



Olmsted 200

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

Issue 77

October 1, 2019

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What Made the Man Who Remade Olmsted Falls?

Olmsted Falls has lost the man who reshaped the community by restoring and preserving its historic heart. Clint Williams, who died September 6 at age 81, had a vision 30 years ago that became Grand Pacific Junction. He saw a future in a small collection of old buildings when no one else was interested in them.

If he had not created Grand Pacific Junction, it's quite likely that many of those old buildings would have been torn down – or fallen down on their own. The west side of Columbia Road could have been redeveloped much like the east side was with Mill River Plaza. And Olmsted Falls would have looked little different from any other suburb of Cleveland.

Williams also started Olmsted Heritage Days in 1992 to show off the restored buildings in Grand Pacific Junction and celebrate the history of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township. Unfortunately, he missed the festival this past August. He was in the hospital reportedly with a broken hip, but he stayed in contact with employees by phone to make sure activities in the Grand Pacific Hotel and his other properties went smoothly.

One of the last public events Williams attended was the June 22 reunion of people with fond memories of Shady's Shell. He hosted it at the former gas station he converted in 1978 to serve as the Olmsted Falls office for his



Clint Williams shared some of his memories when he hosted the Schady's Shell reunion at his Olmsted Falls office on June 22.

company, Clint Williams Realty. One of the conversations he engaged in that day revealed some of the experiences of his life that shaped him and led to his business success, which gave him the means to preserve and repurpose buildings to create Grand Pacific Junction.

As his shiny new red Tesla with the license plate “2 QUIET” sat on the Water Street side of the building, Williams revealed that he always had a fondness for attractive cars. Al Martin, who worked at Schady’s Shell in the late 1950s, recalled seeing Williams pull up in those days in a blue Cadillac convertible. But Williams revealed that wasn’t his first Cadillac.



This Tesla was the last of many cars owned by Clint Williams. Its license plate said, “2 QUIET.”



Cathy Hess, alumni director of the Olmsted Falls Alumni Association, shared this photo of Clint Williams with the pump he had installed for the Schady’s Shell reunion and an unidentified woman.

already had been sold.

“When I got my first car, my dad took me to the junkyard,” Williams said. “He gets me a ’38 Cadillac limousine, dual side mounts and all that. He gets it home and the box cracks. It’s a Ford motor in this thing. So I drove that all through high school.”

After high school in Columbia Township, Williams went into the Navy and was “cooped up for two years on board an aircraft carrier,” as he put it. But he was in good financial shape when he re-entered civilian life and began working as a barber in Columbia Station.

“I’d saved all my Navy pay,” Williams said. “I won about a grand playing cards. I was cutting hair. I was very frugal. For being in the Navy, I was making money.”

At age 20, he saw a powder blue Cadillac convertible with a blue top at a dealership in Elyria and immediately wanted it. When he walked in and asked about it, the salesman, who seemed incredulous that a 20-year-old could afford such a car, told him it

“But I have another powder blue one with a white top in the back,” Williams recalled the man as saying. “I said, ‘Can I look at it?’ Of course, I’m sold before I get there. Forty-three-hundred-and-fifty bucks. I told him, ‘I’ll take it.’ I didn’t even have enough God-dang sense to argue with him over the price. So I went and paid for the

damn thing, and that's probably the best move I've made because...that made me work harder. You know what I mean? You got to keep achieving and achieving."

That's what he did. He achieved and achieved. Even while working as a barber, Williams got his real estate license in 1963 and started the career he would prosper in the rest of his life.

Martin said, "He'd be cutting my hair and he'd be selling houses in the barbershop."

"I was working the whole time," Williams responded.



This is another of the vehicles Clint Williams collected. He identified it as a 1931 Depot Hack and displayed it during Olmsted Heritage Days.

Initially, he went to work for W.B. Cipra Realty as its second salesperson. Soon, he left barbering behind. In 1966, he started Clint Williams Realty. Early in his career, he interested Lawson's, the longtime Cleveland area convenience store chain, in a deal to create a strip mall in Fairview Park, where it would place one of its stores. He said that deal resulted in "a valuable lesson" he learned from Lawson's, which paid for the property with a 12-year mortgage.



On August 7, 2016, at the conclusion of the 25th Olmsted Heritage Days festival, Clint Williams was honored for his role in establishing Heritage Days. The festival included daily butter-churn drawings with \$100 cash prizes.

By that time, Williams had land contracts on two pieces of commercial property. He went to the bank.

