



Olmsted 200

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

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Why Did Peltz and Simmerer Split?

This is the fourth part of a series about the Peltz and Simmerer families who were prominent in Olmsted Falls for decades during the 19th and 20th centuries. It includes photos that have not been seen around Olmsted for perhaps almost a century.

Certain names always go together in American commerce – such as Proctor & Gamble, Ben & Jerry's and Black & Decker. The names that always went together in Olmsted Falls in the late 1800s and early 1900s were Peltz & Simmerer – until they didn't.

Joseph Peltz and Philip Simmerer's store was the place to go for anyone wanting drugs or hardware or a sundry of other things. They were first brothers-in-law because of Peltz's marriage to Simmerer's sister, Anna. Then, Peltz hired Simmerer to work in his drugstore. Soon, they became business partners and



Beginning in 1893, the Peltz & Simmerer store offered plenty for customers, but the partners split 20 years later.

moved their business into the former hotel on the corner of Mill Street and Columbia Street (now Columbia Road). That happened in 1893, but 20 years later, the partnership broke up. Peltz re-established his drugstore across the street and left Simmerer with the hardware store, which lasted under the direction of three of Simmerer's sons until 1971.

Doug Peltz, the great-great-grandson of Joseph Peltz and Anna Simmerer, has been trying for many months to find out what happened to break up the partnership. He has been searching for other Peltz and Simmerer descendants in hopes of finding someone with answers to that and other questions about the family, as well as photos and other information. A few weeks ago, he contacted one of Philip Simmerer's granddaughters, Marcia Simmerer Smith, who was in her 70s, and got closer to finding out what he wanted to know. That was shortly before Smith died of a heart attack on March 18.



Philip Simmerer (left) and Joseph Peltz worked closely together for 20 years. This photo is from about 1900. Notice in this photo and the next one that the middle finger on Simmerer's right hand always was extended. Marilyn Simmerer Martell said that was because a barrel had rolled on it and crushed it when he was young.

“I think we can say with confidence now,” Peltz wrote, “the reason Joseph sold his shares in the store in 1913, and re-opened his drug store across the street, is because there must have been some kind of falling out between the brothers-in-law. We do not know what that disagreement was. We have wondered if it might have had anything to do

“As a little girl she had fond memories of time spent at her Grandpa Philip's house in Olmsted Falls,” Doug Peltz wrote. She also recognized the Peltz name.

“The Peltz house was right next to my Grandpa's house,” she told him. “I remember that.”

The Peltzes no longer were living in the house by the time Marcia came around, Doug Peltz wrote, but she knew that Joseph *had* lived in it.

As he spoke with her, she asked, “Wasn't there some kind of spat between Joseph and Philip?”

Doug Peltz wrote, “That's the second time I've heard that now.” Marcia's cousin, Marilyn Simmerer Martell, said the same thing to him months ago. Neither of them knows any details, but both made such comments independent of each other, he wrote.

with the death of Anna Simmerer. But I think this is unlikely; she died in 1906. Joseph left the store in 1913. It's more likely that 1913 reflects the date of any disagreement or falling out."

According to a genealogy of the Simmerer family prepared in 1980 by Carleton and Esther Simmerer (son and daughter-in-law of Philip Simmerer), the split in the Peltz and Simmerer partnership occurred in 1912 rather than 1913. They wrote, "In 1912, he [Philip Simmerer] dissolved the partnership with Mr. Peltz, who then took the drugs and moved back across the street into the building where he was first located. This building was later destroyed by fire." But the exact year might matter little and be hard to pinpoint because the breakup of a 20-year partnership likely occurred over a period of weeks or months. It might have begun in 1912 and become final in 1913.

"That said, things couldn't have deteriorated too badly between the two families," Doug Peltz wrote. "We know that Julius & Verna [son and daughter of Joseph and Anna Peltz] were attending Simmerer Family Reunions, thanks to the reunion minutes sent to us. It does not seem that they had an enmity with their Simmerer uncle or cousins."

Philip Simmerer and his brother George started the Simmerer family reunions beginning in 1917, according to the 1980 genealogy report.

"Finally, among Joseph's possessions was a photograph of Philip and two of his sons taken in the 1920s, and presumably sent to Joseph in California," Doug Peltz wrote. "So perhaps the two brothers-in-law, Philip and Joseph, had patched things up."

Genealogy contains many facts about Simmerer.

