



Olmsted 200

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

Issue 61

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Olmsted's Adler Made Waves and Rocked Greater Cleveland

June is the time of year when the thoughts of many people – young and old – turn to summer fun, including swimming. For many years in the 1950s and 1960s, the place where many residents of Olmsted Township, Olmsted Falls and neighboring communities went swimming was Adler's Swim Club, which was located near the corner of Cook Road and Fitch Road.



This photo shows the original swimming pool. In the background is the building that was a residence connected to the Olmsted Lodge, which became the Corral. This and other photos courtesy of Rick Adler.

Right next to the swimming pools at 26910 Cook Road was the Corral, a popular nightspot for many years. During its heyday, the nightclub drew patrons from all around the area to hear some of the best local bands. Thus, many people who were young at that time still have fond memories of both Adler's Swim Club and the Corral, which had the same ownership.

“A lot of kids learned how to swim there,” Rick Adler, son of the owners, said recently. “A lot of people from the Corral eventually got married.”

In fact, when Adler and his wife bought a house in North Ridgeville not long ago, the woman selling the house told him that she and her husband not only met at the Corral but also got engaged there. “When I told my mom about it a couple of years ago, she goes, ‘Oh, my God. That makes me feel so good. We brought many young kids together in that Corral because a lot of people got married that met up there.’”

The driveway for both was located along Cook Road west of Olmsted Township Hall, about where the Greenbrooke Plaza shopping center stands now. It was a long driveway that veered to the right just before reaching the swimming pools and the Corral.



Rick Adler is the son of the late Howard and Marie Adler.



Houses along Fitch Road can be seen behind the pool for Adler’s Swim Club in this photo.

played there on weekends. The article said the hall also was used for private club dancing and parties.

That article was published when Howard Adler and Raymond Tober bought the facility for \$36,000. It said that Adler and his wife, Marie, planned to live in the residential section of the building.

“That was a lot of money back then,” Rick Adler said. “And the Olmsted Lodge was basically for the big bands. People would get dressed up and come in. It was a bring-your-own-bottle type thing.”

Howard Adler, who lived from April 13, 1921, until December 20, 2010, also played with big bands. During his years at Rhodes High School, from which he graduated

But before either the swimming pools were built or the Corral name was in use, a dance hall known as the Olmsted Lodge was built there in 1949. A newspaper clipping from 1950 referred to it as a combination of a log cabin home and a dance hall.

“The one-story building, made entirely of logs, has three bedrooms, living room, kitchen, bath and dance hall,” the article said. “The latter will accomodate [*sic*] 400 people. It is 50x145 feet and is situated on 2½ acres of land.”

The Olmsted Lodge was owned by Hugh Quinn, an orchestra leader and drummer whose band

in 1940, he played trumpet in the marching band and also in a local band called the RhythmAders. He learned the business of linoleum and tile after graduation and worked for Eskay Floors, but in 1942, Adler joined the orchestra of Russ Carlyle, who was one of the most popular singers of the time. He also served in the U.S. Army during World War II, but he did so stateside, playing in a band. After his military service, Adler returned to playing big band music around the country. While traveling with the orchestra in Cincinnati, he met Marie, whom he married in 1946. They traveled with the band for a year before returning to Cleveland and establishing a linoleum and tile store.



These two photos show people at the Olmsted Lodge in the 1950s. Rick Adler believes those on the right were dressed in costumes for a Halloween party.

However, by 1950, the music drew Howard Adler back with the opportunity to buy the Olmsted Lodge with his friend, Ray Tober. Sometime in the 1950s, Adler bought out Tober's interest in the facility.



These two photos show Howard Adler at the Corral. On the right, he is seated in the office.

In 1958, Adler built the first swimming pool at the site and started operation of Adler's Swim Club. It was like two pools in one, because a portion of the shallow end was fenced off and served as a kiddie pool. It also had a diving board at the deep end, but

as membership grew, Adler built a second pool just for diving with a one-meter-high board and a three-meter-high board.



The diving pool became a popular addition at Adler's Swim Club. The right photo shows the excavation for the diving pool's construction.

