



Olmsted 200

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

Issue 48

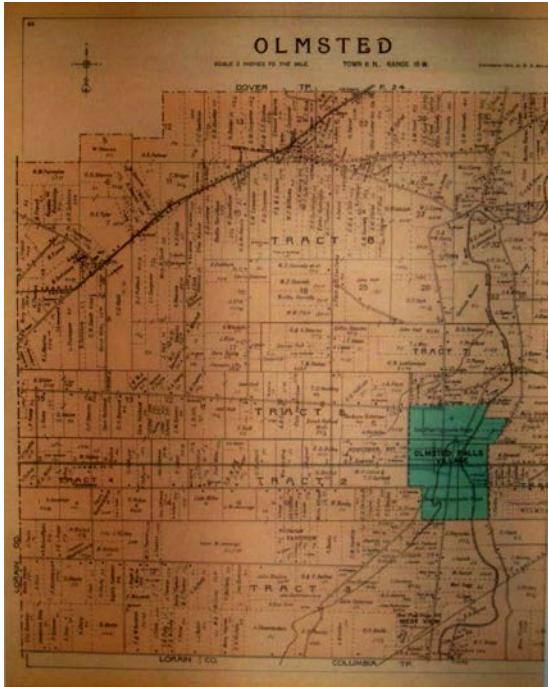
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Olmsted Falls Doubled Early in Its History as a Village

For much of its existence from the mid-19th century until the mid-20th century, Olmsted Falls was a very tiny village. In early maps, it looked like a small island within the sea of Olmsted Township. But it started out even smaller. Then, 160 years ago this year – 1857 – the village doubled in size.



Even a half-century after Olmsted Falls became a village, this 1908 map shows it still was tiny within Olmsted Township.

When residents voted on April 7, 1856, to incorporate Olmsted Falls as a village, the total number of voters was 26. Of course, only adult men voted in those days, so the population of the village was at least two or three times as big when women and children were counted. Still, that was a smaller number of people than the residents who live along just a few streets of one of today's housing developments in either Olmsted Falls or Olmsted Township.

According to Walter Holzworth in his 1966 history of Olmsted, the original village extended a bit south of Bagley Road, which then was called Hamlin Street, but only as far north as the current Elm Street. Also, Mill Street, Orchard Street and Columbia Road (then Columbia Street) were

within the boundaries of Olmsted Falls. Lorain County lawyer E.S. Hamlin, who also served in the state legislature, laid out most of the village.

However, directly north of Olmsted Falls was another hamlet called Plum Creek, which was unincorporated. It included the current Village Green, as well as the section of the current

David Fortier River

Park where Plum Creek flows into Rocky River. The hamlet of Plum Creek included Water Street to just west of what now is Columbia Road. The edge of town then went



The hamlet of Plum Creek included this section of the current David Fortier River Park where Plum Creek flows into Rocky River.



The site of the current Village Green also was in Plum Creek before it became part of Olmsted Falls.

north to what now is Cook Road but then was called Elyria Street. From there, it went east to the river. The hamlet included River Street, which now is River Road. Many of the lots in Plum Creek were 66 feet wide. Holzworth wrote that it's not clear why they were that width.

In the early 1850s, before Olmsted Falls incorporated as a village, several citizens from both Olmsted Falls and Plum Creek signed a petition to have the town plats for both hamlets vacated "with the idea of forming one

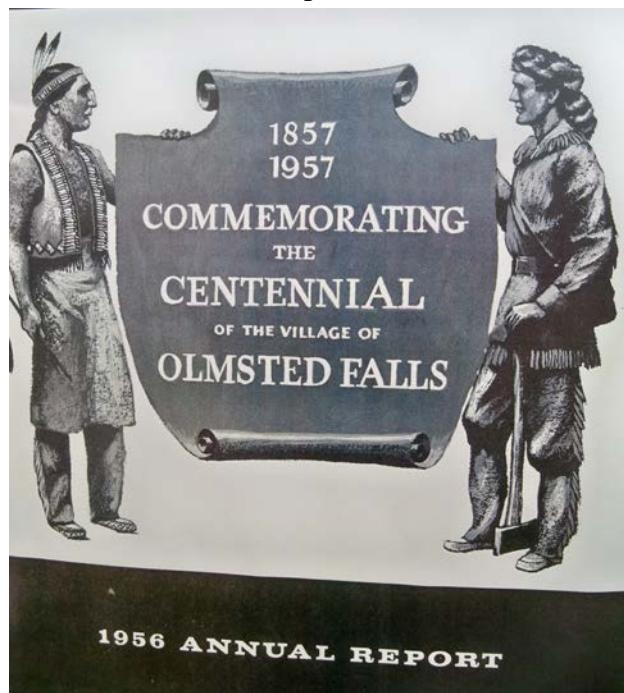
village," Holzworth wrote. Eleven citizens, including at least one woman, from Olmsted Falls signed the petition. From Plum Creek, 13 residents signed it.