"I had enough equity built into it that I said, 'I want a 12-year mortgage,'" Williams recalled. "They looked at me like I'm nuts. After that, I went to 11 years, I went to 10 years, I went to nine years. When I was in my early 40s, I had a ton of real estate paid for. It was the best lesson I ever learned in my whole life."

His vision for Grand Pacific Junction came in 1989, more than a quarter century after he got into the real estate business. Several years earlier, he almost worked out a deal for National City Bank to establish a branch at the corner of Columbia Road and Mill Street. It would have required either the demolition or relocation of the building that had housed Simmerer and Sons Hardware for several decades and more

recently had provided extra space for Kucklick's Village Square Shoppe. If that deal had gone through, it's quite likely that the west side of Columbia Road would have been redeveloped in the form of a modern strip mall.

After that deal collapsed, Williams tried to interest other potential buyers in that two-acre piece of land. Then one day, when he was standing at the corner of Orchard Street and Mill Street, he saw it in a different light. "I really hadn't paid that much attention to it before, but it just kind of struck me as an old-fashioned town," he said in a 2004 interview. "Then I said, 'Maybe I ought to buy it and restore it one [building] at a time.'"

That's what he did – and more. After restoring the initial nine buildings on the land he bought from Bill Kucklick, Williams gradually spread Grand Pacific Junction to other buildings along Columbia Road and Orchard Street. When an old B&O Railroad depot became available in 2008 following the dismantling of Trolleyville U.S.A., he bought it and moved it to Grand Pacific Junction. To complement those buildings, he also built new facilities in the form of the Grand Pacific Wedding Gardens and a replica of a 19th century railroad depot that now houses Pinot's Palette.

Asked how he acquired the knack for restoring old buildings, Williams said, "I've always been interested in restoring things. I got married when I was 25. I bought a 1930 Packard at the time [and] restored it. At one time, I had 25 antique autos. I took a five-year sabbatical from the real estate business. I'd work a half a day at the office and then spend from noon to midnight working on automobiles."



Clint Williams had the vision for Grand Pacific Junction 30 years ago.

The first building Williams restored was one at 8020-8022 Columbia Road. It was built to replace the Dodd-Fenderbosch grocery that burned down in January 1948 and later housed Tom Kucklick's appliance store. Williams bought the building in the 1970s. He continued the appliance business on one side of the building for a while and put the Olmsted Falls office of his real estate company into the other side.



The City of Olmsted Falls honored Clint Williams in 2016 by giving a portion of Mill Street a second name.

A more significant renovation project came in 1978, when he bought the former Schady's Shell at the corner of Water

Street and Columbia Road. Williams had to clear regulatory hurdles put up by the city – and he later faced similar hurdles for Grand Pacific Junction. But the result was a repurposed building that fit into the character of the community. In 1981, the Cleveland Area Board of Realtors gave him a Medallion Home award for helping to “preserve, protect and upgrade the real estate market.” That set the tone for his later renovation work.

Even during the final months of his life, Williams was planning another restoration. On May 13, he bought the former West View Wesleyan Methodist Church at 9807 Columbia Road at Sprague Road on the south end of Olmsted Falls. The church dates back to 1845, when it was built with hand-hewn timber. The building came close to being torn down in 1983. For years, it sat idle. County records show he paid \$87,500 for the property. It’s not clear what Williams intended to do with the building, but one of his employees said during Heritage Days that Williams planned to fix it up first and then worry later about finding a business interested in occupying it.



A peek through a window at the former West View Wesleyan Methodist Church in August revealed renovation work Clint Williams had initiated.



Clint Williams hated to see a historical building deteriorate, which is likely why he bought the former West View Wesleyan Methodist Church in May.

Not everyone was fond of Clint Williams. He fell out of some people’s favor over business matters they didn’t like. Others complained Grand Pacific Junction was like a Disney version of Olmsted Falls. But the reality is that old buildings are hard to save unless they are put to use. Without being used, they tend to fall apart. A good example of that is the barn John Hall built in 1880 along John Road. After it sat idle for years, the barn deteriorated to the point that one side was bowing, and The Renaissance had it torn down in 2014.

Likewise, at least a few of the buildings Williams acquired in 1989 were in such bad shape that they were leaning or had walls that

were separating from the rest of their structures. Williams figured out not only how to repair them but also how to fix them up so well that they could serve as shops and restaurants that attracted visitors to downtown Olmsted Falls. Without him, they surely would have been gone within a few years.

“Olmsted Falls didn’t have a downtown,” Williams said in 2004. “It was gone. So this created first a downtown for the people to come and sit and browse and eat an ice

cream cone – whatever they want to do. I think the reason it worked was because of the fact there are flat storefronts like in the late 1800s, there are Victorian homes and the hotel...and then there's always been an ambience about this place. When you walk through it, you get a feeling."