“The thing that made the diving pool so unique was it was all squared off,” Rick Adler said. “The diving pool was used only for diving. There was no swimming that was permitted in there. We used to watermelon and cannonball off those two boards to try to rock the waves as high as we could and get the water to flow out of it.”



Rick Adler believes the left photo shows his brother and his sister on the three-meter board at the diving pool. The right photo shows his brother Chuck, his sister Cindy and him at Adler's Swim Club.

In the early years, the refreshment stand for swimmers was behind the Olmsted Lodge, so they would have to walk across an area with a shuffleboard court and swings to get to it. Later, Howard Adler built a bathhouse for swimmers to change in and moved the refreshment stand closer to the pools.

Adler's Swim Club sold memberships, but Rick Adler said his father sometimes gave people a break on them. He recalled the story of one girl whose father was killed in an accident, which caused hardship for the family. “My dad went to them and said, ‘I realize you don't have the money to join the swim club, but don't ever worry about it because your membership will always be free as long as I own it.’”

In the early years, the Adler family lived in the residential section of the Olmsted Lodge. But in 1958, the family moved to a new house at 26924 Elizabeth Lane. Then Howard Adler converted what had been their living quarters into the Saber Lounge, which was a restaurant and bar for people ages 18 and over. "And he had a piano player in there with the full-blown piano and a bass player," Rick Adler said. However, that lasted only a few years.

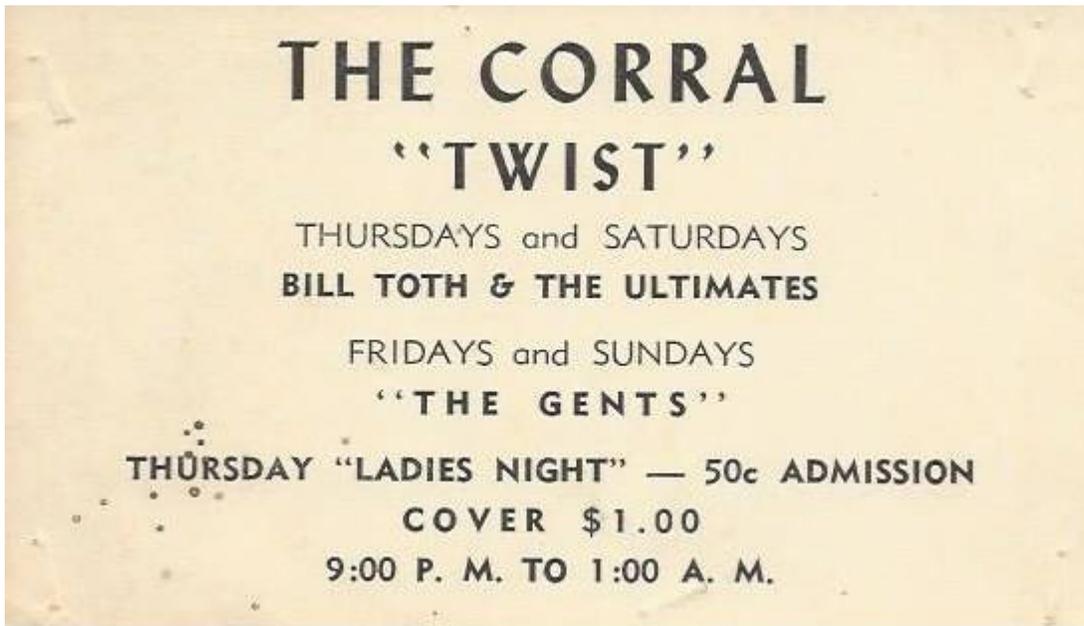


This photo shows the bathhouse Howard Adler built for his swim club.

