



Olmsted 200

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

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The Old Library Is Getting a New Look

The former longtime library in Olmsted Falls is booked for a lot of construction work over the next several months. The building, which began as the home Newton Loomis built after he moved to Olmsted in 1834, is being transformed into a restaurant. The working title is the Library Steakhouse.



This is what the Newton Loomis house looked like in the spring of 2010, when it still was being used as a public library. In February 2013, the Cuyahoga County Public Library moved its Olmsted Falls Branch into a new building at 8100 Mapleway Drive.



Joshua Lorek stands in the old library's doorway.

Joshua Lorek, who grew up nearby on Water Street, is working on the project with two partners, David Grace and Joe McDonough. In mid-April, they received approval for the project from city officials, including the Architectural Board of Review and the Planning and Zoning Commission. That's what they needed to finish work on plans with their architectural firm, the Arcus Group of Rocky River, such as figuring out exactly where things like plumbing, the electrical system and other mechanical items will go. Lorek said that allows renovation activities to proceed while Grace and McDonough work on making sure the restaurant will be ready to meet such requirements as having health department approval and a liquor license.

“We’re probably going to run into just some loose-end things toward the end, but we’re going to be aggressively working on those items in the next six months,” Lorek said.

However, he added that the restaurant could open for business as early as August or September if all goes well.

In recognition of its past, the building will have features that reflect its service over almost six decades as a public library, Lorek said, but its outside look will change.



This is the architect's rendition of what the Library Steakhouse is expected to look like. This illustration is courtesy of Joshua Lorek.



Olmsted's "Stonehenge" – sandstone blocks from an old barn were stored behind the building awaiting use around the planned patio for the Library Steakhouse.

allows for better handicap access, which made sense, and it doesn't compromise the integrity of the front of the building. It actually makes for a better look."

Plans call for installing a ground-level patio on the rear of the building. The perimeter of the patio will be lined with sandstone blocks recovered last summer from a barn that was torn down near Amherst.

"We're getting rid of Olmsted Falls' version of Stonehenge," Lorek said in joking reference to those stone blocks, which have been stored behind the building since he acquired them last year. To make sure he has enough blocks for the project, he said, he is in the process of acquiring more from another barn that is being taken down in the Wooster area. Some of those stones have a "nice red patina" that Lorek plans to incorporate into the Library Steakhouse project.

"So we're really trying to keep the integrity of the views for everybody involved like [the Olde Wine Cellar]," Lorek said. "We wanted to make sure we were being mindful to our neighbors that they wouldn't have views compromised with the covered bridge and things like that from their patios, as well."

The former library sits in a scenic spot near the Charles A. Harding Memorial Bridge, across Main Street from one entrance to David Fortier River Park and next to the parking lot in front of the Dan Waugh Nature Trail, which provides another entrance to the park.

Inside the stone walls, Lorek plans to use brick pavers from the 1800s for the floor of the patio.

"We're going to put an outdoor porch on the front," he said. "So we're going to try to have a similar feel to the wine store next door to it [the Olde Wine Cellar], so it will be more inviting. Right now, it's kind of nondescript. On the right-hand side of the building, our plans call for there to be some nice symmetry. We have to move some doorways to accommodate handicap access. We got some good feedback from the architectural review board in Olmsted Falls. They made one modification that

“We have some that I pulled out of Columbus that were in the Columbus train terminal at one point and then they got moved sometime, maybe 50 years ago, to a gentleman that built his driveway one evening at a time,” he said. “He reclaimed them from the Columbus train terminal, and then we ultimately reclaimed them from his house. That was probably about three years ago, so I still have some of those. And then we were fortunate to find the same exact pavers in Dayton. Those were just in the local streets of Dayton when they were tearing up their roads, so I was able to match [them] up. They’re Nelsonville Block, so they’re from the 1800s, the Athens area.”



This is another view of the building from March 2010, when it still was in use as a library.

Lorek said he previously used some of the pavers when he renovated Gunselman’s Tavern at 21490 Lorain Road in Fairview Park. He owns the tavern, which Grace and McDonough operate.

“We wanted something that looked old when we created the patio,” Lorek said in reference to Gunselman’s Tavern. “So if you go there now, it kind of looks again like it had been there for 70 years even though it’s brand new.”

Despite the outside changes planned for the former library building in Olmsted Falls, Lorek wants it to still seem like a library inside even though the Cuyahoga County Public Library left little behind when it moved out of the building and into the new Olmsted Falls Branch at 8100 Mapleway Drive in February 2013.