As the years go on, anyone who gets that feeling of a vital community rooted strongly to its past can thank Clint Williams for his vision and his record of achieving and achieving.

More information on how Clint Williams turned old buildings into Grand Pacific Junction can be found in a series of stories in *Olmsted 200* from Issue 21 in February 2015 to Issue 38 in July 2016.

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will have more people's memories of Clint Williams and his effects on Olmsted Falls.



One of the last ventures of Clint Williams was the introduction of chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon and pinot grigio wines with the Grand Pacific Junction label. He brought them out in time for this year's Olmsted Heritage Days.

Memories of Schady's Shell Include Pop and a Potbelly Stove

Many readers seemed to get a gas out of the story in last month's *Olmsted 200* about the Schady's Shell reunion in June at what now is the Clint Williams Realty office in Olmsted Falls. It prompted them to share their own memories.



The old gas pump Clint Williams installed for the Schady's Shell reunion shows a price of 49.9 cents a gallon, but some readers remember when it was even cheaper.

Patrick Carroll, confirmed that information.

"Great stuff!" Lee Willet wrote. "Wonderful memories of Shady's Shell station....35 cents a gallon! I delivered the *Cleveland Press* and the paper drop off was at the Gulf station. It was across the street from the Sohio station ran by a guy named Roberson but we called him Robie. The year was 1971-72 maybe."

The story included a photo of a Coca Cola machine owned by Dave Fenderbosch. He said he got it from Mike Carroll, it came from the long-gone Barnum's grocery, and it was identical to the Coke machine that once was located at Schady's. Another reader,

“My brother Mike did indeed have not only Barnum’s old coke machine, but he had Schady’s as well, which he sold to me in the 1980s, and I subsequently sold to a stranger when my family was growing – and the first thing to go for baby food, toys, etc., was nostalgic items,” Carroll wrote. “Alas! Wish I would have kept it! Dave Fenderbosch used to cut mine and my brother’s hair at his shop in Olmsted Township in the 70s and 80s and that’s where the eventual transaction took place for Dave to acquire Barnum’s old machine. I hung out with Dave’s brother Brian, and it seemed everyone who knew the Fenderbosches would get their hair cut at his parlor! He had been in the army for four or more years and was a trained, skilled barber when he got out.”

On Facebook, Tim Carroll wrote, “I remember the vintage coke machine, I think it was 10 cents in a green glass bottle. Hot summer days, coke and the smell of the greasepit along with the Vargas style girlie calendar are vivid memories.”

Responding to Tim Carroll, James Nickels wrote: “When we were kids we would pop the tops off the bottles while they were still in the machine and use 2 straws put together to suck out the coke.”

Also on Facebook, Jon Doe wrote that he spent much time hanging out at Schady’s Shell in the 1960s and 1970s. When he visited Olmsted Falls two years ago, he took photos of the former gas station and was glad to know the building still exists.

In a subsequent post, Doe said he had just read the story in Issue 70 of *Olmsted 200* from March that was written by his friend Pat Carroll, who referred to times when he and his friends hung out at Schady’s Shell. “So kool!” Doe wrote. “I’m gonna give him an earfull though...he never mentioned that it was me with him hanging onto the Corvair’s rear bumper! Hahaha! I also used to hang onto the rear bumper whilst on my sled going down ‘Carnage’ (Cranage) Rd. I also used to hang onto the side of a car while on my stingray bike...got it up to about 50 MPH once...with no helmets! lol. Oh we had some fun back then. Simpler times for simpler people I suppose. Thanks much for what you do with your newsletters!”

Liz Sayers, whose father Bob Sayers painted a much-loved picture of Schady’s Schell (which can be seen on Page 4 of Issue 41 of *Olmsted 200* from October 2016),



Rick Adler, who spoke earlier on June 22 at the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the Village Green, posed with the gas pump during the Schady’s Shell reunion.

wrote on Facebook that she recalls sitting on Gordon Schady's lap when she was four or five years old. She said she also would play with the cash register.

Chris Wood wrote on Facebook, "I remember it from when I was a kid! Full service ... as a kid I loved watching them wash the windshields. My dad once said the owner really helped them out when they were young married with a small child. He'd let them run a tab. Dad always paid him back, but he was sure many others didn't."

Julie Figueroa posted: "Many fond memories of Shady's and the folks that worked there!"

G.L. Kraken wrote, "They fixed my flat Huffy and Schwinn tires on my bike and never charged me as a kid in the 60s and early 70s. Later fixed my first car, a 1964 Chevelle I bought at age 16 in 1975. Loved that station!"