The Simmerer genealogy also contains other information that fills in details about Philip Simmerer's life. He was born on August 9, 1865, to George and Sophia Simmerer in a log cabin on a farm along what now is Brook Park Road in Brook Park. He attended a German school on Smith Road. (His father had emigrated from Bavaria in

This section of a photo from about 1900 shows Philip Simmerer in front of his store.

Germany.)

"Philip worked for his Father on the farm until he was twenty-three years of age," according to the genealogy. "Occasionally his brother-in-law, Joseph Peltz, the druggist in Olmsted Falls, would need an extra clerk, and he would send word to the farm for Philip to come and help him. Philip walked the ten miles to the store."



On September 25, 1888, Philip married Margaret Bauer, who grew up nearby along what now is Brook Park Road. When he was nine and she was five, she got his attention by pelting him with snowballs as he walked by with his older brother. In 1884, he walked her home from a school play, which “marked the beginning of their courtship.” They became engaged in December 1887.

“After their wedding, Philip and Margaret went to Cleveland, where Philip hoped to find some other type of work,” Carleton and Esther Simmerer wrote. “He did not want to be a farmer, and he had applied for a job with the Big Four Railroad [the railroad that then ran through the West View section of Olmsted Township]. This job never materialized, and within a month, they moved to Olmsted Falls when he learned he could have a job with Mr. Peltz. Both his Father and his Father-in-law, Mike Bauer, said: ‘You will never make a living – stick to farming or railroading.’”

The history of Olmsted Falls likely would have been much different if Philip Simmerer had received the railroad job he was hoping for and not partnered with Joseph Peltz.

According to the genealogy, Philip and Margaret initially rented a three-room house on what now is Columbia Road in Olmsted Falls. But soon, they moved to the house at 7486 River Road, where Joseph Peltz grew up. [For more on that house, see the first story in this series from Issue 32 of *Olmsted 200* from January.] Philip rode a velocipede, one of the big-wheeled bicycles of the time, to and from the store.

“Philip suggested to Mr. Peltz that they should add hardware to the drug store’s offerings, which they did, with Philip handling the hardware sales,” the genealogy report said, adding that they became partners in November 1888. Although the report said it was two years later that “their business increased to such an extent that they bought the [former] Grand Pacific Hotel,” they actually bought it in 1892 and opened at the new location in 1893. [For more on that, see Issue 23 of *Olmsted 200* from April 2015.]

“Philip suggested to Mr. Peltz that they should add hardware to the drug store’s offerings, which they did, with Philip handling the hardware sales.” – Simmerer family genealogy

“Even though there were some who laughed, they added to their stock of drugs and general staples such items as scythes, mowers, farm tools, horse collars, and harnesses,” Carleton and Esther Simmerer wrote.

The genealogy report also notes that Philip Simmerer bought an interest in a coal business, which became known as Stearns & Simmerer, in 1898 and then bought out Stearns in 1900. He sold the coal business in 1913 and brought two of his sons, Clarence and Oscar, into the hardware business with him that year. Of course, that would have

been right after his split with Peltz. Later, another son, Russell, also joined the business, which went by the name P. Simmerer & Sons until 1945, when it became P. Simmerer's Sons.

“Philip retired at the age of sixty, and they [he and Margaret] went to California for the winter, but idleness was not for him,” Carleton and Esther Simmerer wrote.

“He returned to his business, and remained active in it for another thirty years. Even at the age of ninety-five, he went into the store daily, trying to be helpful to his three

sons, and in addition, he helped in the care of Margaret, who sat in a wheel chair for the last five years of her life, because of arthritis. During this time, it was found that Philip has a skin cancer which started at the top of his ear lobe. Even with surgery at Southwest Community Hospital in Berea, where the lobe was cut away, and later with more surgery at the Cleveland Clinic, the cancer spread. The last four months of his life were spent at the Shangri-La Nursing Home [in Valley City].”



This postcard sent to Joseph Peltz in California shows Philip Simmerer with two of his sons in their store in Olmsted Falls. It is dated November 15, 1929.

“A man works hard for ninety years to get a reputation, and then he has to work hard to keep it. I did not think much of being ninety years old, but I guess it is something kind of scarce. As far as I know, no one in our family lived to be ninety.” – Philip Simmerer

On August 10, 1955, the day after his 90th birthday, Philip told his daughter-in-law, Esther, “A man works hard for ninety years to get a reputation, and then he has to work hard to keep it. I did not think much of being ninety years old, but I guess it is something kind of scarce. As far as I know, no one in our family lived to be ninety.”