“Yeah, on the inside of the structure the bones are the same,” he said. “The way the county left it, it was kind of stripped out inside. None of the bookshelves were there. It was basically just down to carpet on the floors. [That] was what we inherited it as. So the county had basically, I think, donated it to the City of Olmsted Falls.... So from the inside perspective, there wasn’t a lot of library left. We’re going to bring in some library concepts, maybe some bookshelves – things like that – and make it look just like an older library. We’ve been going to antique places and trying to replicate some library items from years gone by. My wife and I have been working on that the past six months, trying to find ladders and bookshelves and things like that that we can incorporate throughout the building. But basically, none of that existed once we took the building over.”

In addition to using stone blocks from the former Amherst area barn, Lorek also is using old wooden flooring from that barn as flooring for the Library Steakhouse. (A photo of what the barn near Amherst looked like can be found in an earlier story about Lorek's project in Issue 52 of *Olmsted 200* from September 2017.)



These photos show some of the wooden planks and beams from the former barn from the Amherst area that are to be used as flooring for the Library Steakhouse. They have been stored inside the former library building as Joshua Lorek and his partners have sought city approval for their restaurant project and worked with their architectural firm on plans for the building.



This is not the first time the building has undergone significant renovations. When Loomis built it in the 1830s, it was located on the other side of the road and farther south, closer to the railroad tracks that were laid through town in 1853. That was about where the Falls Veterinary Clinic stands now at 8017 Columbia Road. Early in the 20th century,

the Olmsted Community Church acquired the house and moved it to the Main Street site where the current church stands. In 1955, in preparation for constructing the current

church building, the church donated the Loomis house to the community for use as a public library and moved it to its current location across the street at 7928 Main Street. In 1965, the library added a wing to the building on the north side. In 1989, the library made other changes in a renovation project.



This second-floor kitchen served the needs of people who worked there when the building was a library, but the building will get a new kitchen for the planned restaurant.

building to the left, and I think our changes are going to make it look more uniform, tying the two sides together. So it's really the fourth or fifth big remodel it's had. The history behind the building is it gets remodeled a lot."

The hardest part of planning for the current renovation was figuring out where to put the kitchen and finding a logical place for two restrooms on the main floor, he said.

"We started running out of space real quickly once you start laying out to have a full-service kitchen for a steakhouse," Lorek said. "So there's a lot of back and forth with the architects in terms of where the kitchen would lie, where the bathrooms would lie and ultimately how we get the public up and down from our outdoor patio. So that was several months of back and forth, just trying to accomplish that. And then once you come to an agreement, then you got to wait for the architects to redesign it and come up with a plan, and there's a lot of material selection and things like that. The architect actually did a really good job – did a very good first stab at it."

The biggest modification to the building will be in the middle. "We're going to be raising the ceiling in order to accommodate the stairwell going down to the outdoor patio itself," Lorek said. "That was the biggest reason for the structural change in the middle of the building. And it's going to give us the intended front look we want without compromising the look of the building. It's just going to make it flow better."

When it is finished, the restaurant will not only have furnishings reminiscent of its library past, but Lorek also wants it to make reference to another part of Olmsted history:

the Oxcart Library. That refers to about 500 books that Charles Hyde Olmsted donated to the community after residents of what had been called Lenox Township decided in 1829 to change its name to Olmsted after Aaron Olmsted, father of Charles. Aaron Olmsted had bid in a 1795 auction by the Connecticut Land Company for almost half of the original township land. The younger Olmsted sent his donated books covered in heavy blue paper from Connecticut by oxcart. Thus, the books became known as the Oxcart Library, although the organization set up to handle them was called the Olmsted Library Company. Several residents shared responsibility for keeping the books and lending them out to others. That was what is believed to be the first publicly owned circulating library in northeastern Ohio. About 150 of the original books still exist and are stored in a case at the North Olmsted library.

*The North
Olmsted library
stores the
remaining
Oxcart Library
books is a case
next to a mural
depicting what
it might have
looked like
when an oxcart
brought about
500 books to
Olmsted.*



“That’s one angle that’s kind of neat about the history of Olmsted, about the Oxcart [Library], that the name [of the community] was founded around a library,” Lorek said. “Keeping the library and the theme of the library is honoring the integrity of the building and the history of Olmsted Falls.”

In the process of planning for the Library Steakhouse, he has been consulting with Clint Williams, the man responsible for renovating many old buildings in downtown Olmsted Falls and creating Grand Pacific Junction.

“He and I talk daily now, so I think he knows that I’m excited about the future of Olmsted Falls,” Lorek said. “When we first started talking, he didn’t think he would be taking on any more projects, but I think I’ve convinced him to work with me on some future stuff that’s yet to be determined.”

Williams has influenced Lorek’s planning for the building’s renovation and helped guide him through the process of getting approval from the city. “I don’t think we’d have gotten things done as quickly without his guidance,” Lorek said.