Nothing came of that petition, but the idea of combining the two little towns did not die. In 1857, one year after Olmsted Falls became a village, it annexed Plum Creek. According to Holzworth, the fact that Olmsted Falls "had the advantage of a railroad station" was a major reason why the residents of Plum Creek decided to let their hamlet be annexed to the village. The Toledo, Norwalk and Cleveland Railroad had built its east-west tracks through Olmsted Falls, as well as Olmsted Township, in 1853.

In addition to the railroad, another advantage Olmsted Falls had over Plum Creek was a post office. It was the second one that had been established in Olmsted Township. The first one was set up in 1829 at the home of Elias Frost in the northeastern part of the township, a section that became part of North Olmsted 80 years later. When the second post office was established in 1843, it was not for Olmsted Falls but for Norris Falls. That did not last long. In 1845, the name of the post office was changed to Olmsted and the little town there became Olmsted Falls.

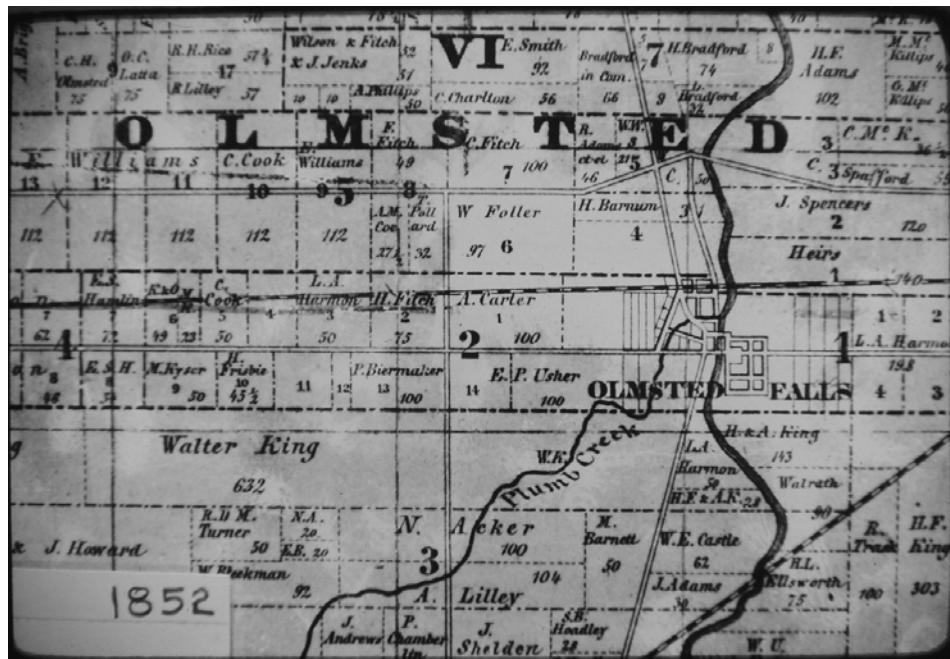
Unfortunately, some people in the 20th century seemed to confuse the year Olmsted Falls annexed Plum Creek with the year the village was incorporated. They referred to 1857, rather than 1856, as the beginning of the Village of Olmsted Falls. One consequence was that the village celebrated its centennial in 1957, which was one year late.

The annexation of Plum Creek was not the only time Olmsted Falls essentially doubled in size. It also happened more than a century later with the merger of the Village of Olmsted Falls and the Village of West View. Technically, West View annexed Olmsted Falls, but it took the Olmsted Falls name, so the effect was that community known as Olmsted Falls roughly doubled in size and population. Before they joined, Olmsted Falls had about 2,400 residents in 1.52 square miles, and West View had about 2,500 residents in 1.95 square miles. The vote for the merger occurred on May 5, 1970, and the change took effect at the beginning of 1971. That gave the municipality enough residents to become a city, which occurred in 1972. Thus, Olmsted Falls doubled in size



This picture from the front of the 1956 annual report for Olmsted Falls shows that the village marked its centennial one year late in 1957, the 100th anniversary of the annexation of Plum Creek rather than that of the incorporation of the village.

both a year after it became a village in the 1850s and in the year before it ceased being a village in the 1970s.



