



# Olmsted 200

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

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## Election One Century Ago Had Lasting Effects on Olmsted

A century ago this month, residents of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township voted on one of the most important issues in the communities' history. In an article titled "Olmsted Falls Carries Bond," here is how the *Berea Enterprise* reported it in the November 15, 1915, issue: "On a second attempt to secure an issue of bonds for the building of a new centralized school building in Olmsted Falls, the vote was cast in favor of the project by a majority of six."



*For several years, the new school housed all of Olmsted's students. In 1916, when the school was built, the district had only about 300 students from first grade through high school.*

The exact tally was 146 votes in favor and 138 against. With that slim margin, the people of Olmsted authorized funding to build the school that replaced several small school buildings around the village and township. That

made Olmsted's school district the first one in Cuyahoga County to quit using one-room schools in favor of a consolidated school. The building that resulted from that bond issue is still around today and known as Olmsted Falls City Hall.

But as the narrow vote suggests, it wasn't easy to get the community to agree to construction of the new school. A similar effort several months earlier was unsuccessful. On June 8, 1915, Olmsted residents voted 137 to 131 against approving a \$40,000 bond issue to buy land and build a school. That came shortly after Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township merged their separate school districts.

One year earlier, in 1914, the Union Schoolhouse, which had been built at the Village Green in 1873-1874 to serve Olmsted Falls, was declared structurally unsafe (although it went on to be used for other functions and stood until 1960). At the time, the township had five small schools. (Three others that had been part of the township district became part of North Olmsted's school district after that part of the township broke away in 1909.) The largest of the township schools was built in 1880 and rebuilt in 1889 as a two-story structure to serve students in the West View area. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it served as West View Village Hall and later one of two Village Halls for the new Olmsted Falls after West View and Olmsted Falls merged in 1971. That building still stands on the west side of Columbia Road between Sprague Road and the railroad tracks.

After the Olmsted Falls students had to be moved out of the Union Schoolhouse, the village and the township began talks about merging their separate school districts. That merger occurred in 1915.

After the vote in June 1915 against building a new school, supporters worked harder to get a

bond issue approved that fall. In the two weeks leading up to the November 2 election,



*An article in the October 22, 1915, edition of the newspaper included this depiction of what the proposed new school would look like. The building that was finished almost a year later did look very much like the artist's conception. It stayed that way for a decade until the building was doubled in size to accommodate a growing population.*

big articles appeared in the *Berea Enterprise* to encourage residents to vote for the bond issue. The first one on October 22 included an artist's rendering of the proposed school. Here is what it said:

## ***OLMSTED'S NEW SCHOOL***

*Great interest is being shown in the new \$65,000 school for Olmsted Township, the bond issue for which is to be voted on November 2<sup>nd</sup>.*

*The school is to be located just west of Division Street on ten acres between the Dutch Road and the railroad. About half of the lot is to be used for building site and playgrounds, the balance for agricultural experiment plots.*

*There were about 300 pupils in Olmsted schools last year, including about 16 in the high school. The different grades varied from 44 to 27 pupils each.*

*All pupils living more than a mile from school and all first graders, altogether about 215, are to be hauled free to school all the way from home. This will take eight wagons, each hauling 20 to 30 pupils, and with routes from 2¼ to 6½ miles long. The Board will buy the wagons and the average monthly cost for hauling them will be about \$45.00 each.*

*Through the courtesy of W.H. Nicklas, the Cleveland architect employed to prepare preliminary plans and estimates for the new school, a cut and description is given.*

*The building will be 110 feet across the front, 75 feet deep, with the auditorium extending back 27 feet further. It will have two stories and a basement; its construction throughout will be of concrete, brick and metal, making it absolutely fireproof. Its exterior will be of rough hard burned brick, with white stone trimmings, and its simple beauty can be seen from the illustration. Its interior will be plastered and painted; the only woodwork used will be for interior finish and furniture; the best architects claim that a building like this should last "almost forever."*