Margaret Simmerer died in Southwest Community Hospital on May 10, 1963, when she was 96 years old. If

she had lived another four and a half months, she could have celebrated her 75th wedding anniversary with Philip. He died at the age of 99 on November 4, 1964.

One other interesting item in the Simmerer genealogy is that Philip had one of the first automobiles in Olmsted Falls. It was a 1909 Ford five-passenger touring car with a folding top and curtains in case of rain. It had acetylene lights. His last car was a 1927 Willys-Knight, which he gave to his grandson, John Simmerer, in 1950. [For more on Willys-Knight cars and their connection to Olmsted Falls, see Issue 31 of *Olmsted 200* from December 2015.]

The next part of this series will explore what happened to the sons and daughters of Joseph Peltz and Philip Simmerer.

Before Moosehead, Building Was Named for Former Mayor

This is the latest in a series of stories about the history of buildings at Grand Pacific Junction. The series began in Issue 21 in February 2015.

If developer Clint Williams had stuck to his original plan, the building that now houses the restaurant known as the Moosehead Hoof & Ladder at 7989 Columbia Road never would have become part of Grand Pacific Junction.

“Well, I vowed I would never cross the street,” Williams said. But that was before the building came up for sale. Even then, he wasn’t sure he wanted it. Eventually though, he couldn’t resist it.

Although the building is decades younger than most of the others at Grand Pacific Junction, it has an interesting history. It was built at the end of the Great Depression, shortly before the United States entered World War II, to be the Village Hall for Olmsted Falls. The new building replaced an old town hall built in 1883 at the same site.

Actually, the older building was more of a township hall, because the Olmsted Township trustees had it built for \$5,510. They had rejected an architect’s design for a building they were afraid would cost about \$8,000 and went for something cheaper. It turned out to be too cheap because, before



This town hall built by Olmsted Township lasted almost six decades before the current building replaced it.

1883 ended, the building had drainage problems that had to be fixed. In 1884, the trustees had to have an iron rod installed in the middle of the building to prevent the sides from bowing outward. They also had problems with the chimney.

Despite those problems, the building served as the home of both the township government and the village government for almost six decades. In some years, it hosted graduation ceremonies for the small classes coming out of the local school. But by the late 1930s, the old town hall had reached the end of its useful life.

“They demolished it,” Charles Bonsey said in a 1982 interview. He had served on Olmsted Falls Village Council when the building came down. By that time, the township and village no longer shared it.

Although the township had retained ownership of the town hall for many years, Bonsey recalled that the law was changed apparently in the 1930s. “A village, being incorporated, had the right by law to seize any structure that was within their boundaries,” he said. “Well, it caused a lot of [bad] feeling among township people.”

The township responded by building a new Township Hall at the corner of Fitch Road and Cook Road in 1939. The village responded by deciding to replace the old building with something better.



The Village Hall was 22 years old when this photo was taken in 1962. Photo courtesy of Carolyn Petlowany.

Depression days, Olmsted Falls arranged to get help from one of the best known New Deal agencies, the WPA – the Works Progress Administration, renamed in 1939 as the Works Projects Administration – to put up the new building.

Workers didn’t demolish the old building but dismantled it. “It had a good slate roof on it, and they salvaged all the roof slates, all of the bricks and all of the lumber that

“We needed a new fire station,” Bonsey said. The village had been using the old jailhouse to hold its firetruck and equipment. The jailhouse was located on the site where the Olmsted Community Church is now. The jailhouse later was moved to Mill Street, near where it is now, housing Jorgensen’s Apiary at Grand Pacific Junction.

The village decided to replace the old town hall with a new building that could serve as a firehouse, police station, and home to the council and other village officers. In those late

could be salvaged – [as well as] the floors,” Bonsey said. They took stones out of the old quarry (now David Fortier River Park) and cut them for the sides of the new building, he said.

“It was my headache to see that that building was completed,” Bonsey said because he became mayor in 1940. “Well, the government hadn’t put out enough money to build. The walls were up with no roof on, and WPA pulled out.

Well, it just happened that I was working for the county, and there was another fellow working with me that knew somebody that had some connection with the WPA business. I told him about our town hall only being half built. So he said, ‘Come with me.’ We went up to see this fellow. We needed \$11,000 more than we got. I think we only got \$30,000 for that building. We talked to this man, and he got the \$11,000 that was needed to finish that building, and it was finished in 1940.”