Lorek wants the Library Steakhouse to fit into the mixture of businesses in downtown Olmsted Falls. In the past six months, he has visited most of the restaurants in that section of town to get a feel for how to fit in with them.



This staircase connected the second floor to the first floor in the former library.

“I think this will continue to be a complement and something different that is going to continue to make the area more of a destination,” Lorek said. “I think there’s a lot of people that tire of the chain restaurants that are maybe more prominent in some of the other cities. I think Olmsted Falls offers a unique experience for a lot of people that like just going to a local restaurant where it’s just a different feel. So I think it will complement. I think it will just enhance and continue to build on that what’s already been created.”

This is Lorek’s 15th renovation project. Others have included both residential and commercial buildings, such as Gunselman’s Tavern. He has done those projects while also working for 21 years in financial planning.

“My excitement for real estate is once you do a project it’s somewhat done,” Lorek said. “In financial planning, if you make somebody 10 percent one year, you got to make them 10 percent the next year. Your business is never done. I like both worlds. I like the financial planning. That’s my calling and my passion, but I like the real estate and seeing a sense of accomplishment of taking something from maybe not so ideal to more of an ideal scenario for a particular building or house or anything along those lines.”

His partners bring other experience to the project. David Grace has a long history in running restaurants, including one at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, the Hard Rock in Cleveland and the Bonefish Grill in Independence, as well as Gunselman’s Tavern. Joe McDonough is a musician who also got into the restaurant business after running a performance motorsports parts business.

At Gunselman’s Tavern, Lorek owns the building while Grace and McDonough run the tavern and its catering business. “I’ve been their landlord,” Lorek said. “They’re hitting me up this time to be part owners in the building, which I want them to be to make it more or a true partnership.”

Photos Show Different Views of and from Water Street Bridge

Several people wrote to express appreciation for last month's story about the three bridges that have carried Water Street over Rocky River in Olmsted Falls since 1864. But one of them, Mike Gibson, sent a thank you message that was accompanied by a few photos with different historical views of that location.

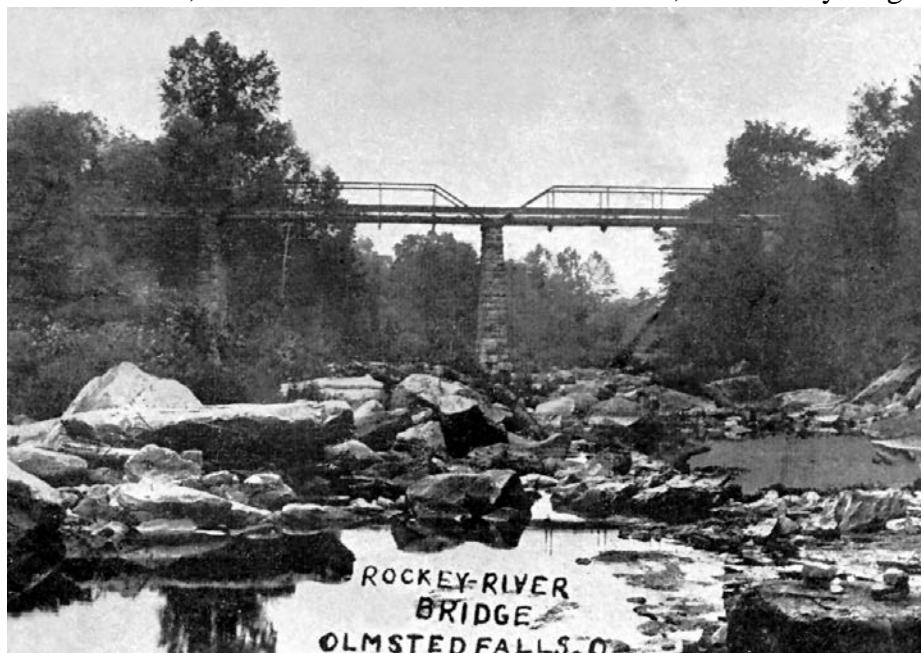
One is a photo taken of the original bridge sometime before the March 1913 flood knocked most of it down. It seems to have been taken farther from the bridge than one in last month's issue and shows more rocks in the river. It might be from an old postcard. It is one of a number of photos that Gibson's father, William, took of other people's photos.

"In 1963, Dad was active in the OF Historical Society and went around with his Nikon camera loaded with Panatomic X Kodak B&W film and copied photos in scrapbooks of old time residents," Gibson wrote. "I was 15 at the time, knew everything that there was to know, and paid NO attention to what my father was doing."