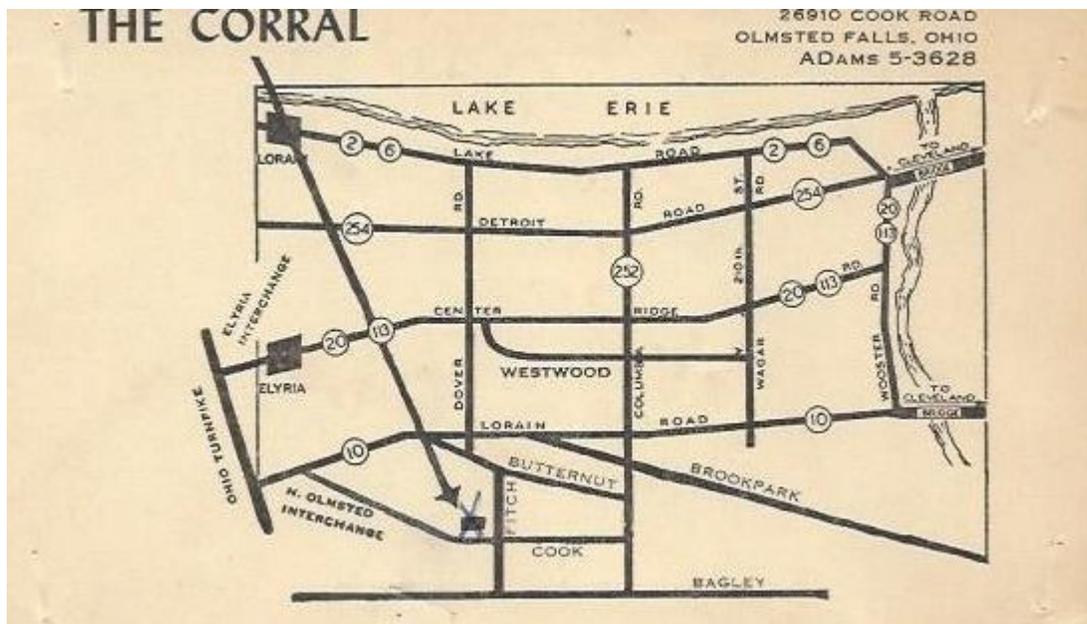
In 1961, Howard Adler turned the Olmsted Lodge into the Corral, which brought in rock-and-roll bands. At first, it was just for teenagers, those 18 years old and younger.

"And he had a group by the name of Dave C. and the Sharptones play there strictly for the kids," Rick Adler said. "That's all it was for. Then it became a pretty big thing."

Dave C. and the Sharptones were one of the most popular bands in the Cleveland area. They played Motown-style music at many popular spots on both the West Side and the East Side, recorded a few regional hits and became the house band on WEWS television's *Upbeat* show beginning in 1964.



This is a card that advertised the Corral in its early years. The reference to "Twist" indicates it is from the early 1960s when the Twist was a big dance craze.



This is the other side of the card showing people how to find the Corral in Olmsted Township, although it listed its location as Olmsted Falls. Note the old-style phone number with the prefix as “ADams 5” instead of “235,” which it became when all-digital phone numbers replaced the old system in the 1960s.

Rick Adler recalls leaving the Corral one Sunday evening early in 1964 and going over to the Saber Lounge to watch the television there. That was the night of February 9, when the Beatles made their first appearance on “The Ed Sullivan Show.” It was a big turning point for music and culture in America and a turning point for Howard Adler.

“This thing just went crazy,” Rick Adler said about rock music at the Corral.

His father incorporated the Saber Lounge into the Corral and turned it into one of the first places in the Cleveland area that booked rock bands for the 18-and-over crowd. Later, places like the Agora in Cleveland and the Coral Lounge on Center Ridge Road went after the same demographics.

In the 2002 book, *Rock ‘n’ Roll and the Cleveland Connection*, author Deanna R. Adams acknowledged the pioneering role the Corral played in establishing Cleveland as a hotbed for rock music and the eventual home of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame:

One of the first clubs to play live rock music was at 26910 Cook Road in Olmsted Township, originally called the Olmsted Lodge. Built in 1949, it was yet another popular lounge-type club, frequented by West Siders in particular. But it found new life in 1961 after it changed its name to the Corral and began catering to the emerging rock scene.

The Corral was open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings, and at times, Thursday evenings, as well. On Fridays and Saturdays, Rick Adler said, it was not unusual to have about 400 young people in there at one time.



This is Marie Adler, wife of Howard, cleaning at the Corral after it closed. She also would collect money from patrons at the door.

that Saber Lounge part, which was the house –the restaurant – and just stored cases and cases of beer there.”