The building served as Village Hall for three decades. After Olmsted Falls and West View merged in 1971, the new village – which became a city in 1972 – had two village halls. The 1940 building became the North Hall. The former West View Village Hall, which had been built in 1880 as a school, became the South Hall. In 1983, the city renamed North Hall the Bonsey Building in honor of the former mayor who ensured that it was completed in 1940.

In the late 1990s, the city government acquired the former school building that dated back to 1916 at the corner of Bagley Road and Mapleway Drive and turned it into City Hall, including a police station. That left the city with little use for the Bonsey Building in the 21st century.

“The city was going to sell it,” Williams said. “They wanted it put up for bid, a minimum bid of \$325,000 – about \$300,000 it was. Nobody bid on it. It was way too much.”

Williams said he was appalled at the condition of the building when he inspected it. “The god-blessed light bulbs are hanging out of the sockets, and the two wires are hanging down on a fixture,” he said. “I took pictures of this stuff. This is how the city is living, and then they’re making everybody do their stuff [a reference to enforcement of



The Bonsey Building now is home to the Moosehead Hoof & Ladder restaurant.

building ordinances]. Then the next year, they put it up for \$225,000. So now, I'm hot. I'm ready to buy now because the wheels are just turning like crazy."

The building has "a super location," Williams said, considering that it has a city parking lot next to it and the back of it overlooks Rocky River.

"The bid come up on it, and a gentleman, which I've gotten to know very well now, was talking about doing an antique firehouse memorabilia-type place," he said. "And the city really didn't want it because there was no money. They're not getting tax from people and employees. They're not getting any tax money out of it. So I thought and thought. I said, 'I don't want to lose this. I'm really into this. I like it. I want to do it and everything.' So I bid \$232,505 – odd number, \$7,500 more than what they're asking – because he's talking bidding. Now, somebody could bid \$225,900. I said, 'I'm not going to take no chances.' So I left \$7,500 on the table. He didn't bid. That's OK. I got the building."



The back of the building now includes a 780-square-foot patio added by Clint Williams that allows diners to look over Rocky River.

Columbia Road). After Williams acquired the Bonsey Building, they looked at it, and the negotiations went smoothly.

"Jeff was one super guy," Williams said. "In 20 minutes, we're saying who's going to do what. Who's going to do this? Who's going to do that? Wrote it down on a piece of paper. It's over. He did the same things he was supposed to do. I did everything I was supposed to do – not one wrong word, not one question. If you'd have given it to a blessed attorney – my son's an attorney – they'd have been months just deciding who's doing what."

Before the Bonsey Building was auctioned, Williams already had been talking to Geoff George, owner of the Moosehead Saloon in Westlake, about possibly setting up a new restaurant at Grand Pacific Junction. Initially, George and his wife had looked at space now occupied by Matteo's Casual Italian Restaurant in the Depositors Building (but not the section that fronts on

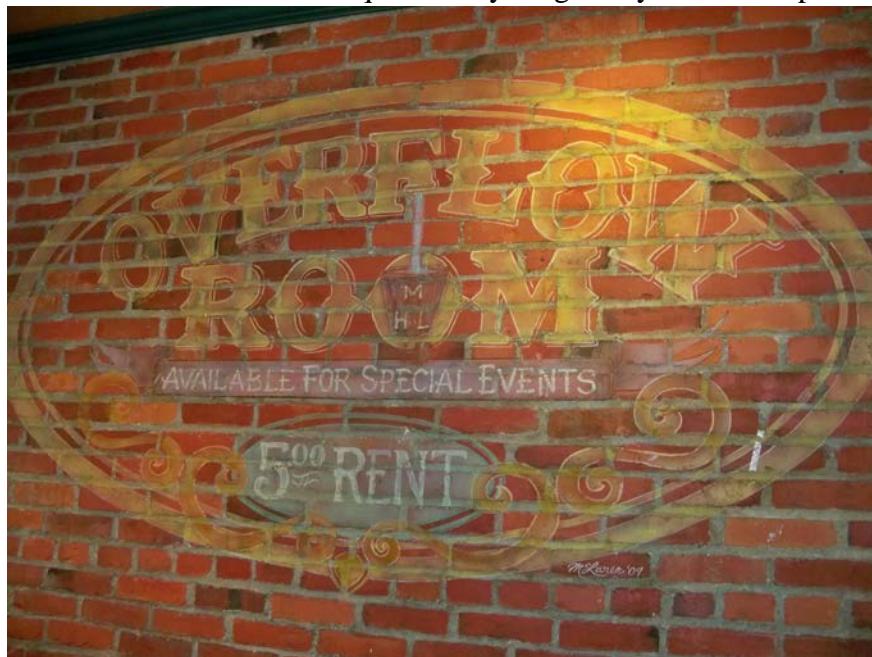
When he acquired the building, it had offices in the main section, a garage on the south end and then another six-car garage behind it, Williams said. That's because it had served as both a fire station and a police station. When told about Bonsey's account of how the building was constructed, he said, "It makes sense because the firehouse was upstairs. They didn't have a brass rod to slide down. They had a ladder that comes out of the upstairs to come down into the drying room, where the hoses are handled."