*At the corners of the main building, on both floors, are 8 grade rooms; on the first floor the principal's office and the public library room flank the main entrance, while the auditorium, seating 500 with a big stage and dressing rooms, faces it. Beside the 4 grade rooms upstairs, is a high school, study room, chemical and physical laboratories and three recitation rooms, a rest room, and store room; in the basement is a gymnasium, with raised spectators' galleries, domestic science and manual training school rooms, a playroom for girls, toilet and locker*

*rooms, and the boiler room containing the heating and ventilation plant and water supply system.*

*The building will be well supplied with good sanitary plumbing fixtures, draining to a septic tank. Large windows are placed according to the modern way, on only one side of each school room. In addition, electric light is provided for all rooms.*

*It has been planned to fit, as nearly as is wise, the present requirements for size, making reasonable allowance for the immediate growth, particularly in the high school, which experience in other centralized districts shows will surely come, and the building will probably be large enough for 10 or 15 years. The plan will permit additions to be very easily made when needed.*

*This plan was adopted only after very careful study of the best centralized buildings in the state by Mr. Nicklas and County Superintendent Yawberg and presents many improvements and economies over any buildings examined. It is expected that the building can be completed ready for opening of school next fall.*

*The cost of the building alone, complete and ready for use, including heating, lighting, plumbing, and architect's fees, is estimated at not over \$57,000 while the land, seats and equipment, 8 wagons, and a barn, are estimated at \$8,000 or \$65,000 total, the amount of the bond issue. Figures prepared by Mr. Yawberg show that the additional yearly cost of the new school, over cost of running the present schools (including equal yearly payments of \$3750 principal and interest of bonds for 32 years) will be about \$5,500 or \$2.90 more per \$1000 of assessed valuation per year, which is all the additional cost to the taxpayer for one of the finest centralized schools in the state.*

*The committee is distributing a pamphlet showing all the details of the new school, wagon routes, financial statement, etc.*

Having wagons to transport students to the new school was an important part of the proposal because the only transportation that students in the village and the township typically had available until then was their own feet. That's why the township had so many small schools. Each one had to be close enough to the homes of its students that they easily could walk there daily. The wagons, which came to be called "kid wagons," were initially pulled by horses. They were prototypes of school buses that were used later. About a decade after the new school opened, the school board took the next step toward school buses by contracting for motorized trucks with wooden passenger boxes. For a more extensive account of how school transportation evolved in Olmsted, see Issue 5 of *Olmsted 200*, which was published in October 2013.





*This is what was left of one of the kid wagons late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It had been put to various uses over the decades, including as a doghouse and a shed for storing wood. This photo and those below of the inside are courtesy of Bruce Banks, who found the old wagon in a township backyard.*



On October 29, 1915, the *Enterprise* ran another piece in support of the proposed school. This one was written by Cuyahoga County's school superintendent (and is reproduced here with his sometimes odd punctuation and sentence structure):

***PLANS FOR OLMSTED SCHOOLS***  
***As Outlined By County Superintendent A.G. Yawberg***

*A Centralized School for Olmsted Township means that:*

*The children now scattered around in six small schools will all be brought together in one big school:*

*There will be about 300 in one school – enough to give each teacher only one grade – and three teachers for the high school, with the same number of teachers (eleven) now employed:*

*Each teacher can specialize, teaching the grade for which best qualified, instead of having thirty lessons a day, hearing perhaps ten, and having time to hear them right:*

*The teachers will have time to study the lessons they teach, time to help backwards pupils, will not be so tired from studying and hearing lessons that they lose all their enthusiasm:*

*The teachers will be experienced, for the best ones get away from the little country schools as soon as they can, and go to the big centralized schools, where their work is in every way pleasanter, easier, more satisfying and more interesting:*

*The pupils will arrive dry, warm, comfortable and on time, even in bad weather – no wet feet nor clothes – for the wagons haul them from their front door to the school, if they live more than a mile away, and haul ALL the little tots:*

