



# Olmsted 200

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

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## The Bicentennial Came Early, but a Centennial Came Late

Accounts of the history of Olmsted have been riddled with errors and inconsistencies over the years. One of the biggest was the incorrect story that “Olmsted” once had an “a” that was dropped mysteriously at some unrecorded time. That fallacy was repeated many times in books and newspaper articles and even cast into metal plaques, such as the Ohio Historical Marker for the Oxcart Library that stands along



Butternut Ridge Road near North Olmsted’s library. Another error cast into metal can be found inside the Olmsted Falls Depot on Garfield Street. It’s the plaque noting that the depot has been included in the National Register of Historic Places. Unfortunately, it says the depot was built in 1877. The more recent Ohio Historical Marker outside shows the correct year: 1876.

Then there is the issue that has been addressed several times in *Olmsted 200*: the claim that Olmsted was founded in 1814, when the only sign of civilization that year was a meager corn crop planted by James Geer when he still lived in Columbia Township, rather than 1815, when Geer and his family became Olmsted’s first settlers. There was a good bicentennial celebration this year, but anyone who would rather mark the bicentennial as 200 years after the first settlement can still celebrate next year.

Another occasion when Olmsted residents made a questionable choice in celebrating their history occurred almost six decades ago. However, instead of celebrating a year early, they celebrated a year late. The occasion was the centennial of the incorporation of Olmsted Falls as a village. The incorporation became official on April 7, 1856, so the year for the centennial celebration should have been 1956. Maybe Olmsted residents weren't paying attention to their history then, because the celebration didn't occur until 1957.



*This artwork for the Olmsted Falls centennial was a year late. Plus, Native Americans were long gone by the 1850s.*

The reason given at that time was that 1857 was the year that tiny Olmsted Falls became a bit bigger by annexing the neighboring unincorporated hamlet of Plum Creek. The original Olmsted Falls included little more than the current central business district. Think of Grand Pacific Junction and Mill River Plaza and not much more beyond that. The northern boundary was about where Elm Street is now. North of that – and about the same size – was the hamlet of Plum Creek, which extended up to where Cook Road is now. Granted, it was a big deal when Olmsted Falls doubled its size, but it didn't negate the fact that the village was incorporated in 1856. If annexation was reason for starting anew in counting the age of Olmsted Falls, then there would have been many occasions for starting over and the community would be considered very young.

An August 8, 1957, article in the *Plain Dealer* noted that 1857 was the year Plum Creek was annexed to Olmsted Falls, but it gave no reason why residents didn't celebrate in 1956 on the centennial of incorporation. The article unwittingly devoted much attention to the false tale of the missing "a" in Olmsted. The headline was: "Who Lost the 'a' Out of 'Olmstead?'"

However, the article did say that the centennial celebration would last four days with events both at the old school (now Olmsted Falls City Hall) and the Village Green. "This year's celebration is billed as the largest in a 36-year series of home-comings," it said. The highlight was to be a Saturday afternoon parade featuring the Olmsted Falls High School Band, a pipe band, antique cars, decorated bicycles, fire trucks and the queen and her court. The queen was 18-year-old Carol Hall, an Olmsted Township resident.

"High on the list of attractions is the annual water fight between Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township firemen," the *Plain Dealer* reported. "Also on tap will be a baseball game between married and single men, square dancing and special services at the Community Church and at St. Mary's of the Falls Catholic Church."

The "water fight," in which teams of fire fighters use water from their hoses to drive a barrel along a line between two poles in a reverse tug-of-war fashion, was a

traditional feature at homecoming celebrations over the years. It came back this year with the new Cornerstone Festival held July 4 at the middle and intermediate schools.

## **West View Had a Short Life as a Village but a Long History**

A popular story among many Olmsted residents – current and past – involves the comic strip “Funky Winkerbean,” which is carried in the *Plain Dealer* and other newspapers around the nation. The strip, based on the exploits of students and teachers at the fictional Westview High School, appeared in the early 1970s about the time when the name West View disappeared from the map because of the merger of the villages of Olmsted Falls and West View. Thus, the story often told among people from Olmsted was that Tom Batiuk, the strip’s creator, had taken the name for the strip’s high school from the community that wasn’t using it anymore.

It made sense because Batiuk was based in northeastern Ohio. According to his online biography (<http://www.funkywinkerbean.com/bio.html>), he was teaching art at Eastern Heights Junior High School in Elyria when he created “Funky Winkerbean” in 1972. That was close enough that he could have been aware of what had happened to the Village of West View. Also, it was not unusual for him to put northeastern Ohio references, such as the logo for WMMS radio, into the strip.