(In an aside, Williams added that he had known Bonsey. "I was in the hospital with Charles Bonsey back in 1962," he said.)

His renovation work began by stripping out everything on the inside. "Everything had paint on the walls," Williams said. "I mean just years and years of paint. The jail was in the cellarway going into the basement. It has bars going across the cellarway to get down to the basement. I mean talk about an inadequate everything. They had bullet-proof glass for where the gal came out to collect the monies or whatever it was. I got that sitting somewhere. I save all of this old stuff. We had a lot of work."

When Williams talks about the work needed to fix up the Bonsey Building, it's not all about work he delegated to others. He did much of the work himself, including in the dining room that the Moosehead now calls the Overflow Room.

"I stripped all the paint off of that," Williams said. "When we get all done, it's got white specks all over it. Somebody filled it with something before they painted it, just like you take your finger and fill this hole, fill that hole. We couldn't even scrape it out. Whatever it was, it was hard. So I ended up painting all of those bricks in that upstairs dining room – all of them – with a little brush, cut everything in. If you look close the next time you're in there, go up to the wall, and you'll see gray in the crack where the mortar was. I used three different colors of red. And you'll see where I'm not perfect, you know. You'll see it. So it took me three weekends to paint that. I got tired of painting, I'll tell you. There's one section that was pretty good. I kind of dabbed the white specks and



Clint Williams personally stripped paint off the walls and then painted over white specks in this room.



This is the entrance from the adjacent parking lot.

One is the moose head carried over from the original restaurant in Westlake. The other pays homage to the building's past as a firehouse. Antique fire equipment decorates the bar and dining rooms. A fire hydrant fountain greets patrons entering from the side parking lot. And if you look up in a vertical passage between the bar and the back dining room, you can see a manikin dressed in firefighting clothes at the top of a ladder, reminiscent of the many firefighters of past years who descended from the second floor to head out to fires and other emergencies.



Decorations in the bar (above) include fire hydrants and a fire hose. A vertical passageway includes a manikin in firefighter's clothes as if ready to descend a ladder to go out to fight a fire, reflecting the building's past use as a fire station (right).

got away with it. I tell people. They say, 'No, you didn't.' I say, 'Go look.' Once you strip it, there's no paint on it."

Williams also took advantage of the building's location by building a 780-square-foot patio on the back. During pleasant weather patrons can dine out there overlooking Rocky River.

Today, the Moosehead is a restaurant with two decorating themes.



One interesting aspect of the conversion of the building to be a restaurant is that for most of the 20th century, Olmsted Falls was a dry community, so officials based at the

Village Hall had the duty of seeing that no one sold alcoholic beverages in town. Now, alcoholic drinks are sold in that very building.

Special thanks go to Bruce Banks for use of the interview with Charles Bonsey, which he conducted on March 26, 1982, when Bonsey was in his late 80s..

Family Photo Shows Former Look of 180-Year-Old House

Olmsted Falls is blessed to have many old houses dating back well into the 19th century. Olmsted Township also has its share of old houses, although they are more spread out than those in the city. However, some of those houses have undergone renovations that have changed them so much that they no longer have the same contours.

One such house is at 7707 Main Street on the corner of Water Street. Many people refer to it as the Mahoney house, because it was the home of the late Dr. William Mahoney, a physician who served as a councilman and then mayor in the 1960s and 1970s. But it was built in 1836 by Lemuel Hoadley, one of the community's early settlers and a builder of several mills in the area that used river and creek power to grind grain or saw lumber. He had help from his son-in-law, John



*The house at Water and Main streets has been bigger in recent decades than during most of its existence.
Photo courtesy of Bruce Banks.*

Barnum, who built his own house nearby at 25334 Water Street.