This 1852 map shows Olmsted Falls as part of Olmsted Township a few years before the village was incorporated. However, it fails to label Plum Creek on the northern end of Olmsted Falls.

This 1874 map shows Olmsted Falls as it was 17 years after the village annexed the hamlet of Plum Creek. When it was a separate hamlet, Plum Creek covered the area on the top part of the map, roughly down to just past where Plum Creek flows easterly into Rocky River rather than northerly, as it does below that. Thus, the community named for Plum Creek included only a small portion of the creek itself.



Photos Show Big House When It Was the TeGrotenhuis House

The house at 25390 Nobottom Road at the corner of Columbia Road is perhaps the oldest house still used as a residence in either Olmsted Township or Olmsted Falls with one part of the house dating back to 1820. Of course, no photos of the house exist from its early days almost two centuries ago, but a few old photos from a former resident provide a glimpse of what it was like 70 years ago.

The photos come from the collection of *Olmsted 200* reader Lynn (TeGrotenhuis) Rice, who lived there as a child. In addition to being one of the oldest residences in Olmsted, the house also is one of the largest. Thus, it seemed fitting that the house was owned for several decades by members of a family named TeGrotenhuis, which means “of the big house” in Dutch.



This photo shows the front of the house in the late 1940s. The man in front of the house is Lynn Rice's grandfather, Theodore Herman TeGrotenhuis. Her brother, Neil, is at the front door. Her mother, Marjorie TeGrotenhuis, is on the right side of the picture.

The oldest part was constructed of hand hewn beach [sic] logs or beams and was said to have been built in about 1820 by John and Maria Hoadley Adams.”

Rice believes her photos are from about 1947, when her family moved into the house. Until she was three years old, her family lived in the house next to the old Grange Hall (now home to Taqueria Junction, the Mexican restaurant at Grand Pacific Junction).

“We then exchanged houses for a sum of money with our grandparents who were living at the Nobottom house,” Rice wrote. “All I remember is that everything was so gray and old and had a lot of cobwebs.”

“One of the most imposing old homes in Olmsted Township stands at the northeast corner of Nobottom and Columbia Roads,” Walter Holzworth wrote in his 1966 history of Olmsted. “A part of the house was one of the first frame houses built in the Olmsted Falls area. Additions and alterations over the years and its architectural style, with its location on top of a knoll, causes it to stand out as an old landmark.



This house at 8162 Columbia Road is where Lynn (TeGrotenhuis) Rice and her family lived until she was three years old and they swapped houses with her grandparents. After that, she grew up in the big house at the northeastern corner of Nobottom Road and Columbia Road.

The big house, which is owned by Bill and Marty Richner now, has been featured a few times in *Olmsted 200* as the Richners have worked steadily to remodel it. (See Issue 4 from September 2013, Issue 29 from October 2015 and Issue 43 from December 2016.) Rice's photos provide the opportunity to see what it looked like well before the Richners acquired it in 2009.

When the house was in the hands of the TeGrotenhuis family and previous owners, its address was on Columbia Road because the house originally had its front facing toward Columbia Road. It once had a driveway that came off of Columbia Road. But the Richners changed the address to Nobottom Road because, long before they acquired the house, the driveway to the house was off of Nobottom and its front clearly faced that road.



This photo from August 2013 shows the house a few years after the Richners acquired it.

This photo from August 2015 shows the front of the house from a different angle. Notice that the shutters shown in the photo from the 1940s had been removed. During the years the Richners have owned it, they have made many renovations inside and outside the house.



Rice said her father, Theodore Alcott TeGrotenhuis, who died in 2003, also spent much time and effort remodeling the house. “Most of the work he did himself so it took many years,” she wrote. “My dad did all the bathrooms and tiling. The current kitchen was not the original kitchen. The original kitchen was on the opposite side of where the current kitchen is. The old kitchen was entered from the concrete steps. I remember a shed and a windmill. We also had a coal furnace until my father changed it. My father

raised the roof on the second story, which was on the front of the house, which is over the living room area. My dad did redo all the plumbing in the whole house, and he put in baseboard hot water heating. He did all the tiling and [created] the new kitchen.”