The story that he took the name Westview, the fictional high school, from West View, the former village, started going around in the 1970s. It’s still going around. For example, it recently appeared in a Facebook post. But is it true? Well, here is the email response from Batiuk on September 15 after *Olmsted 200* posed that question to him:

*I went to Midview High School. I simply swapped out Mid for West. It was just a coincidence that it resembled any other school or city.*

Thus, another myth about Olmsted’s history is busted. But the truth about West View is worth more attention.

### **West View once straddled the county line.**

The name West View – sometimes written as “Westview” – once was more common in Olmsted than it is today. Newer residents might not realize that the few references that remain, such as Westview Concrete, harken back to a time when West View was a separate, incorporated village in what now is the southern half of Olmsted Falls. Much earlier, the name was used for an area that included not only the southeastern corner of the original Olmsted Township but also the northeastern corner of Columbia Township.

The West View name reportedly came from the Columbia side of the border. Calvin Hoadley, who built the original dam and mill on Rocky River just south of what is now Sprague Road where Gibbs Butcher Block now stands, also built a house across from it where the clubhouse for the former Riverside Golf Course later was located. The



*The Hoadley house had a view to the west.*

story is that, when the Hoadleys looked out of the window at the front of their house, their view was to the west. Thus, they had a “west view.”

In 1849, the Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati Railroad cut through the area on a northeast-southwest angle.

The railroad established its station there on the Olmsted Township side of the border and used the West View name.

Despite having the first railroad in Olmsted, West View did not develop much until the 1870s, when sandstone quarries were established in the area. The quarries were in both townships, but other businesses chose the Olmsted side for their stores.



*A sign from the old West View depot hangs inside the Olmsted Falls depot.*



*West View’s small business district included this Italianate-style building, which still stands along the section of Columbia Road near the underpass for the railroad.*

An 1874 map, which listed 14 merchants in Olmsted Falls, listed just one in West View:



*Columbia Road (then Columbia Street) was a quiet country lane in West View’s old days. The Wesleyan Methodist Church can be seen in the center. The building still stands.*

“L.C. Tanney, dealer in groceries, drugs, medicines, perfumery, toilet articles, books and stationery; also proprietor of cheese factory, capacity 400 cows or 20 cheeses per day.” However, such listings tended to exclude saloons, and West View generally had one or more operating throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, judging by reports – generally complaints – about them in the local newspaper.

For more than a century, residents of West View seemed satisfied living in an

unincorporated community, but that changed in 1927, when those who lived north of Sprague Road decided to separate from Olmsted Township and incorporate a new village. Some residents of Strongsville got the same notion about the same time, but as the *Berea News* reported on Friday, June 24, 1927, the two communities had opposite election results:

*West View became a village, and Strongsville remains a township as a result of a special election held Tuesday in those communities.*

*In West View 77 votes were cast for incorporation and 14 against. Strongsville voters cast 178 votes against incorporation and 111 in favor.*

*Both communities were governed by township trustees, West View was in Olmsted township and Strongsville remains in Strongsville township.*

*The date for a municipal election at West View has not been announced.*

Olmsted Township records found by county officials and returned several months ago to township officials tell more about how West View became a village. The minutes of the township trustees' meeting of May 7, 1927, written longhand, state that the trustees received a petition with the signatures of 63 people, as well as a map, asking for the election to determine whether to incorporate West View as a village. The map showed the area intended to be included in the new village, but the minutes also offered this description:

*The territory is bounded as follows:*

*Beginning at the Southeasterly corner of Olmsted Township;*

*Thence Westerly along the Southerly line of said Township, which is also the center line of Sprague Road, to the Westerly line of 50 Acres of land owned by Olive Bachart as described in deed from David J. Nye, Executor, to Olive K. Bachart, deed No. 1231122, recorded in Volume 2432 of the records of deeds of Cuyahoga County, Ohio, at Page 184.*

*Thence Northerly along the Westerly line of said premises owned by Olive Bachart and the Northerly promulgations thereof to the center of Plumb Creek;*

*Thence Northeasterly along the center of Plumb Creek to the Northerly line of Tract Number 3, Olmsted Township, which is also the Southerly line of Olmsted Falls Village;*

*Thence Easterly along the Southerly line of Olmsted Falls Village and along the northerly line of said Tract Number 3, Olmsted Township, to the Easterly line of Olmsted Township;*

*Thence Southerly along the Easterly line of Olmsted Township to the beginning.*

Note that Plum Creek was spelled as "Plumb Creek."

Minutes from the trustees' meeting of June 7, 1927, state that the petition had the signatures of 52 electors from West View rather than the 63 mentioned in the May minutes. That might indicate that 11 signatures were invalidated. But the minutes also state that only 30 valid signatures were needed for the petition to be accepted.

The trustees then set an election for June 21, 1927, from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time with the former West View school building on Columbia Road to be used as a polling place. Unlike the minutes from the May meeting, the name of the proposed village was written initially as one word, "Westview," in the June 7 minutes, but later as "West View" and still later as "Westview" again. If official records went back and forth between the two forms of the name, it's little wonder that others used both over the years.

