



Olmsted 200

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

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Township Again Became Annexation Target in 1960s

The efforts in 1958 to either incorporate Olmsted Township as a village or annex parts of it to Berea, North Olmsted or Olmsted Falls had hardly died down before new talk of changing boundaries flared up in the 1960s.

In December 1960, some residents of seven-and-a-half square miles – about two-thirds – of the township’s 10.2 square miles at that time expressed interest in annexation to North Olmsted. The area proposed for annexation went from the North Olmsted border on the north to the Ohio Turnpike on the south and from the Lorain County border on the west to the border with Olmsted Falls and Rocky River on the east. That section had about 3,000 residents, which was more than half of the township’s total population.

North Olmsted Mayor Paul Gareau told the *Plain Dealer* that many people had come to his office to ask about annexation. He said the city was “definitely interested.” The North Olmsted Chamber of Commerce also expressed interest, and the North Olmsted



Signs such as this one on the southern border of North Olmsted would have been located farther south if a 1961 annexation effort had succeeded.

North Olmsted Planning Commission discussed the opportunity.

Gareau said leaders of the annexation move, whom he did not identify, were considering different options. One was to have residents vote on the proposal in the May 1961 primary. Another would be to submit petitions with signatures of a majority of property owners to the county commissioners.

Another Annexation Move Is on in Olmsted Township

This Plain Dealer headline on December 21, 1960, was on one of the first stories about an effort to annex a large portion of Olmsted Township to North Olmsted. That effort stirred up many township residents in the weeks that followed.

In its December 21, 1960, edition, the *Plain Dealer* reported: “The territory in question is still open country for the most part, but a number of subdivisions are planned. At present there is no industry, but township trustees last year zoned a large parcel along the New York Central for system tracks use.” (That is a reference to the township’s attempt to establish a district to attract industry.)

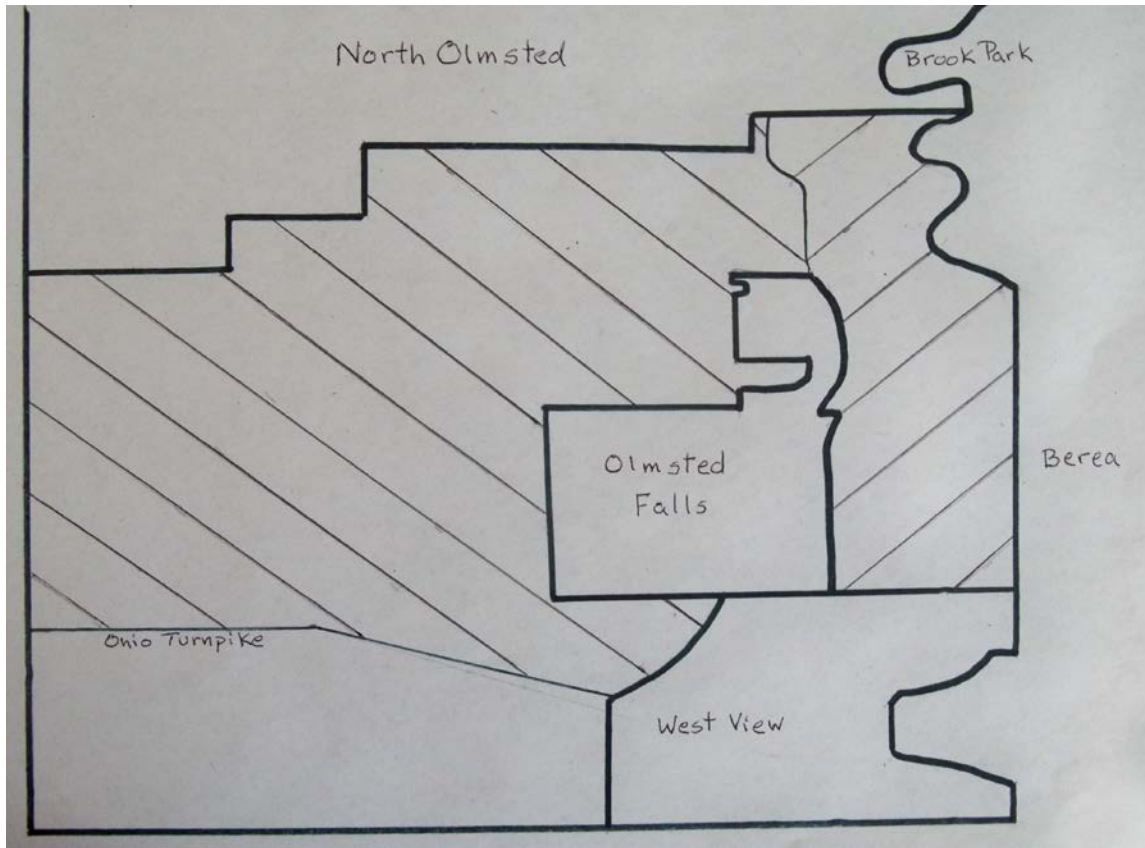
Further, as the newspaper reported about the proposed annexation, “The move, if successful, would cut the township in half, leaving two parcels of unincorporated land separated by a distance of several miles. One would be the area south of the turnpike, the other, the area east of Rocky River.”

