



Olmsted 200

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

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Simmerer's Hardware Served Olmsted Almost Eight Decades

This is the third in a series of articles about Grand Pacific Junction. If you missed the beginning of the series, go back to Issue 21 of Olmsted 200, which came out on February 1, and then see Issue 22 from March 1.

Baby Boomers who were in school as late as the early 1970s still fondly recall the hardware store known as P. Simmerer's Sons. It was chock full of nuts, bolts, screws, nails, ropes, tools and many other items typical of mid-20th century hardware stores. But it also had items such as horse collars and buggy parts left over from past years when

those things were more in demand. Many items were filed away in wooden drawers, while others hung from the ceiling.



The side of the Grand Pacific Hotel reflects its former use as a hardware store.

The stately building on the corner of Columbia Road and Mill Street that once housed the hardware store today bears the name Grand Pacific Hotel, which reclaims the identity it had for a time in the mid-1800s, although it now is a banquet hall rather than a hotel. But the side of the building also pays homage to several decades from the late 19th century

through almost three-quarters of the 20th century when it was home to the hardware store that was one of the longest-lasting businesses not only in Olmsted Falls but also in all of northeastern Ohio.

The hardware store had its roots in a drugstore begun in 1882 not by anyone named Simmerer but by Joseph Peltz. It did not take Peltz long to expand. By the fall of 1882, he added hardware items, such as oils, paints, tools and window glass – even bird cages – to his store’s inventory. In 1884, he installed a soda fountain.



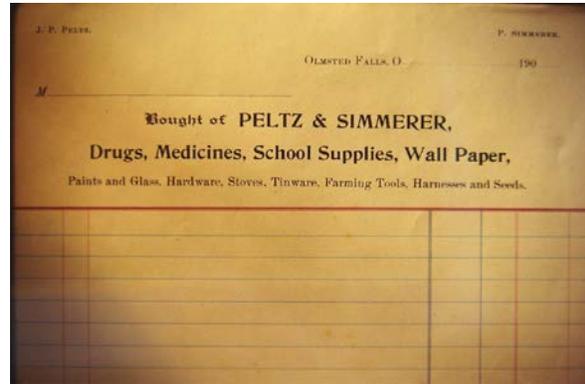
This ad in the October 12, 1882, edition of the newspaper heralded the expansion of Peltz’s drugstore to include hardware items.

An item in the local newspaper, the *Berea Advertiser*, on February 5, 1886, hinted of a partnership to come, although no one at the time could have realized what it would mean for Olmsted Falls: “Mr. Jos. P. Peltz, our genial and enterprising druggist, expects to take his departure for Texas and the West on Friday, Feb. 5, in pursuit of health and pleasure. He will go by the way of Kansas, and probably spend a day or so acquainting himself with the land of the farmer’s delight. His business will be conducted during his absence by his competent assistant, Mr. Stanley Wright, assisted by Mr. Peltz’s brother-in-law, Mr. Philip Simser of Rockport. As Joe has promised to keep us informed in regard to climate, his health and the blizzards, we shall wish him prosperity.”

It wouldn’t be the first time the newspaper misspelled the name, but Philip “Simser” actually was Philip Simmerer. Peltz had married Simmerer’s sister, Anna, in 1881. In 1888, Simmerer became a partner in Peltz’s business. At that time, the store was located in downtown Olmsted Falls but not in the building now known as the Grand Pacific Hotel, which was still being used as a hotel back then.

Change was noted in a small item in the August 26, 1892, edition of the newspaper: “J.P. Peltz & Co. have bought the village hotel and are making improvements.” Several weeks later, the paper followed up with this item on October 14, 1892: “Mr. J.P. Peltz has purchased the old hotel, corner Columbia and Mills st. and is now rebuilding it.”

Peltz and Simmerer must have done considerable work to convert the old hotel into a store because it took them several months to get it ready. The February 10, 1893, edition of the newspaper had this: “Mr. J.P. Peltz is moving into his new store.”