The ballots were to offer voters a simple choice: "For Incorporation" or "Against Incorporation."

The trustees approved the motion for the election unanimously. Then they adjourned their meeting until the day of the election and agreed to meet at the former school in West View.

The minutes from the June 21 meeting show that 93 people cast votes with 77 of the ballots in favor of incorporation, 14 against it and two blank. Then the minutes listed every person who voted that day, after which came the statement:

*Thereupon, said Board of Township Trustees unanimously declared that said territory described in said petition shall from this date be incorporated as a village by the name and style of the Village of Westview.*

The trustees ordered the clerk to send a transcript of the journal entries related to the formation of the new village to the Cuyahoga County recorder.

Thus, in just six and a half weeks after the petition was presented to the trustees, West View – or Westview – became an incorporated village, the third after Olmsted Falls and North Olmsted to be created out of parts of the original Olmsted Township. The size of the new village was 1.95 square miles, or 1,250 acres. In the 1930 census, it had 345 residents.

In November 1927, the village elected its first set of officers with Albert Richards as mayor, Lee Blodgett as clerk, Raymond Herman as treasurer, Lester Hazel as marshal and six others as council members.

In 1928, voters approved a \$10,000 bond issue to prepare a town hall. The village used the money to fix up the old school building for that purpose, and it was opened for use in August 1929.

West View continued as a quiet little village for a few decades. Then, in the late 1960s, there was a flurry of efforts by neighboring communities, including North Olmsted, Olmsted Falls and Berea, to annex all or parts of Olmsted Township. West View got involved and seemed to be a leading contender until the county commissioners decided in July 1969 that they didn't want to have a newly expanded West View that would surround Olmsted Falls.



*Built in 1880 as a two-story school, later remodeled with just one story, this building at 9722 Columbia Road became West View's town hall.*

Serious efforts then began for a merger of Olmsted Falls and West View. A six-member committee with three members from each village worked out an agreement by April 1970 for Olmsted Falls to be annexed to West View with the new entity to be called Olmsted Falls. Some people hoped that Olmsted Township later would join the enlarged Olmsted Falls. About 2,400 people resided in the 1.52 square miles of Olmsted Falls, about 2,500 in the 1.95 square miles of West View and about 7,000 in the 10.42 square miles of Olmsted Township. On May 5, 1970, Olmsted Falls and West View voters approved the merger of the two villages. The new Olmsted Falls came into existence at the beginning of 1971 and removed the West View name from the map of Cuyahoga County. In 1972, the expanded Olmsted Falls moved up from being a village to become Ohio's 231<sup>st</sup> city. Of course, the annexation of Olmsted Township didn't occur, although Olmsted Falls, Berea and North Olmsted all nibbled away parts of the township in the following decades.

*Thanks go to Olmsted Township Trustee Sherri Lippus for sharing the township records from 1927.*

## **Olmsted Trip Was Fatal in Mid-1800s**

Relatively few stories are available about what life was like in and around Olmsted in the early and middle years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, because regular newspaper coverage did not begin until the early 1870s. But a story preserved by neighbors to the south of Olmsted gives a glimpse of mid-century life. In particular, it shows how treacherous travel could be in those days.

The story of a fatal trip to Olmsted comes from the *Autobiography of Moses Deming, 1777-1868*, published in 1986 by the Columbia Historical Society in Lorain County. Deming and his wife, Jerusha Russell Deming, were residents of Liverpool Township in Medina County. That is the township just south of Columbia Township.

By 1849, the Demings were retired from active farming, but they still lived on their farm along Columbia Road in Liverpool Township. Their son, Ralph, and his wife,

Eliza, had taken over the farming. As Moses Deming wrote, they had put time and money into “curing” their horse that summer. By mid-summer, he was well and “fat as a seal,” so they planned a trip to visit friends in Cuyahoga and Portage counties. On September 4, the roads seemed good and the weather was pleasant, so Moses and Jerusha embarked on a trip to Olmsted, which he spelled “Olmstead.” Their plan was to travel to Euclid the following week. But the trip to Olmsted was not so pleasant. Deming quoted a popular hymn of the time to characterize it:

*How vain are all things here below,  
How false and yet how fair.*

The trip to Olmsted was not the problem, but the return trip was. Deming wrote that they had had “an agreeable visit,” but they encountered trouble while on an iron bridge that then carried what now is known as Sprague Road across Rocky River on the Olmsted-Columbia border. He wrote that “a slab which covered a bad hole in the bridge...had been removed, and the horse had got near it before it was discovered.”

