



Olmsted 200

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

Issue 64

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Contents

“New” High School Gets New Space	1
School and Bridge Stories Stir Readers’ Memories	5
Origin of Herb Street’s Name Is Corroborated	8
Still to Come	11

“New” High School Gets New Space

Half a century ago, the site of the new Olmsted Falls High School was still a construction zone with workers putting the finishing touches on the school even as students entered their classrooms for the first time early that September. As the school marks the 50th anniversary of its opening this month, it again is a construction zone as it is being expanded by almost 40,000 square feet on three sides, while about 49,500 square feet of existing space is being renovated for a total cost of \$21.9 million. And school again opens in early September before construction is finished.

This is what construction at the high school looked like late in May. The pace of work picked up after the school year ended.



The reason for the expansion is the same as the reason the high school was built in 1967 and 1968: growth in the student population as new housing developments have sprung up around Olmsted Township and Olmsted Falls. In recent years, some classes had to be held in trailers outside the building. The expansion eliminates the need for those trailers.



In recent years, some classes were held in trailers outside the high school because of the size of the student body.



This is another view of construction at Olmsted Falls High School from late May.

The construction was made possible by voters' approval in the November 2016 election of a bond issue and permanent improvement levy. School system officials referred to it as a "zero new taxes" proposal. That's because a previous 5-mill bond issue and a five-year permanent improvement levy were scheduled to expire by the end of 2016. In addition, another 0.5 mill issue was scheduled to go away at the end of 2017. What the school district asked for in the 2016 election was a combination of a 2.2-mill bond issue for 35 years and a 1-mill continuous permanent improvement levy. Thus, the 3.2-mill tax increase the district requested was less than the 5.5 mills of taxes that were ending. It was estimated that homeowners would save at least \$63 per year for every \$100,000 of valuation.

That deal was good enough for more than 59 percent of voters. The bond issue and levy passed with 6,678 votes in favor and 4,556 votes against.

On October 19, 2017, members of the board of education joined members of the construction team for a ceremonial groundbreaking. Turner Construction is the construction management company for the project, while Architectural Vision Group, Ltd., is the architectural firm.

This is the addition on the east side of the building for business and Fab Lab classrooms as seen in early August.



The addition on the east side of the building is for three business classrooms and Fab Lab space, which is a partnership with Polaris Career Center. A fab lab is a fabrication laboratory, which typically has computer-controlled tools for use in solving problems. Such labs are being incorporated into many schools across the country.



This is another view of the addition on the east side of the high school, as seen in early August.

The south side of the building is getting a new section with nine up-to-date science classrooms and four art classrooms. It is taking the place of the open courtyard that was just south of the cafeteria. It is the largest of the three expansions.

These August photos (right and below) show the addition for science and art classrooms on the south side.



The new section on the west side of the building includes larger band and choir classrooms, which were needed because of the growth in the number of students participating in those programs. That section also includes a scene shop for Masquers, a green room area and increased storage space for theater equipment, props and musical equipment.



These photos from early August show the northwestern corner of the building with the new section next to the auditorium for band and choir classrooms, a green room and storage for scenery and theater equipment.

Included in the renovations of existing space is the cafeteria, so it can have a Bulldog Café that is separate from the main kitchen and serving area. The café will have extended hours beyond those of the cafeteria, allowing students and others to be able to buy snacks and beverages even after the end of the school day. Renovations to the library/media center include an open space design with smaller, enclosed meeting/study rooms around it.

Construction began during the last school year, but the pace increased after the school year ended when the number of construction workers doubled from about 60 to about 120. The work on the additions and renovations is scheduled to be finished this fall. Because of the construction, the start of the school year, which has been in August in

recent years, has been pushed back to September 6 – 50 years plus two days after the school opened for students in 1968.

For more information about the construction at Olmsted Falls High School, see the school district’s OFHS Construction Project webpage at: <http://www.ofcs.net/Content2/ofhsconstructionupdate>. It has included updates on the progress of construction, a live webcam showing construction activities and architectural images of what parts of the school will look like after construction is completed.