More than two years earlier, residents of the eastern portion of the township circulated petitions in a move to have their area annexed to Olmsted Falls. That effort died when other residents proposed incorporation of the township instead. After incorporation was rejected in the November 1958 election, the proposed annexation of the eastern portion of the township to Berea failed to get going again. The talk in 1961 about annexing a big portion of the township to North Olmsted left people in the eastern portion wondering whether they would be left in a much-diminished township.

In the January 5, 1961, issue of the *Berea News*, Mayor Gareau said North Olmsted had been receiving requests about annexing parts of Olmsted Township for two years, which essentially meant people had been talking about such possibilities since the defeat of the incorporation proposal in 1958.

“The inquiries have been coming in increasing numbers recently, and we felt that we were now in a position to consider them seriously,” he said. “The township has a lot of potential, and we believe that we have something to offer there. We would be able to bring utilities, including sewers and water, to the proposed industrial area, and to

complete the road there. This would help to bring in developments which would materially increase the tax duplicate and benefit the entire district.”



North Olmsted expressed interest in late 1960 and early 1961 in annexing a large section of about seven square miles of Olmsted Township (which then covered a little more than 10 square miles) north of the Ohio Turnpike and west of Olmsted Falls and Rocky River. Soon there was talk about annexing the eastern section of the township to Berea, Olmsted Falls, Brook Park or North Olmsted. No neighboring community expressed interest in the section of the township south of the Ohio Turnpike and west of West View.

Also in January 1961, a new group, the Home Owners' Committee of Olmsted Township, got involved. The group had been formed in early December 1960 to address residents' concerns about the expansion of trailer parks "and other township problems." The committee's chairman, Ernest Miller, scheduled a meeting on annexation to be held at Township Hall on January 11.

With all the talk about annexing a big chunk of the township to North Olmsted, residents of the eastern section of the township began considering their options for annexation. It was suggested they could join Olmsted Falls, Berea, Brook Park or North Olmsted.

Berea Mayor Tom Stinchcomb said his city would welcome any portion of the township east of Rocky River interested in joining Berea. He said, "It would seem to be of benefit to the people of this area to annex to Berea more than to any other community.

Berea could extend utilities into the area and the proximity of the two communities and the relationship of the trade areas would make it seem more logical.”

Berea Service-Safety Director Joe Skodis backed him up by saying, “Berea can furnish both water and sewers to the section on this side of the river, and both now run to the city limits on Bagley, Barrett and Nobottom Rds.” He added that Berea was doubling the capacity of its water plant and enlarging the sanitary sewer line along Bagley Road. Berea’s average charge was only about \$12 a year, he said, and the water plant already was finished and in operation. Berea also would provide fulltime police and fire protection, as well as weekly garbage collections, he said.