*The pupils benefit directly by the improved teaching – with big classes there is rivalry among the pupils and school becomes interesting:*

*The school rooms themselves will be so pleasant that they will furnish inspiration to teachers and pupils alike:*

*The teaching equipment, from primary grades up, will be much better in the new school:*

*With five acres for playgrounds, and more than 300 children, each child will have many others of his or her own age and sex to play with, and plenty of playground room, ball grounds, tennis and basket ball courts, see-saws and swings, gymnasium, school will be so attractive they'd rather be there than at home:*

*The old unsanitary outhouses give way to modern sanitary toilet facilities throughout:*

*The old buildings, improperly designed, poorly lighted and ventilated, give way to an up-to-the-minute, absolutely fireproof building, better arranged, we believe, than any other building in the state, large enough for at least ten or fifteen years, economically designed and constructed, almost everlasting:*

*Olmsted Township “gets in the procession”, there are already 600 Ohio townships ahead of us, discarding the old, unsatisfactory schools that were good enough thirty years ago, when education was not so advanced as now, and getting the “real thing”, that will give the boys and*

*girls as good educational advantages at home as they could get in city schools:*

*The unsatisfactory three-year high school, lacking sufficient teachers and teaching equipment, with improper classroom facilities, condemned by the State Educational Department and allowed by it to continue only because of our proposed centralization, will be advanced to a first-grade, or four-year high school, provided with proper equipment, class rooms and sufficient teaching force, to equal City high schools:*

*This high school, instead of only about 12 pupils as now, will have from 60 to 70 in a few years, as the result of its improvement, and the very important fact that it is at home and within reach:*

*Manual training (carpentry, masonry, electrical work, etc.) for the boys and domestic science (cookery, sewing, millinery, nursing, etc.) for the girls, will be properly provided for and taught in special rooms in the new building:*

*Agriculture will be given an important place in the courses of study in the new school, and it will be practically demonstrated on the school's 5-acre agricultural plot:*

*The community will have a suitable place for a public library, in connection with the school library:*

*A comfortable auditorium will be available for all sorts of public meetings, day or night, centrally located, comfortable, convenient, meals at times can be served from the domestic science kitchen; spelling bees, literary societies, debates, concerts by school orchestra, etc., are going to arouse great interest in school as it never was aroused here before:*

*The school is going to raise property values all over the township a great deal more than it costs, experience elsewhere proves this, it's like paved roads.*

*The entire new school, with land, building, heating, plumbing, lighting, seating and equipment, eight wagons and barn for them, and architect's fee, will cost not more than \$5,000, the bond payments will be arranged so that they will be about equal each year for 30 or 35 years, and that the total additional yearly cost of the new school including these payments, over the present arrangement will be about \$5500, on an increased tax of \$2.90 per year per \$1,000 of assessed valuation.*

*The average valuation, after eliminating the railroads, etc., is somewhere around \$3500, on this valuation the additional cost would be*

*about \$10.00 a year, 20 cents a week. Is it worth this much to have your children trained for the battle of life? If you think it is, vote for the new school, next Tuesday.*

As promised, the new school was built and opened in 1916. As Walter Holzworth wrote in his 1966 history of Olmsted, the job of securing options for a school site was given to three men: Frank Hall, C.M. Durbin and L.L. Partch. They bought the property on the corner of Dutch Road (now Bagley Road) and Division Street (now Mapleway Drive) from the Cain and Garfield family, which had bought it from the Rathburns in 1909. It was farm land at the time.

“The option committee can now be praised for acquiring a fairly large parcel for future expansion when at the time a few overly conservatives thought the committee had gone land crazy,” Holzworth wrote. “Their extravagance was partially forgiven when on July 14, 1917 Herbert Ingersoll paid \$20.00 for the hay crop on the school ground.”