By mid-August, the school district reported that construction was on schedule “for substantial completion of the new renovations before the opening” of the school year. The new wings were on schedule for completion by the end of October.

It is interesting to reflect how much the changes of today seem to parallel the changes of the past. Exactly 50 years ago this month, classes began in the new high school, which succeeded the consolidated school that had been built a bit more than 50 years before that. This month, classes begin in the expanded high school. If the school system follows a similar pattern, perhaps the high school will be replaced or renovated again in another 50 years.



Although construction at the high school delayed the start of classes until September, Charles A. Harding Stadium was ready for the opening of football season on August 24.

School and Bridge Stories Stir Readers’ Memories

The stories last month in Issue 63 of *Olmsted 200* about the construction of Olmsted Falls High School 50 years ago and the construction of the Charles A. Harding Memorial Bridge 20 years ago to replace the dilapidated steel bridge on Main Street prompted many responses from readers.

“Seems like yesterday we were the first graduating class of the ‘new’ school,” Denny Shirer wrote on Facebook. “So many memories, good and bad. Thankfully 50 years has dulled the bad ones and made the good ones that much more precious.”

Also on Facebook, Dottie Rigo said, “Nothing like putting our age in perspective. But I still call it the new high school.” She also liked the story about the bridge and said she recognized almost every name mentioned in that issue.



Here is a piece of memorabilia from the early years of Olmsted Falls High School. This is one of the shirts issued in the late 1960s and early 1970s for use in physical education classes.

About the bridge, Joe Del Pizzo wrote on Facebook: “Looking at the picture of that flimsy railing under the old bridge, it’s a wonder we never tumbled over riding our bikes down the hill.”

In an email, Lisa (Kunberger) Woodcock, who graduated from Olmsted Falls High School in 1972, wrote: “Who knew when we entered Fitch

Elementary that the school was only a year old or that we were destined to be the first class to fully attend a new school as teenagers? Reading about the ‘new’ high school still stirs up quite a feeling of pride for our school district and a wealth of memories. Today’s ‘mega-schools’ such as my sons attended here in Texas can never deliver the thorough education we received. They also go to great lengths to try to create a feeling of school/community connection but typically never achieve it for all students. We took it for granted, the happy reality of a smaller community.”

As he has done before, Mike Gibson, who now lives in



This August 1967 photo shows the former Main Street Bridge as seen from Plum Creek. Photo courtesy of Mike Gibson.

Oregon, responded with both memories of Olmsted and photos from the past. He said he enjoys reading about Olmsted's history, especially when it touches on subjects he remembers from his childhood.

“About the bridge over Plum Creek: I remember it being much more overgrown and greener below the bridge,” Gibson wrote. To illustrate his point, he shared a photo of the former steel bridge taken from the creek below it in August 1967, a few years after his family moved away from Olmsted Falls.



This photo from May 12, 1953, shows students in the kindergarten class that met in Olmsted Falls Village Hall because of overcrowding in what was the district's only school before Falls Elementary opened. Photo courtesy of Mike Gibson.

“About Olmsted Falls High School – both 1916 and 1968: I started kindergarten in 1952-53,” Gibson wrote. “My class (OFHS 1965) went back and forth between the 1916 building (grades 1, 4, 7 through 12) and the ‘new elementary building’ (grades 2, 3, 5, 6). It seems, when I was in first grade in 1953-54, that I am part of the last group in Olmsted Falls history where every kid was in school in the 1916 building.”

Gibson also said, “In kindergarten we were in the fire station. Very cool!!!!” That’s a reference to the former Olmsted Falls Village Hall, where the Moosehead restaurant now is.

In addition, Gibson shared a photo of his second-grade class in the first year of operation of Falls Elementary School. Of that, he wrote: “That’s me in the [second] row in the silly bow tie. BUT!! The little kid over the sign in the grade 2 photo is my friend, and future Olmsted Falls mayor, David Fortier.”



This photo of a second-grade class at Falls Elementary School was taken on April 27, 1955. Photo courtesy of Mike Gibson.