Howard Adler gave the Corral a look to go with its name. “I remember he would buy wood and would take a blowtorch and just go up and down the wood to give it that rustic old – I want to say – cowboy look to it,” Rick Adler said. “And the bar was made from that. In fact, Danny Tober [son of Ray and a classmate of Rick], when he bought the Agora in Akron and went country-and-western years later, he did the same kind of look to it.”



These photos show the rustic look of the walls of the Corral. The man on the left was one of the bouncers. Rick Adler said

the bouncers wore vests to distinguish them from the troublemakers they sometimes had to remove from the establishment. The women on the right are the girlfriend of one of the bouncers and Marie Adler, mother of Rick and wife of Howard, at a Christmas party for the staff of the Corral.



“All the IDs were checked by the cop at the door,” he said. “My mom would collect the money.”

On Sundays, fewer people would show up, so his father would close off part of the building, and the show would go on.

“And he’d always have a band in there because his thought was, ‘If I can get the girls in here and get them dancing, the guys will follow and drink,’” Rick Adler said. “And that’s how it all came about. So eventually, it became so big and did so well that he just closed off

As time went on, business at the Corral became so good that Howard Adler lost interest in running the swimming pools. “He eventually said to Kiwanis, ‘If you want to rent them out, they’re yours,’” Rick Adler said, adding that the police chief ran the pools for a while.

Eventually, however, his father decided that the space occupied by the pools was more valuable to him as a parking lot. So he filled the pools in with dirt and made a bigger parking lot to serve the Corral. That occurred in the late 1960s, Rick Adler recalled, because his father “just went bonkers” after the Corral became successful.

The Corral soared high in popularity during the high school years of Rick Adler, who graduated from Olmsted Falls High School in 1966. “In fact, my graduation party was at the Corral,” he said, and his father hired one of his regular bands to play for the party.

The Corral hired bands like Montage, the Naturals and later Wild Horses that were known well in the Cleveland area at that time. But as the music evolved in the late



Rick Adler identified these women as girlfriends of bouncers at the Corral.

1960s into the 1970s, Howard Adler wasn’t always pleased with the performances of some bands. “My dad got tired of it because he would get these bands in there and they would just go off on their jam sessions.” Rick Adler said. “And he, being a musician – a very good musician that traveled the country with Russ Carlyle and other big bands out there – he said, ‘That’s it. I love the kids. I get along with them all well.’”

But he didn’t get along with the bands as well anymore, Rick Adler said. “So he sold the Corral to three guys.” One of those guys was involved with WMMS, which was an influential progressive rock station at that time. Rick Adler believes the sale occurred in the mid-1970s.

So what did Howard Adler do? He got back into the swimming pool business but with a twist that grew out of his involvement with horse racing.

“He had these racehorses,” his son said. “In fact, one of them he named Rick Come Home because at the time I was in Vietnam, and I was shot three times.... But he eventually went and built a swimming pool at Northfield racetrack, which I’m sure is still there to this day, and he would have horses swim in it.”

The horses that swam there included pacers and trotters from Northfield, as well as thoroughbreds from Thistledown racetrack.

“When horses would have injuries, it would be tough to get them back out on the track again because of that constant pounding on them,” Rick Adler said. “A lot of times in the wintertime, they’d be racing and the track would be frozen, so his thought was, if they could train swimming, they’d use more muscles swimming than they do out on the track. And it was proved that horses that swim would do better, and since then, I guess, they got swimming pools all over the country for these horses nowadays.”

Rick Adler doesn’t know if his father was the first person to put racehorses into a swimming pool, but he believes he was the first to do it in the Cleveland area.

The Corral went on as a popular nightspot for several years after the Adlers sold it. But on Monday, January 18, 1982, it was destroyed by fire. According to newspaper reports, Ed Dougan, a 23-year-old Clevelander who was a bass player with the rock band Lude McDude, stopped by to pick up some band equipment when he discovered the fire about 3:45 p.m. He told police he found the front door shattered and smoke billowing out when he arrived. He entered the building and saw a frightened teenager standing behind a wall of flames. Dougan recognized the boy as a 14-year-old who sometimes would chat with band members before their performances at the Corral.