Brook Park Mayor James Topping said his city would “certainly give any annexation every consideration,” but he pointed out that the Metropolitan Park system provided a barrier for extending utilities. Brook Park had not even extended its utilities to the western side of its own community, he said.



This story from the Berea News on January 5, 1961, covered not only the possibility that North Olmsted might annex part of the township, but also that the eastern section might go to an adjacent community.

Meanwhile, the suggestion that North Olmsted might be able to add the eastern section of the township seemed to surprise Mayor Gareau.

“We had not considered the annexation of the eastern section, at least at this time, because we were advised that residents there would not be interested in the idea,” he said. “However, we can always reconsider if they would care to be included. The southwest corner is another matter though – we would have real difficulty extending water and sewer lines beyond the turnpike.”

Gareau added that school district boundaries would not be affected – at least immediately.

By the time January 11 arrived, such a large crowd was expected for the Home Owners’ Committee meeting that it was moved from tiny Township Hall to the auditorium at Fitch Elementary School, which was in its third school year of operation. Township residents were reported to have mixed feelings about all the annexation proposals. In regard to the proposed annexation to North Olmsted, many were said to have adopted a wait-and-see attitude, while others objected to what they called “land

grab” tactics, and still others were willing to consider what it would be like if North Olmsted would take in all or a big portion of the township and become a larger city.



Fitch Elementary School, which opened in September 1958, was the site of the January 11, 1961, meeting called by the Home Owners’ Committee of Olmsted Township to consider whether a large section of the township should be annexed to North Olmsted. The meeting was moved there because Township Hall was deemed to be too small to accommodate the large crowd that was expected. Several years ago, Fitch Elementary School became the Olmsted Falls Early Childhood Center, housing all of the school district’s preschool and kindergarten classes.

“Olmsted Township residents may not always like what they have, but they don’t want to give it away,” reporter Annalee Kamer wrote about the January 11 meeting in the January 19 edition of the *Berea News*. “They may not know just what they want for their sprawling community, but they don’t want anyone else to help them make up their minds. This appeared to be the attitude of the more-than-350 persons who attended a public meeting at the Fitch Elementary School last Wednesday evening.”

The majority appeared to be cool to annexation and resentful toward the chief proponent, John Spadafore of 7087 McKenzie Road. He spoke in favor of annexation but refused to name the committee of citizens he said he represented.

Preceding him in speaking was Vernon McRae, chairman of the township’s zoning commission, who stressed the soundness of the township’s financial position with no bonded indebtedness. He referred to the proposed industrial area the township intended to create as a “multi-million-dollar proposition.”

Mayor Gareau suggested that township residents should form a committee to pursue annexation and examine both sides of the issue before forming an opinion, but the audience was said to exhibit little enthusiasm for that idea.

The final speaker was William Gilligan, chairman of the township trustees. He received the largest applause of the evening when he said he disagreed with Spadafore. He talked about progress the township had made in establishing a zoning code, around-the-clock police protection and a well-trained volunteer fire department, as well as the

township's other accomplishments, while it maintained a very low tax rate compared to neighboring communities.

The question-and-answer session that followed the prepared remarks "threatened at times to get out of hand when some spectators attempted to shout down others or to interrupt answers from the platform," Kamer reported. Some in attendance confused the Home Owners' Committee, which had taken no stand on annexation, with Spadafore's pro-annexation group, she wrote.

One resident summed up the situation by saying, "It appears to me that we have here a committee [the pro-annexation group] with no power, going over and wasting North Olmsted's time. We are trying to make a decision on something we don't know anything about."

"It appears to me that we have here a committee [the pro-annexation group] with no power, going over and wasting North Olmsted's time. We are trying to make a decision on something we don't know anything about." – Olmsted Township resident at the meeting to consider annexation of part of the township to North Olmsted

After that, annexation talk died out for a while. Olmsted Township residents went back to arguing about the expansion of the Columbia Park mobile home development, the construction of a mortuary at Sunset Memorial Park apparently in violation of township zoning regulations, and problems associated with the expansion of housing developments, such as Breezewood Estates.

