 1872 newspaper told how a local crime was solved:

*A few weeks since the store of N.P. Loomis was robbed. The burglar on ‘going through’ the money drawer took about twelve dollars, mostly pennies and five-cent pieces. A few days ago a man named Patrick Ryan bought an axe at the store of R. Pollard, paying the whole amount in pennies. Mr. Loomis, hearing of this had the man arrested, and on searching him and his trunk, they found the money and a key of the back door of the store, which Mr. Loomis identified. The key was supposed to be lost as it was missed several days before the burglary was committed. Ryan was tried before Esquire Lay, found Guilty and bound over. In default of bail he was sent to enjoy the hospitality of the Hotel-de-Frazee.*

The *Hotel-de-Frazee* apparently was a joking term for jail, but it wasn't the jail building now on Mill Street in Grand Pacific Junction. That one wasn't built until 1878.

## Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include the rest of the story about Ed Kidney and other stories about the history of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township.

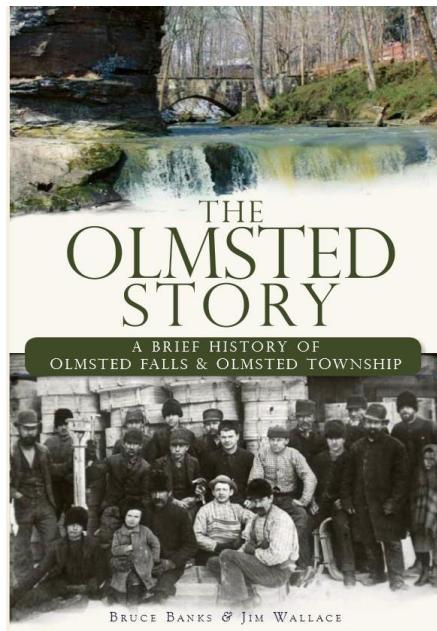
If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: [wallacestar@hotmail.com](mailto:wallacestar@hotmail.com). *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Michigan, Minnesota, 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](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](mailto: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 Angelina's Pizza in Olmsted Falls and the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.



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