According to a story in the *Elyria Chronicle-Telegram*, Dougan sent his fiancée to alert police while he tried to remove the boy, whom he referred to as “very slow.” After the boy said, “I can’t move,” Dougan found a way around the flames and carried him out. Dougan then tried to use beer pitchers filled with water to battle the flames, but heat and smoke forced him out.

Firefighters from Olmsted Township, Olmsted Falls and North Olmsted battled the fire for about five hours, but they could not save the building. Dan Toth, who was Olmsted Township’s assistant fire chief, called the fire “fully involved” by the time firefighters arrived. Thirteen of the firefighters had to be treated at Southwest General Hospital for smoke inhalation. Damage to the building was estimated at \$500,000. Sam LaPonza, son of the Corral’s owner and manager of both the Corral and Lude McDude, said the band lost \$19,000 worth of equipment in the fire.

Later, the 14-year-old boy’s sister brought him to Olmsted Township Police, where he admitted starting the fire but would not say why. The *News Sun* cited Police Chief Richard Masielle as saying the boy told police he used a pipe to break two glass doors to get into the Corral shortly before 3:30 that Monday afternoon. The paper quoted



This photo of the Corral is labeled: “Everyone is gone.”

Masielle as saying, “He said he started the fire in some garbage cans and from there it caught the rest of wall in the building.”

Toth suggested the boy might have been inspired by a show about firefighting he had watched on television. “From what we’ve pieced together, the previous night’s Code Red on TV almost parallels what happened here,” the *News Sun* quoted him as saying. Toth added that he didn’t like shows like *Code Red* because they were “too suggestive and somebody somewhere will pick up that stuff and employ it against society.”

Shortly after the fire, Fred LaPonza, who then owned the Corral, promised to rebuild it.

“The Corral will be back,” he told the *News Sun*. “Without the Corral we won’t have new bands in Cleveland.”

The newspaper noted that there were times when the Corral filled up and thousands of fans had to be turned away from performances by such bands as Brownsville Station, Circus, Love Affair, Rainbow Canyon, Fairweather, Wild Horses, Tommy James and the Shondells, Freddie Boom-Boom Cannon and Magic, which later became Eric Carmen’s band.

However, the *News Sun* also reported that the Corral had recently been cited by the Ohio Liquor Control Commission for two violations. One was for staging a wet T-shirt contest on July 5, 1981. The other was for advertising the retail price of malt liquor in a newspaper before June 17, 1981. If it hadn’t burned down, the Corral would have had its liquor license suspended from February 7 through February 12, 1982.

Despite LaPonza’s promise, he never rebuilt the Corral. That ended more than three decades of activities that had made the corner of Cook and Fitch perhaps the most popular spot in Olmsted Township.

Considering that his father and Ray Tober paid \$36,000 for the Olmsted Lodge in 1950 and the Corral was estimated to be worth \$500,000 when it burned down in 1982, Rick Adler said, “I thought, that’s not a bad investment.”



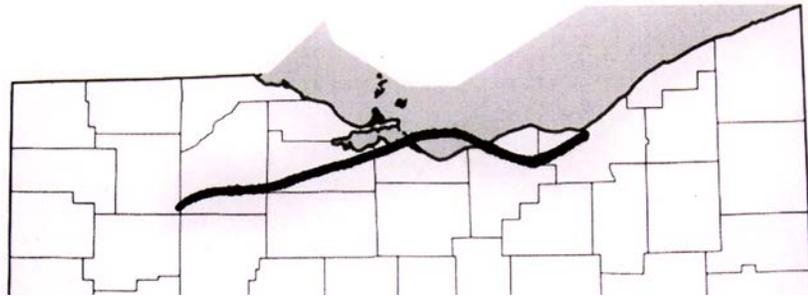
Greenbrooke Plaza shopping center along Cook Road west of Fitch Road stands where the entrance to Adler’s Swim Club and the Corral once was located.

Olmsted Had a Close Call with a Tornado

This month marks the 65th anniversary of a dangerous day in northern Ohio. On Monday, June 8, 1953, a deadly tornado either passed over or very close to Olmsted Township and Olmsted Falls before passing by Hopkins Airport and causing heavy destruction in the West Park section of Cleveland.