This is an old receipt from Peltz & Simmerer's store. Photo courtesy of Bruce Banks.

Two weeks later, on February 24, 1893, the paper's Olmsted Falls correspondent still had trouble with Simmerer's name when this item ran: “Messrs. Peltz & Zimmerman have moved their stock of goods into the new store standing where the old Olmsted Hotel formerly did. Where is the enterprising man to start a ‘good hotel’ at Olmsted Falls? Plenty of vacant sites for building, plenty of saloons to remodel and change into a first-class hotel at Olmsted Falls. Who will come?”

The answer was no one. On September 15, 1893, the paper had this follow-up with another misspelling: “Olmsted Falls wants a hotel. A good opening here for an experienced landlord.” More than a year later, the newspaper reporter still seemed more concerned about what the village didn't have rather than the business being run by Peltz and Simmerer. The December 7, 1894, paper included this item: “We need a hotel and restaurant here.”



During the store's early years, Olmsted Falls bore more resemblance to an Old West town than the metropolitan suburb it became after the introduction of automobiles.

A few years later, the proprietors ensured they would get mentioned in the paper. They bought ads that ran right in the middle of news copy with no disclaimer. In the October 14, 1898, edition, this one ran: “DON'T FAIL to see Peltz & Simmerer before you buy a range, cook stove or heater. Olmsted Falls, O.” One week later, on October 21, another ad

appeared: “NOW IS THE TIME to call upon Peltz & Simmerer, Olmsted Falls, for Born steel ranges, Eclipse cook stoves, Peninsular oak heaters, also stove repairs.” Those and similar ads became regular inclusions in the paper.

While they sold their goods on the first floor of the building, Peltz and Simmerer also put the upper floors to use. Beginning in 1904, they provided office space on the

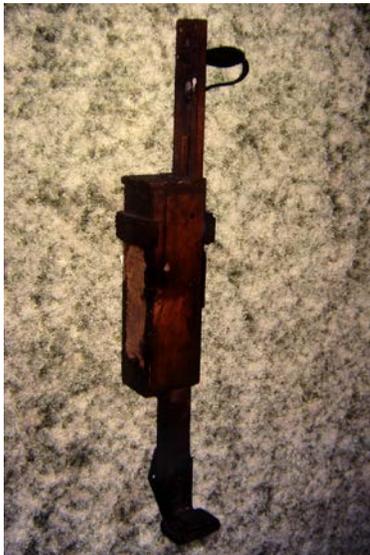
second floor for Dr. M.H. Westbrook, a physician, and a dentist by the name of Dr. Pelton.

[Research has not yet revealed Pelton's first name.] Pelton reportedly had a foot-powered drill. An enclosed stairway added onto the Mill Street side of the building allowed patients to reach the medical and dental offices on the second floor without going through the store on the first floor.



The enclosed stairway on the side of the building provided access to the medical and dental offices on the second floor. Clint Williams removed it when he remodeled the building while developing Grand Pacific Junction in the early 1990s.

On the third floor of the building, Peltz and Simmerer set up a manufacturing operation for hand tools. John Smith, a carpenter worked up there. A manually operated corn planter was among the tools he made.



This was one of the corn planters made on the third floor. Photo courtesy of Bruce Banks.

In 1912, Peltz and Simmerer ended their partnership. Peltz left the hardware business and went back into selling drugs, as well as stationery and other items, from another store nearby. Simmerer brought three of his four sons – Clarence, Oscar and Russell – into the business, which took on the name P. Simmerer & Sons and later, P. Simmerer's Sons. Another son, Carlton, the third oldest, went to work as a representative for a paint company and ended up in Chicago. Philip Simmerer and his wife, Margaret, also had a daughter, Pearl, but she died young.

The business then just went on and on. Eventually, its longevity became so notable that newspapers reporters would come around every several years to do feature articles about it, always noting how much had stayed the same over the decades.