Later in the 1960s, however, new proposals arose about changing the boundaries of not only Olmsted Township but also Olmsted Falls and West View. *Olmsted 200* will have more about that in next month's issue.

The Border Made a Big Difference

Several readers expressed interest in the story in Issue 67 from December about how and why North Olmsted broke away from Olmsted Township 110 years ago. Lisa (Kunberger) Woodcock, who now lives in Texas, found it especially interesting because her family moved in 1958 from Rocky River Drive near Kamm's Corners to a house on Barton Road in Olmsted Township not far from the border with North Olmsted.



Just a small section of Barton lies in Olmsted Township between Cook Road and North Olmsted.



Most of Barton Road is located north of the Olmsted Township border, which now is marked by these signs (above).

This section of Barton Road (right) in Olmsted Township is where Lisa (Kunberger) Woodcock lived when she was growing up after 1958. It was an easy walk across the border into North Olmsted, but the border affected not only where residents paid their taxes and attended school but also affected their social interactions. The township residents knew each other but not those who lived on the other side of the line, and the North Olmsted residents likewise kept to themselves.



“Our two houses on 3 1/2 acres joined the other 11 houses to complete the Township side,” she wrote. “The majority of Barton going on up to Lorain Road was/is North Olmsted. That painted dividing line on the road was a very definite divide between ‘rural’ us (with septic tanks, well water, and phone party lines) and ‘suburban’ them (the benefits of city water and sewage, better phone system). We could name everyone on ‘our end of Barton,’ but no one on the other side of the line!”

Town Hall Dedication Program Turns Up

In Issue 68 from January, *Olmsted 200* carried two stories about the troubled history of the Town Hall built jointly by Olmsted Township and the Village of Olmsted Falls in 1882-1883. It was located in the same spot where Olmsted Falls built a replacement in 1939-1940 that is the building that now houses the Moosehead restaurant.

A recent search through the *Olmsted 200* archives turned up a photo of the program for the January 19, 1883, dedication ceremony for the Town Hall that was overlooked when putting together January’s story.

TOWN HALL

PROGRAMME

— OF —

DEDICATORY EXERCISES,

Friday, Jan. 19, 1883.

President of the Day. - - - *W. W. Mead.*
Vice-Presidents { *James Hickey, Wm. Camp, Wm. J. Spafford,*
 { *E. S. Jaquays, C. L. Underhill.*

PART FIRST.

PRAYER.

Formal acceptance of the Town Hall by the Township Trustees.

Music by the Band.

Remarks by the President of the day.

Speeches by invited guests and citizens.

SONG..... Oh who will o'er the downs so free
 WILLA, JENNIE AND ERNEST TRAYTE.

COMIC SONG..... The Major
 N. BARRY.

Remarks by L. P. ELDRIDGE. (Architect.)

Music by the Band.

SONG—Quartette
 MISSSES CLARA AND ANNA BARNUM, DR. J. E. PARKER AND A. LOCK.

COMIC SONG..... The Judge's Song
 WILLIAM TRAYTE.

POEM..... "Experience"
 FRANK MILLER.

SONG..... Down by the river side I stray
 MISS JENNIE TRAYTE.

Statement of cost of Town Hall and fixtures,..... C. M. RATHBUN
 SUPPER.

PART SECOND.

MUSIC BY THE BAND..... Red, White and Blue

COMIC SONG..... N. BARRY.

This was the "Programme of Dedicatory Exercises" used for the dedication of the new Town Hall in Olmsted Falls on January 19, 1883.