The tornado began near the border of Henry County and Wood County southwest of Bowling Green. Between about 7:00 and 10:00 p.m., it traveled more than 110 miles through Wood, Sandusky, Erie, Lorain and Cuyahoga counties before exiting over downtown Cleveland.

“The twister left 17 dead and approximately 400 injured in its path,” meteorologist Marvin E. Miller wrote in *The Ohio Journal of Science* for November 1969. “Numerous reports of hail up to one and one-half inches in diameter were received. The storm resulted in \$13,410.00 in crop damage and \$19,320,000 in property damage. Major property damage was in the Cleveland area.”



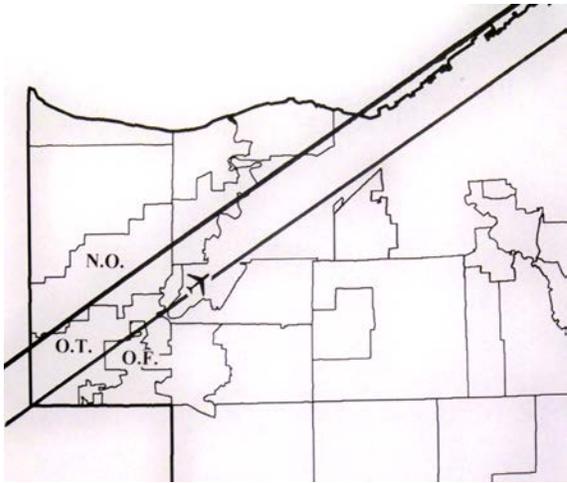
This was the tornado's path through northern Ohio.

The Ohio tornado was just one of many tornadoes that day that swept across several states, including Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, New York, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Ohio's tornado was one of six that later were rated F4 on the Fujita Tornado Damage Scale (developed in 1971), which means winds were estimated to be from 207 to 260 miles per hour – enough to cause devastating damage that could level well-constructed houses.

That's what happened on the West Side of Cleveland, where it killed nine people, five of them in one home. The path of the tornado was about half a mile wide.

“Ohio National Guard troops were posted in the W. 130th Street area, where looting was feared in some 100 homes demolished,” the *Plain Dealer* reported. “Meanwhile auxiliary police searched debris of a collapsed house at 1772 W. 28th Street for five persons believed trapped in the wreckage.”

Frank Kalamajka, who grew up in Olmsted Township at 6880 Fitch Road (after his family moved from Westlake when he was very young) was born more than a year after the tornado hit, but reports about it have made him wonder whether it touched down or passed over Olmsted Township.



The tornado probably traveled within this corridor, which took it along the Olmsted Township-North Olmsted border and then past Hopkins Airport into Cleveland.

there because the township was mostly farmland then.

“Still, it’s amazing there was a touchdown of this killer tornado and no one was hurt in our area,” he wrote recently. “My cousin, who lived in Brook Park, near the airport, was nicknamed ‘Tordy’ for years afterwards, as her mom was in delivery with her in their basement as the neighborhood was being smashed. Somehow they were spared. Her dad would always say, ‘It sounded like a freight train coming through.’”

One photograph of the tornado caught it swirling through a field on the northwestern side of Hopkins Airport near what then was the Lewis Flight Propulsion Laboratory, which has become the National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s Glenn Research Center. The airport is just northeast of Olmsted Township, so it seems unlikely that the tornado got there without passing through at least a small section of the township. It was estimated to be at the F2 level then. It became as strong as F4 only after it went farther into Cleveland.

Olmsted residents did not have to look too far away to see the type of destruction they barely missed. The tornado

Judging by maps of the tornado’s path, that seems possible, although hard to prove at this late date. It looks as though the tornado headed southeast as it passed north of Elyria and then turned northeast at North Ridgeville. It then likely crossed into Cuyahoga County about 9:45 p.m. somewhat along the border between North Olmsted and Olmsted Township as it headed past Hopkins Airport and toward downtown Cleveland. The tornado was reported to have lifted off the ground before it passed over the Terminal Tower and disappeared over Lake Erie near East 40th Street.