That’s when a pleasant trip turned fatal. Deming wrote that the horse “darted first to the right, which cramped the buggy, and then backed at the same instant. The railing gave way at the first touch of the wheel and, O what tongue or pen can paint the horrors of the scene that followed.” The account went on:

*The bridge was high and solid rock beneath. I had just time to think ‘We are gone and crushed beneath our horse.’ The next I saw my wife some yards from me lay motionless. Two men were quickly there. I heard them say, “She is dead.” Soon others came to my relief and moved the shattered buggy that confined me down, and when I rose I heard one say, “She breathes.” And then a gleam of hope sprang up, a vain delusive hope. The die was cast. Although kind friends did all that could be done and doctors tried their skill, ‘twas in vain. Returning consciousness brought no relief, but added to her pain. Yet we rejoiced that she could speak and bid her friends farewell. But to behold a bosom friend so racked with pain without the power to give relief for six successive days caused me to feel no pain from my own wounds, but when her eyes were closed in death I found myself much injured by my fall. Our favorite horse never got up, but died almost instantly. My wife was carried into Mr. John Vaughn’s, where every kindness was bestowed on us that could have been expected from dearest friends.*

Vaughn was then the owner of the mill that had been started by Calvin Hoadley in the early 1800s. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the mill was owned by Thomas Chambers. That site now is occupied by Gibbs Butcher Block.

“All my anticipated enjoyments were now at an end,” Deming wrote in continuing his story. “My constitution was much injured by my fall, which, together with the excitement, operated powerfully on my nervous system. When I retired to my lonely



bed, my repose was interrupted by frightful dreams. Sometimes I dreamed of riding on steep precipices with my wife, and then in deep ravines in search of her. At other times I dreamed our horse had run with the carriage and left us in some lonely gulf, and then I would labor to ascend the cliff till sweat would freely start at every pore.”

Jerusha Deming was 64 years old when she died on September 10, 1849. She had been born on February 24, 1785.

Another perspective on her death was recorded in an unpublished work, *Recollections of Boyhood Days*, by George P. Metcalf. Copies can be found in the Elyria Public Library and the Buckeye Branch of the Medina County Public Library. Metcalf was a grandson of Moses and Jerusha Deming and was born in 1844. He lived on Center Road at the far western end of Liverpool Township. Later in life, Metcalf became a respected judge in Lorain County. Here is what he wrote:

*I could not have been over five years old, when my grandmother Deming died. She was killed at Olmstead Falls, Cuyahoga County, by being in a wagon which accidentally backed off a bridge over Rocky River into the stream. I well remember Emory Poole coming on a cream-colored horse belonging to my Uncle Ralph, to tell us of it. It was very common in those days to lend clothing by one family to another to wear to funerals, black dresses, veils, children's clothes, etc. I attended my grandmother's funeral wearing the clothes of Augustus Goodrich, our nearest neighbor's boy. Our family were no worse off than others, but it was not at all times that a whole family of children were provided with an extra suit of clothes. Times have changed wonderfully since those days.*

To put into perspective the year of the accident, 1849, it was when the first railroad laid tracks through Olmsted Township just north of where the accident occurred. However, the first train did not pass through West View until July 1 of the following year.

*Thanks go to Rod Knight of the Liverpool Township Historical Society for sharing those accounts of the fatal accident that occurred on the southern border of Olmsted Township.*

## **Still to Come**

For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Olmsted was part of what was considered the largest concentration of greenhouses in the country, and several greenhouses still operate in Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township. But the greenhouse industry in Olmsted began in the 1800s. The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include an article about that. Also in the works is an article about what Olmsted Falls looked like 60 years ago, based on a map that was a souvenir of the 1954 Homecoming. Anyone with information about Olmsted six decades ago is invited to share that information with *Olmsted 200* and its readers.

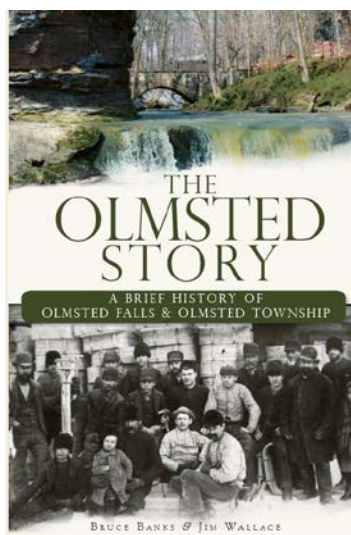
If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: [wallacestar@hotmail.com](mailto:wallacestar@hotmail.com). *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, Florida, Massachusetts and Maine, as well as 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 me to pull out of my 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." Also, beginning with the June 1, 2014, issue, Olmsted Falls made room on the city's website for the latest issue of *Olmsted 200*. Look for it at: <http://www.olmstedfalls.org/2008/fullnews.php?n=174>,

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](mailto: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 and through online booksellers.



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