“Horse collars aren't moving too briskly this Christmas season in Greater Cleveland. Nor are horse-drawn plows and whiffletrees,” reporter Robert J. Drake wrote in the December 17, 1957, edition of the *Plain Dealer*. “This footnote on shopping trends was gleaned yesterday at P. Simmerer's Sons

Hardware in Olmsted Falls, where almost nobody was asking for wagon pole tongues, tug fasteners or oil lamp chimneys.”

Such items were popular in the early days of the hardware store, he wrote. Although Philip Simmerer had adjusted his inventory over the years, Drake noted, the store still had on display a dozen horse and mule collars and three walking plows. They weren't selling by the late 1950s, but Russell Simmerer said, “We keep them for atmosphere now. You'd have to put up a mighty darn good story to get one.”

It was just a few weeks before the *Plain Dealer* article appeared that the Simmerers removed the sign for Syracuse Plows, which Philip Simmerer said was the store's main line until tractors came along and the John Deere Company acquired the firm that made Syracuse plows. Other items that Simmerer said had been discontinued included oaken bucket wells (because the manufacturer quit), chamber pots for use in bedrooms in the days before many homes had indoor toilets and mounts for Berea grindstones. However, the store still had its own grindstone that turned by a foot pedal for sharpening axes.

That story in the *Plain Dealer* helped the store sell some old inventory. Ten days after the original story, Drake reported in a new article that an Amish farmer from Middlefield in Geauga County had shown up at the store after reading the story and said he knew a dealer who could provide plow points for the three Syracuse-brand plows still at the store. The sons called upon Philip to handle the sale because they had not had much experience in selling plows. He sold them for \$5.00 each. Oscar Simmerer called it a bargain.

“The last previous plow we sold, 10 or 12 years ago, brought about \$24,” he said. “That left us with one plow, a Moore. Dad wanted to keep it, but now that's been sold to a farmer on Lewis Road. We could have done even better. After selling out, we got a letter from another Amishman in Burton who saw the story and wanted a Syracuse plow.”

Other readers inquired about buying grindstones and chamber pots, but the store couldn't help them.

A little more than two years later, the *Plain Dealer* did another story about the store, noting in the January 17, 1960, edition that Philip Simmerer had been in the business for 71 of his 94 years. The article said that he had stepped down from being the boss at the store four years earlier but still helped his sons run the business. It also noted that two of the sons – Clarence at age 70 and Oscar at age 68 – were themselves beyond the normal retirement age. The other son, Russell, was only 54.

A photo that accompanied the article showed the four of them holding a buggy jack that was more than 60 years old. The article said the store's motto was: “Know what the people want and have it when they want it.” It said that had resulted in the store's

reputation for being the place to go in western Cuyahoga County to find items that couldn't be found elsewhere, but Philip Simmerer wasn't happy about that.

“Now they look every place else before coming here and only come in for the unusual purchase,” he said.

Philip Simmerer, who was born on August 9, 1865, just months after the end of the Civil War, died November 5, 1964. The sons kept the hardware store going for several more years, but by late 1970, when Russell was 65 years old, they decided it was time to close the business.

A Plain Dealer story on November 22, 1970, noted that, even as the store was getting ready to close, it still could sell a horse collar or buggy parts to a customer. Reporter Pauline Thoma described the business this way: “The store is in a gabled, weathered building that once was a hotel and tavern along a stagecoach line. It is a hodgepodge of innumerable cabinets, hundreds of feet of packed shelves and every imaginable sort of hardware or horsey item hanging from the ceiling. The south wall is an expanse of drawers that were installed from floor to ceiling 78 years ago and have samples on their fronts of items inside.”

By the time the store closed in 1971, it had served the community for 78 years. Two local businessmen bought the land from the Simmerers. One was Bill Kucklick, whose Kucklick's Village Square Shoppe in the nearby Depositors Building specialized in Early American-style furniture. The other was Kenneth Raub, a veterinarian who owned the Bagley Road Animal Hospital. The former hardware store became Kucklick's Village Square Annex, which he used as a furniture warehouse and showroom.