As explained in Issue 67 of *Olmsted 200* from December, residents of the Butternut Ridge area of Olmsted Township largely were absent from that ceremony to dedicate the Town Hall because they disagreed with the decision to build it. That dissatisfaction festered over the next quarter century and combined with other factors that drove people in northern Olmsted Township away from their neighbors to the south. That led to their decision in 1908 to join with a smaller portion of southeastern Dover Township to form the Village of North Olmsted, which came into existence at the beginning of 1909. It grew to become the City of North Olmsted on October 5, 1951, after the population topped 5,000 in the 1950 Census.

Surely, the dignitaries, as listed in the program above, who participated in the dedication ceremony of 1883, had no idea of the changes they were setting in motion.

Winter Games Were Daring Half a Century Ago – Part Two

By Patrick Carroll

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second part of an essay from Patrick Carroll offering a glimpse of life in Olmsted in the latter half of the 20th century. The first part ran in Issue 69 of Olmsted 200 last month.

After my experience with the “Psychedelic Sled” that broke up and launched me into a nearly frozen Plum Creek during Christmas break in 1968, my enthusiasm for sledding – at least the normal type – also was chilled. But for some strange reason, I was still eager to engage in another daredevil activity just days later.

It began when a member of our gang of friends, Billy Cromwell, showed up at Schady's Shell in his newly acquired car, a 1960 four-door Corvair. As a fanatic about air-cooled cars, I fell in love with it.



Billy was something of an anomaly. He could repair radios, TVs and other assorted electronic stuff, but he never succeeded in school. He passed his driver's exam on his first try in his father's

behemoth 1959 Oldsmobile, but he was what educators now call learning disabled. He had a penchant for “acquiring” things and a heart of gold. He was fun to be around.

Schady's Shell service station at the corner of Columbia Road and Water Street served as a hangout for Patrick Carroll and his friends in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Sometime before the early 1960s, when postal zones became ZIP Codes and phone numbers switched from being expressed as a combination of letters and numbers (such as ADams5-8003) to all numbers (such as 235-8003), Schady's issued this keychain.

Everyone called him “Whooper” because he was round and overweight and did a passable imitation of the Three Stooges’ Curly when he would spin in circles on the floor and holler, “Whoop, whoop, whoop, whoop, whoop!”

Great Northern Shopping Center was merely a long retail strip center separated from the newly built May Company store to the east. The current enclosed Great Northern Mall was still several years away, and construction of I-480 through North Olmsted was even further away, but going to Great Northern was always a treat for us. Now that we had Billy as our personal chauffeur, our sense of freedom as young teens expanded. We spent much time going to Great Northern, having hamburgers at Grant’s dime store lunch counter and generally just messing about.



The Corvair Patrick Carroll and his friends used for bumper sledding might be long gone, but pictured here is one that has been preserved by someone who appreciates old cars.

Because the Corvair’s engine, like that of a Volkswagen Beetle, was in the rear, the small car’s weight distribution was excellent for traction and it handled considerably well in snow. That proved to be an enormous asset in our quest for wintertime fun. We would go out at night to unfinished housing developments in Olmsted and

North Olmsted for bumper sledding!

Bumper sledding required: 1) A freshly packed snowy road surface; 2) An adequate vehicle with which to latch onto with gloved hands while crouching with feet flat on the ground in slippery-soled shoes or boots; and 3) A safe driver who would not go over 25 miles per hour. It would be hard to do bumper sledding with many of today’s vehicles.

The Corvair was the perfect “sled” puller with the sleds being our feet. The rear bumper was perfect for the coupling of two teenagers in tow. My brother Mike was the responsible and safe driver.

Having all the requisite criteria, we set out one night to find a suitable sledding patch. We found it in an unfinished housing development off of Fitch Road near the border of North Olmsted and Olmsted Township. The road already was packed with a slick surface of snow. Although we had no Zamboni, we found it to be excellent because not much traffic had driven through there. Thus, it provided a smooth, relatively undisturbed surface.

Away we went! Mike would get the car up to about 25 MPH and signal us with the horn. We then would let go, “crouch-sledding” on the soles of our boots for a couple of hundred feet. This form of winter fun countered the gray doldrums of December

weather in northeastern Ohio. It also was veritably unsafe and probably illegal, so we would have been in much trouble if the police had noticed.