The new school was the first in Olmsted to offer four years of high school education. Previously, the most that the Union Schoolhouse offered was three years of high school. The small township schools offered less. Students from Olmsted Falls or Olmsted Township who wanted to earn high school diplomas had to go to neighboring communities, such as Berea and Elyria, to complete their education.

After the new school was built, the district sold most of the small schools around the township to the highest bidders. Holzworth wrote that school furnishings, outhouses and sheds associated with the schools were sold separately.

For example, the Gage family from Ruple Road bought the outhouses for the District #4 school for \$2.00 each. That school was along Barrett Road in the northeastern portion of the township. Holzworth wrote that the Metropolitan Parks board later acquired the school building, which served as a home until it was in poor condition and was torn down.

John Larsen bought the District #3 school and the grounds on which it stood along the south side of Cook Road between Stearns Road and McKenzie Road for \$900. Henry Surman bought the District #8 school along Sharp Road near Sprague Road for \$430. George Pohm, who was in the grocery business in Cleveland, bought the District #7 school along Dutch Road (now Bagley Road) and turned it into his home. Holzworth didn't note how much Pohm paid for it, but he wrote, “Mr. Pohm was one of the very few who was caught up with the idea of retirement to a small chicken farm who made a success of it.” The District #7 school was on the north side of what now is Bagley Road and was closer to Stearns Road than to Fitch Road, which would be roughly across the road from the site of the current Olmsted Falls Middle School.

When the new school opened in 1916, it was big enough to hold all of Olmsted's students, but that didn't last long. In 1926, the western half of the building was added. The section with the gymnasium, now the Olmsted Community Center, was built in 1938.



Another section on the western end with seven elementary classrooms was added in 1948. But with the post-World War II growth in the community, the school board eventually had to build other schools to hold all the children. Falls Elementary School opened in 1954 but soon was expanded in 1955 and 1957. Fitch Elementary School opened in 1958 and expanded in 1961. Lenox Elementary School opened in 1961. The district opened a new high school, the current one, in 1968 and expanded it a few times since then. In 1992, the Falls and Lenox buildings were joined to become Falls-Lenox Primary School. The current Olmsted Falls Middle School opened in 1996. In 2009, Olmsted Falls Intermediate School opened beside the middle school.



*The school doubled in size in 1926. The section to the left in this photo was added a decade after the original section on the right was built in 1916. The dates are on stones above the doorways.*

When the new middle school opened in the 1990s, it wasn't clear at first what would happen to the old school, which had been the middle school since the new high school opened. The school district sold it in 1997 to FirstNorth Development Corp. of Cleveland for \$225,000, which was almost three and a half times what it cost to build the original section in 1916. The western wing became a day care center. The main section



became City Hall. The section with the gymnasium became the Olmsted Community Center.

When Olmsted voters went to the polls 100 years ago this month, they really did approve a long-lasting building.

*The old school now houses City Hall and other functions.*

## Wedding Gardens House Had Ties to Illicit Romantic Past

A double dose of irony is part of the story of one of the buildings at Grand Pacific Junction. The little house at the corner of Mill and Orchard streets that developer Clint Williams nicknamed the Doll House because of its small size is credited as having been



*Now part of Grand Pacific Junction, this little house once was home to William TeGrotenhuis, who got into trouble for loving his neighbor.*

owner, TeGrotenhuis, got into trouble at least a couple of times for having affairs with other men's wives. This is known because news of his being sued over those affairs made it into the newspapers of the time. Here is how the *Berea Advertiser* reported the second of those lawsuits in its November 11, 1880, edition with an article titled "LOVE RHAPSODIES":

*His name is Wm. TeGrotenhuis, and he keeps a shoe shop on the east side of the Creek; she lives on the west side and answers to the name of Mrs. Lena TeLuida – both being of foreign extraction. The love existing between the couple forever ceased, Friday, when the party of the first part, answered to the charge of committing rape upon the party of the second part, the suit being instigated by her husband. The hearing was before Justice Griswold, Cleveland, and Wm. TeGrotenhuis was bound over to answer to the above charge. Witnesses who attended the hearing, say developments proved them to be "old lovers," and the depreciation placed upon chastity would cause a moralist to weep. "Billy" says he will prove an alibi. He was tried before the Probate Court for a similar charge three or four years ago, but was discharged.*

Subsequent issues of the newspaper did not make it clear what the outcome of that case was.