It no longer sells gas, but the old building still fuels memories.

Thomas Lehner wrote, "It's the services I think of when full service was provided."

The *Olmsted 200* story jogged the memory of Liz Stearns Shore. "Every time I go past there I try to remember the name of the gas station," she wrote. "Thank you for posting this! My grandparents always had their car serviced there...I remember going there with them like it was yesterday!"

Marie Knappage wrote, "The guys used to stand by the old pot belly stove and tell tall tales ha ha." To that Facebook post, Steve Harris responded, "I remember that, they would stand by the old pot belly stove, with their pot bellies, and tell tales!"

Tom Sayers wrote, "I still can remember getting candy bars and those 10 cent cokes in the glass bottles out of the machine. I used to walk over there daily. I spent many hours building forts inside the old tire shed and in some of the abandoned cars that used to sit in the gravel lot outback."

To that, Sherrie Scarton responded, "They had that classic coke machine. I used to buy these Zero bars there."

"Yes," Tom Sayers replied. "I miss those guys, do you remember Whitey and Fran? and that old red machine was awesome with the tall narrow door on the right side. After the dime was in it would pull out and even had the built in bottle cap puller." He added, "I used to freak out when they let the lift down in the service bay. Even in my backyard it was a loud startling noise."

Dave Allen wrote, “I can still see Art and Fran talking to my Dad... about world events or repairs to his pickup... I want the 60s-70s back.”

Finally, Cathy Bibbs-Cornell posted on Facebook, “I remember getting gas there in my first car, in 1969!”

Long Battle over Annexation Involved Small Piece of Land

Olmsted Township got out of 1991 without losing any more land to its neighbors despite efforts from Olmsted Falls, North Olmsted, Brook Park and Berea. Some who favored keeping the township intact hoped the November 1991 defeat of a ballot issue to form an Olmsted Township-Olmsted Falls merger commission would be the end of attempts to take township land. It wasn't.

One of the longest battles over annexation over just a relatively small portion of township land began in 1992 and wasn't settled until almost eight years later. Over those years, decisions on whether the township should keep the land or lose it went both ways, which illustrates how the outcomes of annexation battles can turn on the decisions of just a small number of officials.



Whether Berea would get a chunk of township land was subject of a legal battle that lasted most of the 1990s.

On July 23, 1992, a group led by Berea businessman Ellis Lovell, president of VRC, Inc., filed petitions with the Cuyahoga County commissioners to permit 240 acres of township land to be annexed to Berea. The land was located east of Lewis Road and Chestnut Grove Cemetery, north of the Conrail railroad tracks and west of the Berea border. The group's plan was to build houses on the land.

It had echoes of Berea's 1987 annexation of the Bagley Road corridor because the developers wanted water, sewer and other services Berea could provide but Olmsted Township couldn't. Lovell's company was located in that corridor, which was just south of the new territory proposed for annexation.

Owners of 14 properties in the area had signed the petition filed with the county, but by late August, nine of them had withdrawn their support. According to the *News Sun*, five of them were encouraged to withdraw their support by Woodbridge Development Company, which had conditional purchase agreements with the property owners and objected to the timing of the annexation request. However, by October 1992, Woodbridge dropped its objection.

The county commissioners held a hearing on the matter on October 27, 1992, but Olmsted Township presented a series of legal and procedural challenges, so the commissioners put off a decision and scheduled another hearing for December 8. At that second hearing, Lovell withdrew the petition, saying it no longer had the required number of signatures.

In May 1993, Lovell filed a new petition with the county seeking annexation of a slightly smaller portion of the land – 205 acres – to Berea. Three months later, Berea Mayor Stanley Trupo wrote a letter to the *News Sun* promising that, if the land would be annexed to his city, residents there would immediately get water and sewer service, as well as other city services, which would increase property values.

“It is a venture that has only positive benefits for all parties,” he wrote.

Trupo said the additional territory and residents would cause no financial burden to Berea.

“In return, the city will benefit from an additional 300 housing units and the residents who will move into them,” he wrote. “All this will add to the city’s tax base. In terms of real dollars and cents, Berea could collect nearly \$300,000 in municipal and Berea property tax yearly. Furthermore, development professionals estimate approximately \$50 million work of development to take place within the 205 acres. Finally, the amount of construction fees, which include building permits and other fees calculated on the 300 units, add up to another \$450,000.”



Olmsted Township proclaims itself to be “A Community on the Grow!” But numerous efforts have attempted to shrink it.