Further, Rice added, “My brother [Neil] also said that my father put in the whole basement. There was only a crawl space under the house – no basement. My brother said my father had a conveyor belt rigged up to get the dirt out that he dug, and my brother helped him do that.”

Holzworth also mentioned Theodore A. TeGrotenhuis’s extensive work on the house: “He spared neither money or his time and energy in remodeling and refurbishing the large house to make the most elaborate home in Olmsted Falls. The beauty and charm of its



This photo from December 2015 shows one of the stairways.

[huge] fireplace, its open bannister stairways and the windows that extended from floor to ceiling were retained. By installing all of the modern conveniences and adding recreation rooms, he transformed it into the most livable of modern homes.”

Rice said her father tore down the shed and the windmill (although it would seem that a windmill would be fitting for a family of Dutch heritage). In addition to the windmill and the shed, she recalled an outhouse was located near the shed. She had hoped to find photos that showed a widow’s walk around the three levels of the house but was unable to locate them.

Her grandfather, Theodore Herman TeGrotenhuis, came from Holland at age three with his family in 1881. Her grandfather bought the house in 1935, according to Holzworth, who wrote that the house had several sets of owners after John and Maria Adams and before the TeGrotenhuis family acquired it. Those owners included: Arthur and Roxanne Whitney Gray, Arthur and Emma Loomis Gray, Joseph Bartlett, and Mrs. William E. Bunts. During the Bunts years, the house received “extensive additions,” Holzworth said. Ownership of the house then went to Mrs. John Bunts Stambaugh, the wife of a Youngstown steel manufacturer, who used the house as a summer home.



This is the oldest part of the house, the section built in 1820 and renovated many times since then. Notice the massive stone hearth and mantle that impressed a visitor to the house in 1904 for providing an impression of enduring beauty and solidness.

“In September 1904, Miss Harriet Ingersoll of Berea wrote about a delightful day she spent in Olmsted at the summer home of Mrs. John Stambaugh,” Holzworth wrote. “She was impressed with the spacious grounds and its surroundings, but more so by the massive fireplace of stone from its foundation to the apex. The broad stone hearth and mantle gave the impression of enduring beauty and solidness.”

Later, Mrs. Caroline Stambaugh Snyder (apparently the daughter of Mrs. Stambaugh) owned the house until it was sold to the TeGrotenhuis family, according to Holzworth.

This 1940s photo from Lynn Rice shows the side of the house facing the driveway. Lynn Rice is not sure who is shown in the picture.



This is a more recent photo from August 2015 of the house's east side, which faces the driveway. Notice the door installed by the Richners and Bill Richner walking away from it.

By the way, even though members of the TeGrotenhuis family lived in Olmsted from late in the 19th century up until the 21st century, there has been some confusion over how to pronounce the family's name. Rice said the family pronounces it like this: tee-GROH-ten-hys. In other words, it rhymes with her current last name, Rice.



This photo from the 1940s shows the back of the house and the old shed. Lynn Rice believes she is the little girl in the center. However, she doesn't recognize the woman or the dog. Her father tore down the shed, as well as a windmill that stood nearby. At the time of the photo, many years of renovations were ahead for Rice's father.

Early Settler's House Will Become a Restaurant

One of the oldest buildings in Olmsted Falls is set to be put to a new use soon as a restaurant.



This is how the Newton Loomis house looked on February 23, 2013, the day it was replaced as a library by a new building on Mapleway Drive.

Many people still think of the building at 7850 Main Street as the old library, although it began as the house Newton Loomis built for himself in 1834, shortly after he arrived in the community. At that time, Olmsted Falls was more than two decades away from incorporating as a village, and it was located in what then was called Lenox Township.

From the mid-1950s until February 2013, the building served as the public library for Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township. But since the Cuyahoga County Public Library moved its Olmsted Falls branch into a new building on

Mapleway Drive, the old Loomis house has been empty for more than four years. According to Cuyahoga County property records, the City of Olmsted Falls acquired the building from the county library system in April 2013.

Recently, the city entered into an agreement to sell the building. The reported price was \$225,000 in the sale to the owners of Gunselman's Tavern in Fairview Park. The new owners reportedly plan to spend about \$500,000 turning the building into a restaurant and bar. That will expand the restaurant district of Olmsted Falls, which already expanded to Main Street last year, when the Olde Wine Cellar moved north to the former Jenkins Senior Center and began selling food in addition to wine. The new restaurant in the former library will be next door to it.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include a story about how Olmsted Township became “Splitsville” before it even became Olmsted.