Clint Williams dates the TeGrotenhuis house back to about 1860, but as with the dates on several other Grand Pacific Junction buildings, that is just his best guess. The

the home of William TeGrotenhuis, an immigrant from Holland. Although the house had just four rooms and a dirt-floor basement with walls made of locally quarried sandstone, TeGrotenhuis in Dutch means "the big house." But that's not the only irony associated with the house.

The house now serves as a bridal cottage for the Grand Pacific Wedding Gardens, where 21<sup>st</sup> century couples begin their married lives. But in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, its

house apparently changed little for several decades because it reportedly had no plumbing or central heating until 1943.

When Williams acquired the house a couple of decades ago, he said, it had two bedrooms, a kitchen and a living room. “The people I bought it from had, I think, two kids [or] three kids,” he said. “And that was their home.”

By then, the basement had a concrete floor, but Williams said he could see how it might have had a dirt floor as late as the 1940s. “Could be because the chimney that was in the basement at that time was coal-fired,” he said. “There’s a coal bin out in front of it under the grass. I think it was probably coal-fired. It was probably in the middle of the basement. That’s normally how they did it.”



*Despite having only four rooms plus a basement, this building served as a home for many decades in the 1800s and 1900s.*

After the house became part of Grand Pacific Junction, it housed different retailers, including one that sold yarn and another that sold photographs. Three years ago, Williams put the house to a new use when he built the Grand Pacific Wedding Gardens that extend from the house down toward Plum Creek. The new facilities include a



*The facilities for the Wedding Gardens extend back from the little TeGrotenhuis house toward Plum Creek.*

pavilion with Greek-style pillars, a stone fireplace, an outdoor bar, flowered walkways and an amphitheater with enough seating for 125 people. It also has provided a new venue for concerts during

Olmsted Heritage Days each August. The Wedding Gardens joined the Grand Pacific Chapel and Grand Pacific Hotel in helping Olmsted Falls become a wedding center.



## Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include the next story in the series about Grand Pacific Junction and more.

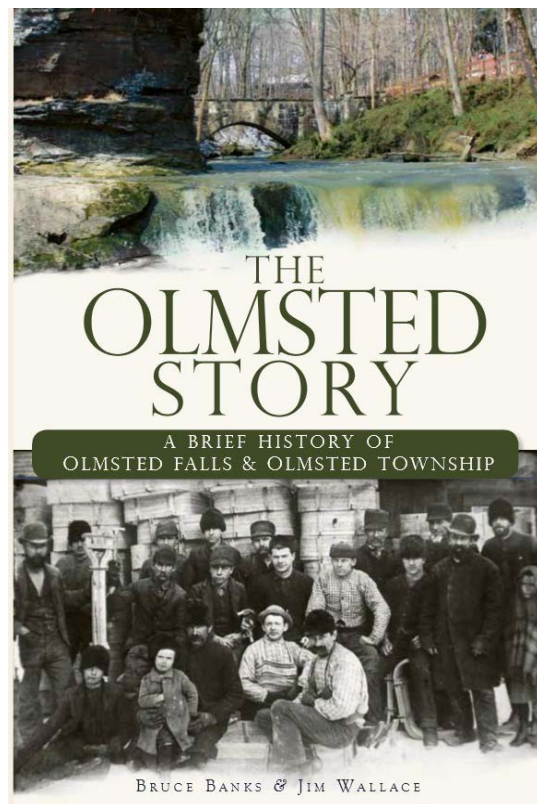
If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: [wallacestar@hotmail.com](mailto:wallacestar@hotmail.com). *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, 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](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, the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.



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