The mayor’s letter was a pitch to both the township residents in the area being considered for annexation and to residents of Berea to support the annexation. But it also spelled out what Olmsted Township or Olmsted Falls would be denied because neither of them was prepared to make a similar offer to the township property owners. Earlier in his letter, he stated that Berea already had benefitted from the 1987 annexation of the Bagley Road corridor from the township by turning it into an industrial corridor supporting about 500 new jobs and generating many thousands of dollars yearly in municipal income and property taxes. Those were benefits Olmsted Township and Olmsted Falls missed out on when neither of them could keep that corridor out of Berea’s hands in 1987.

On October 19, 1993, the Cuyahoga County commissioners voted two to one to approve the annexation of the 205 acres to Berea. As usual, the township hired a lawyer to challenge the annexation in court. On January 18, 1994, the township was successful in getting Common Pleas Judge Brian Corrigan to issue a temporary restraining order to prevent Berea from proceeding with the annexation. But on August 12, 1994, Corrigan ruled against the township and in favor of the annexation. Within a few weeks, lawyers

for the township and owners of a 72-acre horse farm – Dave and Joseph Hollo – opposed to the annexation got the Eighth District of the Ohio Court of Appeals to block Berea City Council from accepting the annexation.

In March 1995, the appeals court reversed the August 1994 decision by Judge Corrigan that upheld the county commissioners' approval of the annexation. The appeals court sent the case back to the lower court. Although previous reports referred to the area at issue it as being 205 acres, newspaper reports beginning in March 1995 sometimes referred to it as 195 acres and sometimes as 205 acres with no explanation for the discrepancy.

But annexation efforts quieted only for a short while. On September 23, 1996, Lovell filed a new petition to annex the same 205 acres or 195 acres of township land to Berea. That request was withdrawn before the end of 1996, but it was revived in 1997. The county commissioners approved it in August 1997. At the time, Lovell told the *News Sun*, "Persistence paid off."

Again, the township appealed the decision. Again, the lower court upheld the decision, and again, the appeals court overturned it. When the case went back to the lower court, Common Pleas Court Judge Richard McMonagle ruled in favor of the township and issued a permanent injunction against the annexation mainly because of the inclusion of the 72-acre farm owned by the Hollo brothers, who opposed the annexation. The judge cited a 1967 appeals court ruling in saying the proposal "smacks of 'strip, shoestring, subterfuge, corridor and gerrymander annexation.'" In January 2000, the Ohio Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal from Berea, putting an end to that annexation effort, which had stretched over almost eight years.

Meanwhile, another case followed a similar course. A May 1997 plan was to annex to Berea 64 acres of a farm owned by the Rados family on the south side of Nobottom Road and a three-acre triangle of land next to Berea's Parknoll Elementary School. The Rados family mainly wanted municipal water. The county commissioners approved it that November, but an appeals court eventually rejected it in July 1999.

Each of those cases involved relatively small pieces of township land, but if their disposition had gone the other way, the long-term effects on the township could have been bigger. They established that attaching parts of the township to neighboring cities would not be as easy as some people expected.

However, even though Olmsted Township was successful in fending off those annexation efforts in the 1990s, it had little power to fight one proposed by North Olmsted in May 1997. The only property owner was the City of North Olmsted itself. The land was the southern 49.6 acres of Springvale Golf Course. That is why the North Olmsted boundary now extends almost to John Road in that area.

These annexation cases were not the only efforts to change Olmsted Township's boundaries in the 1990s. There were grander proposals that could have led to end of the township. The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will cover those cases.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include a story about efforts in the 1990s that could have eliminated Olmsted Township and one with memories of Clint Williams.

If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: wallacestar@hotmail.com. *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Michigan, Wisconsin, New York, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Maine, as well as overseas in the Netherlands, Germany and Japan.

Your questions and comments about *Olmsted 200* are welcome. Perhaps there is something about Olmsted's history that you would like to have pulled out of *Olmsted 200*'s extensive archives. Or perhaps you have information or photos about the community's history that you would like to share.

If you have missed any of the past issues of *Olmsted 200* or want to share them with someone else, all of them can be found on Olmsted Township's website. Go to <http://olmstedtownship.org/newsletters/>. A list of *Olmsted 200* issues is on the right side. Click on the number of the issue you want to read. All of the issues of *Olmsted 200* also are available on the website of the City of Olmsted Falls. Find them at: http://www.olmstedfalls.org/olmsted_falls_history/index.php. A link to *Olmsted 200* can be found on the left side of the page.

Except where otherwise noted, all articles in *Olmsted 200* are written by Jim Wallace. Thanks go to Mary Louise King for help in proofreading and editing many issues. 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 Village Bean in Olmsted Falls and the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.

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