I had brought a small can of tuna that I had spray-painted the same “day-glo” orange left over from my ill-fated Psychedelic Sled to use like a hockey puck. We also had fashioned a couple of sticks to act as puck drivers. When we let go and slid, I would drop the puck and we would try to chase it, still crouching, and hit it with the sticks.

It wasn’t very successful. Often, we would lose speed and fall over, tumbling like human ten pins in the middle of the road. Nevertheless, it proved to be loads of good, clean fun! Crazy, you say? I say not because what teenager ever considers such activities as safe, prudent and normal in the already crazy society in which we lived in the late 1960s?

Where have such reckless, creative options gone for teenagers today to satisfy their hazardous urges? Playing on cell phones? Sitting at McDonald’s and watching YouTube videos of other daredevils? No, times have changed.

Fifty years ago, our winter games provided us with enormous fun, satisfaction, creative play and intense personal satisfaction. Or at least, I like to think so.

Patrick Carroll is a 1972 graduate of Olmsted Falls High School who now lives in Wooster.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include a story about how talk about annexation and merger that arose in the late 1960s led to a boundary change that bypassed the 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. *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Florida, Wisconsin, New York, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Maine, as well as overseas in the Netherlands, Germany and Japan.

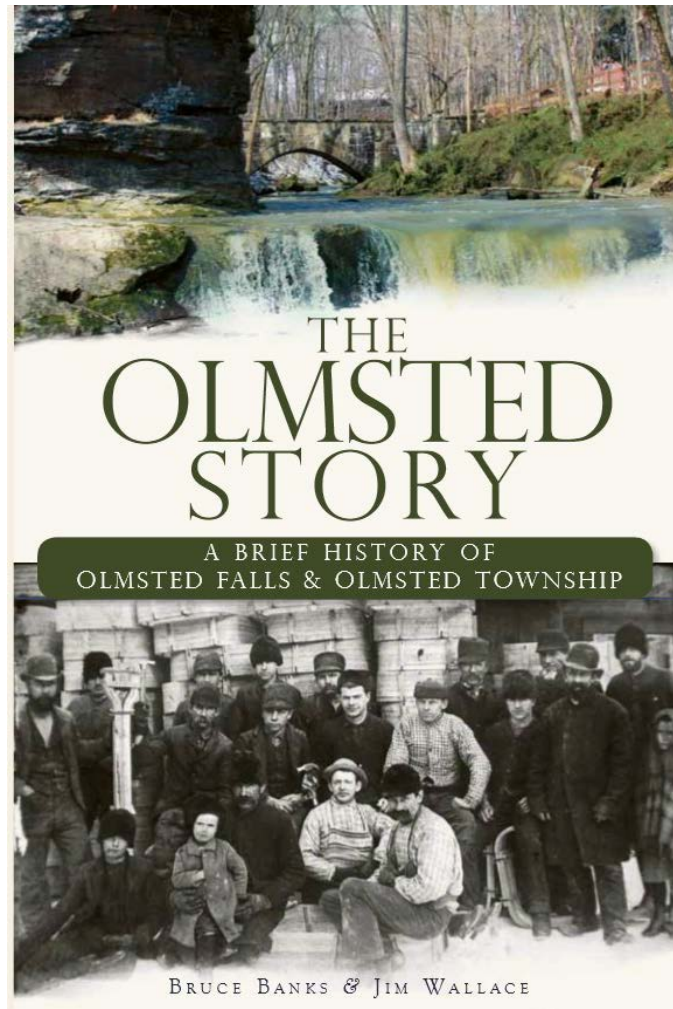
Your questions and comments about *Olmsted 200* are welcome. Perhaps there is something about Olmsted’s history that you would like to have pulled out of *Olmsted 200*’s extensive archives. Or perhaps you have information or photos about the community’s history that you would like to share.

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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