In 1964, Gibson's parents, Bill and Jean, moved the family from 8278 Mapleway Drive to Los Angeles. Since 2004, Mike Gibson has lived in the middle of Oregon, where

he now takes much more interest in the negatives he inherited from his father, as well as 35-millimeter slides and five Xerox paper boxes crammed with black-and-white prints he inherited from his maternal grandfather, Wilbur Staten, who lived at 7435 River Road in the house built in the mid-1800s by Philo and Delight Bradford. In recent months, Gibson has been sharing some of those photos with *Olmsted 200*.

Another photo he sent shows the view toward the river from the original Water Street Bridge. It shows what Rocky River looked like near the mouth of Plum Creek long before that area was made into a park (now known as David Fortier River Park) and before a dam was built to hold back the water to give Olmsted residents what many called



This photo of the original Water Street Bridge is from a postcard from the early 20th century,

their “swimming pool.” Gibson’s parents swam there in the mid-1940s. What remains of that dam now forms the falls that stretch across the river at that location.



This photo taken from the original Water Street Bridge shows what Rocky River looked like more than a century ago, before a dam was built and other changes were made to turn the area into a park, now David Fortier River Park.

Gibson also sent two color photos of the same view taken from the second bridge, which existed from 1913 to 1989. The first was taken by Wilbur Staten in 1957. Gibson took the second photo himself in July 1976. (A more recent photo of the same scene was included in last month’s story about the bridge.)

Wilbur Staten, Mike Gibson’s grandfather, took this photo of Rocky River and the park from the second Water Street Bridge in fall 1957.



“I couldn’t help but notice how little the view looking south from the bridge has changed over the years,” Gibson wrote.

As was noted in Issue 53 of *Olmsted 200* from last October, Gibson is the great-great-grandson of Joseph Gibson, who built the dam for Damp’s Mill that lasted from 1883 until 1913, when it was wiped out by the same flood that destroyed the Water Street Bridge.

“Joseph spent as much time in Canada as the USA,” Gibson wrote. “I know he went across Lake Erie to Grimsby, Ontario, four times, at least. LOTS of the old time Gibson boys were stone masons/stone cutters. Joseph and Margaret McGill Gibson had ten kids. I’m descended from son Alexander. The ‘famous’ Atkinson family of Olmsted is descended from Alex’s sister Josephine. Another sister married into the Scroggie family – the family who built the 1913-1989 Water Street Bridge.”



Mike Gibson took this photo from the second Water Street Bridge in July 1976. The waterfalls that stretches across Rocky River is what is left of a dam built in the early half of the 20th century to form a pool of water for swimming. In fact, some old photos of the site were labeled as the “swimming pool” for Olmsted Falls.

Gibson knew the Atkinsons when he lived in Olmsted Falls and recalled playing on the foundation of Damp’s Mill. He added, “I was a friend and classmate of David Fortier and it still seems funny to call the Plum Creek/Rocky River area Fortier Park.”

Olmsted Had Greenhouses and Apiaries Many Decades Ago

Olmsted became a hot spot in the 20th century for greenhouses, some of which still operate today, but a newspaper item from 130 years ago this month shows that industry flowered in the community well before that: “Mr. C. Theo. Schueren’s greenhouses and hot beds are filled with beautiful flowers and plants which seem to have stood the long winter nicely. ‘Tis worth your while to inspect them.” That was from the *Berea Advertiser* from May 4, 1888. Theodore Schueren operated greenhouses and a nursery along Lewis Road just north of the current border between Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township during the 1880s and early 1890s until he moved to Rockport Township, which later became Rocky River, Lakewood, Fairview Park and part of the western end of Cleveland.

Likewise, another *Advertiser* item from the Butternut Ridge correspondent on May 18, 1888, demonstrates that Olmsted had an apiary long before the beekeepers who operate Grand Pacific Junction’s Emerald Winds Honey Shoppe – “Mr. Isaac Jennings, of the ‘Dutch road,’ looks well after the bee interest of Olmsted his apiary being the largest in ‘town.’ Mr. Jennings must have formed a league with the bees for he handles them with impunity, while if your correspondent even dares to look at them he gets a sting. Mr. Jennings says last year was one of the worst for bees he has ever known, over one-third of the swarms having died from starvation.” The Dutch Road was the name used then for what now is Bagley Road west of the Olmsted Falls municipal border.

Within the village, it was called Hamlin Street. East of the village, it was called Irish Road. They all became Bagley Road in the 20th century.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include a story about two long-gone Olmsted Township structures that live on in the memories of many current and former Olmsted residents – Adler’s Swim Club and the Corral. It also will include a story about a tornado 65 years ago that might have touched part of Olmsted.

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, West Virginia, Florida, 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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