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will go into that part of the building's history and its transformation into the namesake structure at Grand Pacific Junction.

Map Was Souvenir of 1954 Homecoming

A souvenir from the Olmsted Falls Homecoming of August 14-15, 1954, provides a faded glimpse of what Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township were like more than six decades ago. Carolyn (Kucklick) Petlowany, whose photos of Olmsted Falls during the 1930s through the 1950s were featured in an article in Issue 7 of *Olmsted 200* in December 2013, kept the map for 60 years until she offered it for use in *Olmsted 200*.

The map, which is 24 inches high and 20.75 inches wide, was printed by the Acme Blue Company, which seems to be why it was produced in a style similar to blueprints. The company's address is listed on the map as 8086 Columbia Road, which is



This photo of the Simmerers was taken in September 1963, about a year before Philip (second from left) died.

the current location of Mary's Hair Salon in Grand Pacific Junction. (The house was built in the late 1800s as the home of Joseph Peltz and his family. There will be more about it as the *Olmsted 200* series on Grand Pacific Junction's buildings continues.)

Unfortunately, the years have not been kind to the souvenir map. The print has faded so much that certain portions have become illegible. Nevertheless, it still reveals some interesting information.



Some parts of the map are too faded to read easily. This portion showing the central section of Olmsted Falls is a bit clearer than other sections.

For example, it is interesting to note that Elm Street was only one block long from Brookside Avenue to Columbia Road back then. The section west of Brookside was called Commercial Street at that time. The north-south street west of that was not Mapleway Drive but still was known as Division Street. The map also shows two planned streets that have appeared on many maps over the years. They are Coolidge Drive and Roosevelt Drive and were to run parallel to Wilson Drive between Columbia Road and Metropolitan Boulevard. Of course, another big difference between the 1954 map and those of today is the older map had many fewer streets in Olmsted Township, because it was made well before the construction of several housing developments on what had been mostly farmland.

Another feature of the map is a listing at the bottom of businesses and other organizations in Olmsted Falls, Olmsted Township and West View, which then was a separate village. Here are the businesses and other entities listed for Olmsted Falls:

1. Frank D. Sweet – electrical work
2. Leslie Heating Service
3. Naber’s Texaco Service
4. Schady Shell Service
5. Charles Bonsey Insurance
6. F.D. Adams, M.D.
7. R.F. Braun, M.D.
8. J.W. Gammon, D.D.S
9. Future library site [the 1834 N.P. Loomis house on Main Street that served as the library from 1955 until the new library on Mapleway Drive was opened in 2013]
10. Future site of Community Church [the current building, which was being planned then]
11. Sashko Welding Shop
12. Olmsted Falls Lumber Company
13. Olmsted Falls Community Church [now the Grand Pacific Wedding Chapel]
14. Schultz’s Barber Shop
15. Olmsted Shoe Repair
16. Olmsted Falls Cleaners
17. Fenderbosch Brothers IGA Market
18. The Cottage Shop
19. Community House
20. Town Hall, Police & Fire Dept., Library [now Moosehead restaurant]
21. National City Bank of Cleveland – O.F. Branch
22. Kucklick’s Dry Goods & Appliances
23. Acme Blue Company
24. P. Simmerer’s Sons Hardware
25. Barnum’s Supermarket
26. Kaufmann’s Delicatessen
27. The By-Way Beauty Salon
28. W.G. Casper Realty
29. Rudy’s Barber Shop
30. New elementary school
31. Olmsted Falls School [now Olmsted Falls City Hall]
32. Lennert – upholstery
33. E.R. Graf – radio & TV repair
34. Lucy’s Cards & Gifts
35. New Post Office
36. Hecker’s Sohio Service
37. H.B. Duncan, real estate
38. St. Mary’s Catholic Church & School
39. F.M. Jenkins, insurance