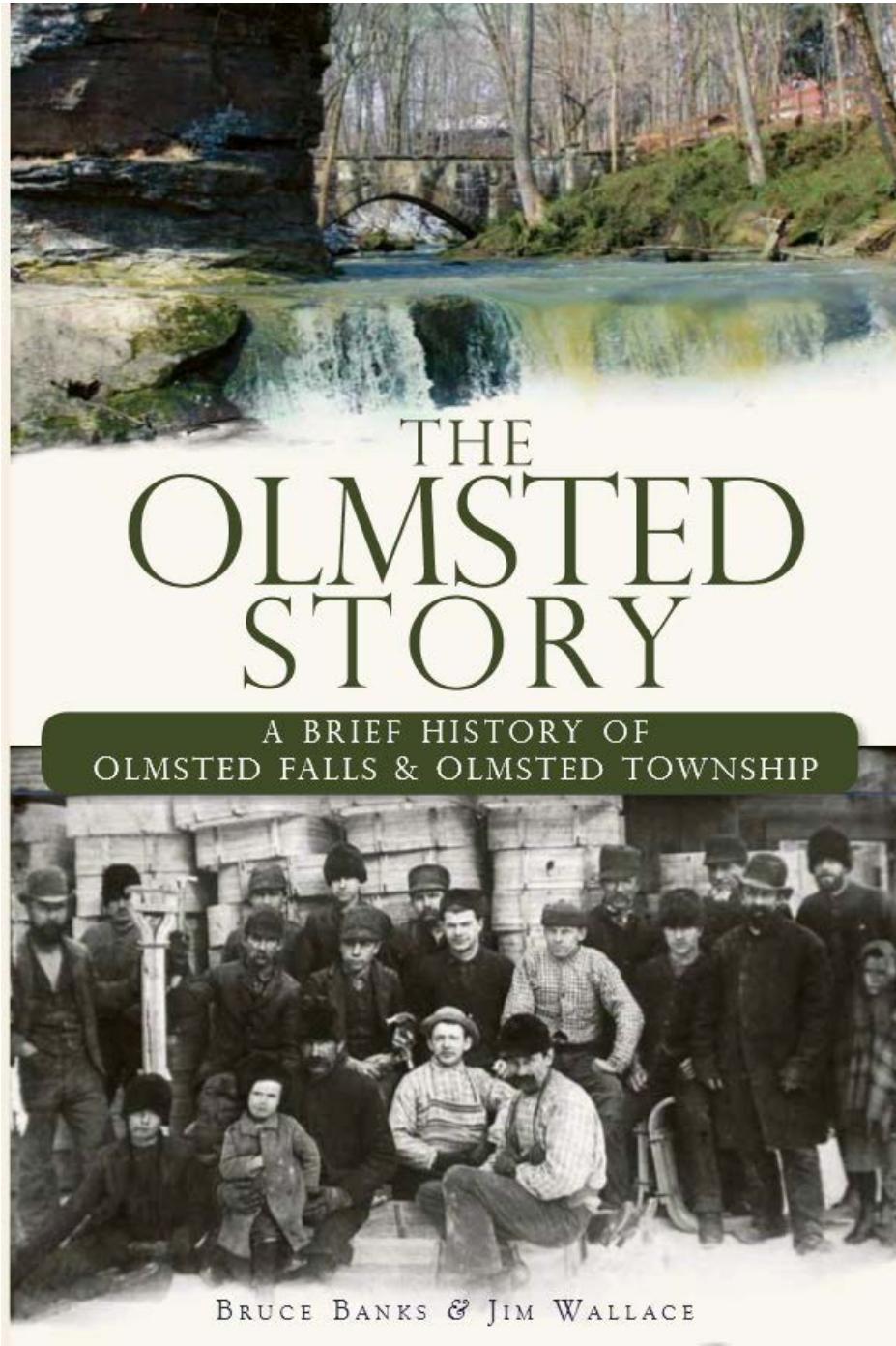
Some of the best stories in *Olmsted 200* have come from contributions of photos and information from readers. If you have photos or information about some part of the history of Olmsted Falls or Olmsted Township, please share them at: wallacestar@hotmail.com. Likewise, questions, comments and story suggestions are welcomed at that address.

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, Colorado, Arizona, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, West Virginia, Florida, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Maine, as well as overseas in the Netherlands, Germany and Japan.

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.

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 Berea Historical Society’s Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.



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