Kalamajka speculated that Olmsted Township might have been spared serious damage even if the tornado touched down



This photo caught the tornado near Hopkins Airport. Note the planes on the left.

hit Cleveland's West Park section especially hard. The "History of the West Park Neighborhood" website documents that destruction with many accounts of the ordeal and photos of the destruction in that neighborhood. It can be viewed at:

<http://westparkhistory.com/tornado1953/tornado1953.htm>.

Thanks go to Frank Kalamajka for suggesting the story about the 1953 tornado and for sharing his family's experience with it.

In the Beginning, Olmsted Hailed the Jail

Olmsted Falls can take pride in many of its current attributes, including a beautiful park in the middle of the city and its business district with many restored and repurposed buildings. But 140 years ago this month, the community took pride in what then was a new building.

"The new jail is now completed," the Berea newspaper, then called the *Republican and Advertiser*, reported in its Olmsted Falls column for June 27, 1878. "The structure contains two cells and one hall. What adjoining township can say as much?"

That jail that was new in 1878 is now one of the old, restored buildings that make up Grand Pacific Junction. It houses the Emerald Winds Honey Shoppe.

Also in that 1878 edition of the *Republican and Advertiser* was this item: "It is reported that a raspberry festival will be held in the Town Hall on Friday evening of this week."

A new jail and a raspberry festival – such was life in Olmsted Falls in June 1878.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include a story about a housing development that stirred up much controversy in Olmsted Township 70 years ago and one about a physician who lived and worked in Olmsted Falls.

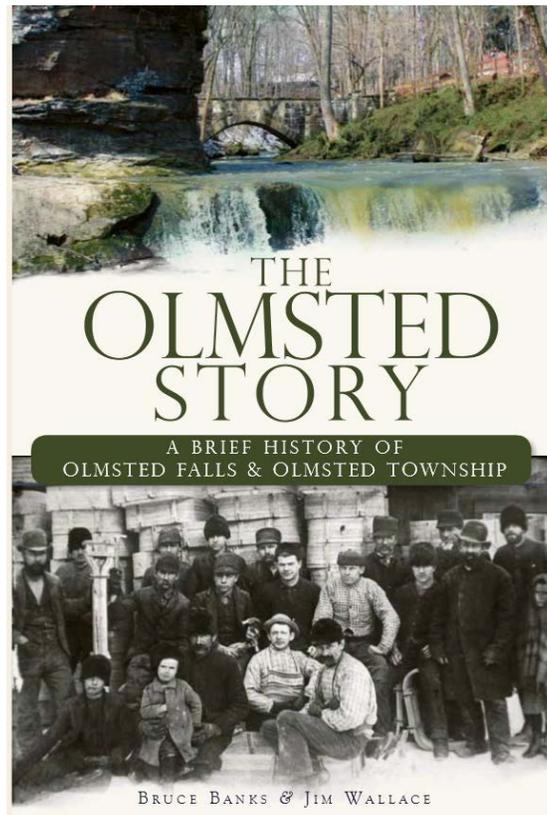
If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: wallacestar@hotmail.com. *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, West Virginia, Florida, New York, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Maine, as well as overseas in the Netherlands, Germany 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://olmstedtownship.org/newsletters/>. A list of *Olmsted 200* issues is on the right side. Click on the number of the issue you want to read. All of the issues of *Olmsted 200* also are available on the website of the City of Olmsted Falls. Find them at: http://www.olmstedfalls.org/olmsted_falls_history/index.php. A link to *Olmsted 200* can be found on the left side of the page.

Except where otherwise noted, all articles in *Olmsted 200* are written by Jim Wallace. Thanks go to Mary Louise King for help in proofreading and editing many issues. Written contributions and photos, as well as comments and questions about items in this newsletter, will be considered for publication. Send any correspondence by email to: wallacestar@hotmail.com.

Olmsted 200 is written, researched and edited by Jim Wallace, who is solely responsible for its content. He is co-author (with Bruce Banks) of ***The Olmsted Story: A Brief History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township***, published in 2010 by The History Press of Charleston, S.C. ***The Olmsted Story*** is available at the Village Bean in Olmsted Falls and the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.



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