The list for Olmsted Township and West View includes these:

1. Sheward's Flowers
2. McDaniel Building Company
3. Hall Brothers, Inc. – meats
4. Hall Gardens (Warren Hall)
5. Township Hall & Fire Department
6. Bauer's Food Center
7. Albert S. Porter, county engineer
8. Sheehan's Olmsted Wire Fox Terrier Kennels
9. Hollum's Corner Store
10. Grospitch's Greenhouse
11. Flanagan's Dog Training
12. Saumers Parts & Service
13. Saumers Shopping Center
14. Pohm's Poultry Farm
15. E.P. Thiem Tool Company
16. King's Factory Method Lawn Mower Sharpening
17. Dr. W.K. Raub, veterinarian
18. Olmsted Auto Service
19. TV Home Service
20. T.W. Murrin's Garage
21. Barnard's Natural Foods [now Vitamix]
22. Walter J. Stanek Greenhouse
23. Jepsen Greenhouse
24. Westview Cleaners
25. Schuster's Greenhouse
26. Ralph Jocke's Garage
27. John F. Jocke Greenhouse
28. Joe Jocke's Greenhouse
29. Kusse's Greenhouse
30. McKenna's Poultry
31. West View Lumber Company
32. Filipek Brothers Builders, Inc.
33. West View Village Hall
34. Yondo's Meat Market
35. Boehlke's Grocery
36. West View Methodist Church
37. J. Meiczek's Greenhouse – tomatoes & geraniums
38. Elmer Kolker – builder
39. Lewis & Sons Sash & Door

If anything in those lists is misspelled, it is because some of the faded letters are hard to read. (Let the editor know about any errors.)

The Olmsted Falls map occupies most of the sheet with a scale of one inch equaling 500 feet. A smaller map that shows Olmsted Township and West View is inset at the upper left. Along the sides are more than a dozen boxes with notes about Olmsted history. For example, one box credits James Geer for being the first permanent resident of Olmsted Township. But like many references, it gets the date wrong, citing 1814. As has been reported previously in *Olmsted 200*, Geer merely planted corn in the township in 1814 and did not move in with his family until 1815. (See Issue 14 from July 2014 for an article about how that mistake likely was made in 1939 and adopted in subsequent references to Olmsted's history.)

Another box credits Julia Geer as the first white baby born in Olmsted Township in 1817. (Not mentioned is that she was believed to have been the first to be buried in the township two years later.)

In a box titled "Early Settlers," these are listed: Elijah Stearns – 1815; Fitch family – 1832; N.P. Loomis – 1832; Hiram Kellogg – 1834; and Caleb Lock – 1846.

Many boxes note when civic groups, such as the Kiwanis, the Grange and the Odd Fellows, were started in Olmsted. The map is a slice of Olmsted's mid-20th century life.

Thanks to Carolyn Petlowany for sharing the 1954 map. Anyone else willing to share such items from Olmsted's history should contact Olmsted 200 at: wallacestar@hotmail.com.

Shaw Story Had Connection to Another

The March issue of *Olmsted 200* included a story about J.R. Shaw, who worked as a photographer in Olmsted Falls and Berea from the late 1860s through the early 1880s. One reader thought he might have a photo of his ancestors that could have been taken by Shaw, but it turned out the photo was taken several years before Shaw began working as a photographer in Olmsted Falls.

Nevertheless, Shaw's great granddaughters, Helen Shaw and Barbara Hanno, who supplied photos and much of the information for the story, still are interested in finding out about any photos in the possession of current or former Olmsted residents that might have been taken by J.R. Shaw.

After the March issue of *Olmsted 200* came out, Hanno noticed a connection with another story. She wrote in an email: "Thanks for the wonderful story! You really brought everything together. I enjoyed all the pictures, too. Right under his story was the story of John Hall's barn. John Hall was the brother of my great grandfather, Charles Thomas Hall, whose daughter, Wealthy May, married John William Shaw. It would be lovely to have a park at the barn site. I'll be sure to visit it whenever I may get to Olmsted again."