The house was much smaller in 1960.

Patsy, standing in our front yard.”

The house that stands today at the corner of Main and Water is larger than the one Hoadley built. It was expanded several decades ago. Not many people today can recall what it once looked like. Fortunately, one *Olmsted 200* reader, Jane Gardner, grew up across the street at 25252 Water Street and recently dug up an old photo that shows the house before it was expanded.

“You can see that their addition doubled the size of the house,” she wrote. “The dog in the picture was our old dog,

The processing date on the photo is March 1960, so the photo likely was taken early in 1960 or perhaps late in 1959. Gardner said the house belonged to a family named Coulter back then.

Another photo she shared shows her family's house across the street.

A third photo Gardner sent shows her family's backyard, including a tire swing. Behind it is a barn that was part of the property of the Ives family, which lived in the old farmhouse going toward the Village Green on Water Street. Later, one of the Hecker families lived there, Gardner noted. She said it is the first



This backyard photo shows a neighbor family's barn.

to *Olmsted 200* at: wallacestar@hotmail.com.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include stories about what happened to the Peltz and Simmerer families and about a Grand Pacific Junction building that sat in two other communities before coming to Olmsted Falls.



This is how the Gardner house at 25252 Water Street looked more than half a century ago.

house on the other side of the Main Street extension. "The old barn stood where the Main St. extension is now – where Mr. Hecker built a few houses and created a dead-end into the field that was part of the Atkinson's farm," Gardner wrote.

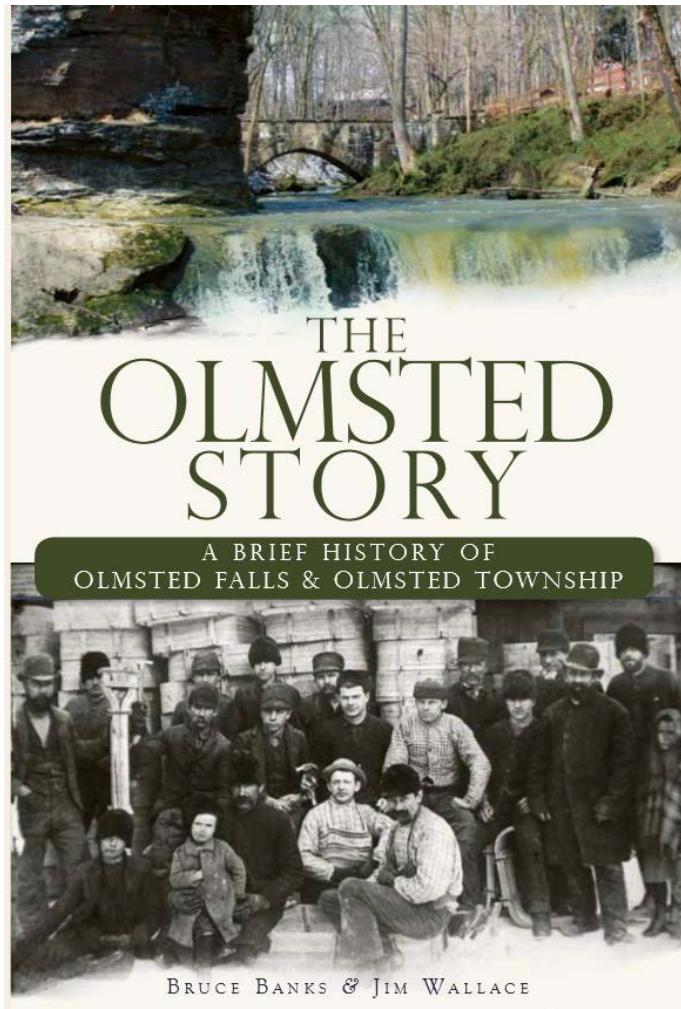
Thanks to Jane Gardner for sharing her photos. Other *Olmsted 200* readers who have old photos that show how Olmsted buildings or neighborhoods have changed are invited to share them. Send them

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, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, West Virginia, Florida, Massachusetts and Maine, as well as overseas in Mongolia 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://www.egovlink.com/olmsted/docs/menu/home.asp> and click on "Olmsted 200."

Except where otherwise noted, all articles in *Olmsted 200* are written by Jim Wallace. 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 Clementine's Victorian Restaurant at Grand Pacific Junction, the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.

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