Civil War Play Will Be Staged Close to Olmsted

As has been noted here before, the historical interests of people from Valley City, which is a little more than 10 miles south of the center of Olmsted Falls, are similar to those of people from Olmsted. So an event scheduled for May in Valley City might be of interest to Olmsted residents.

The Liverpool Township Historical Society will sponsor a production of “The Andersonville Trial, a Civil War Classic,” in observance of the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War. When the war ended, the U.S. military put on trial Captain Henry Wirz, who had been commandant of the Confederates’ notorious Andersonville Prison. He was charged with conspiracy to destroy prisoners’ lives, as well as murder. But that trial remains controversial today.

More than a century after the trial, it was recreated in a two-act Broadway play, which was followed by two made-for-television movies. Stark County’s Courthouse Players, including more than a dozen volunteers who are actual trial lawyers and judges, will perform that play on Thursday, May 14, at 7:00 p.m. in the gym of the Community Center (the former Liverpool School), 6801 School Street in Valley City. The play will last a little more than two-and-a-half hours, including “an intermission and a helpful curtain speech by one of the attorney actors who is a veteran civil war reenactor.” Tickets at the door will cost \$5.00 to help cover expenses. The facility is handicapped accessible. More information is available by calling 330-483-3707.

Thanks to Rod Knight of the Liverpool Township Historical Society for this information.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include the fourth story in the series about Grand Pacific Junction. The story will contain some interesting photos showing the transformation of what had been Simmerer’s Sons Hardware and then Kucklick’s Village Square Annex into the current Grand Pacific Hotel.

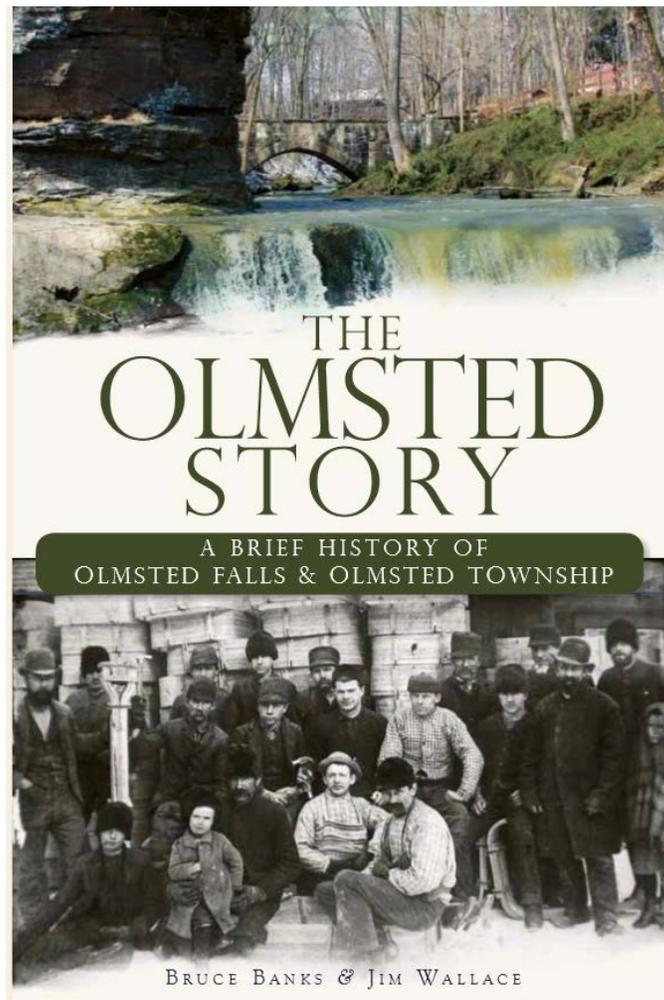
If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: wallacestar@hotmail.com. *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, Colorado, Texas, 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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