Fortier served as mayor of Olmsted Falls beginning in January 1984,

but his term was cut short when he died in a car-truck accident in Columbia Township on February 21, 1986, when he was 38 years old. The city named David Fortier River Park in his honor.

Mike Gibson attended Olmsted Falls schools from kindergarten through 11th grade, but he moved with his family to Los Angeles in 1964 before his senior year in high school.

Another reader, Patrick Carroll, who graduated from Olmsted Falls High School in 1972, shared a funny memory of the old steel bridge on Main Street from his younger years: “Brian Fenderbosch and I (he was in the class of 1974), used to hang around the bridge and subsequent park below many a summer day. Often, the daredevil in us (or was it plain teenage foolishness?) would have us scale the angular beams at the entrance to the bridge, and sit atop the cross beams and holler at people driving by. They never knew if it were ghosts or the voice of God communicating to them from the heavens!”

Origin of Herb Street’s Name Is Corroborated

New confirmation has emerged that Herb Street in the southern section of Olmsted Falls that once was West View was named for a man who had lived there: Herbert Charles Ingersoll. That confirmation comes from his great-granddaughter, Amy Young, who found online the story about Herb Street’s name in Issue 59 of *Olmsted 200* from April.

In the April story, David Kennedy said a former Olmsted Falls mayor once told him about a conversation he had had with Ingersoll’s son, Russell. The Ingersoll family’s house, which was built in 1888, was at 25742 Herb Street. The story the mayor heard was that the elder Ingersoll was asked by a community official what the street should be named and he suggested giving it the shortened version of his first name.

“The street was absolutely named after Herbert Charles Ingersoll (my great grandpa) and the street just to the south, Chapin Street, was named after his wife Mary Hazel Chaplin’s family!” Young wrote after a recent visit to that neighborhood.



This photo shows Herbert Charles Russell as a young man. Photo courtesy of Amy Young.

Russell Vernon Ingersoll was Young's great uncle. In his later years, he lived with her family in Rocky River until his death on January 9, 1991. Young turned 11 years old in 1991.

"Uncle Rusty was great friends with a man named Ransom Bronson growing up," she wrote. "There is a street named after Mr. Bronson's family also!" Young said. She has many photos of family life in and around Herb Street and portrait-style photos of the family. She has shared a few photos here with *Olmsted 200* and some of her memories:

I have been to the little yellow house on Herb Street many, many times. I remember the Prince Albert tobacco cans that held cookies in the kitchen, the depression era glassware we ate off of, Uncle Rusty's Purple Heart medal from WWII, and the children's primer books that Uncle Rusty, my grandma, and my great grandparents all used for schooling in a glass fronted cabinet in an upstairs bedroom.



This photo from about 1939 shows Amy Young's grandparents, Ethel Mae (Ingersoll) Scott and Allen James Scott sitting on a swing on the Herb Street property in what then was West View and now is part of Olmsted Falls. She was about 16 years old. He was about 18 years old. Photo courtesy of Amy Young.

Uncle Rusty drew his bath water from a pump, heated it, and carried it to his claw foot bathtub in the main floor bathroom. I also remember sitting outside under the huge buckeye tree listening to him play his harmonica.

Young wrote that her childhood memories of visiting the Ingersoll family prompted her to buy a home in the West View section of Olmsted Falls 10 years ago.

"In another twist of fate, the woods that used to exist in the exact spot where my home is were where my father conducted many an adventure in what he called 'Grandma's Woods,'" she added.

Her grandfather, Allen James Scott, married Ethel Mae Ingersoll, who grew up in the Herb Street house.

"I have wonderful letters between my grandma and grandpa when he was serving in the U.S. Army Air Corps as a mechanic during WWII," Young wrote. "He was deployed to Japan after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. My favorite is the letter that he wrote to her about finally coming home

from war and his hope to be home to celebrate their anniversary a few months in the future. Sadly he was home only a short while when diagnosed with cancer and passed away at the young age of 34 leaving behind the love of his life and two small children: my father who was 8 and his sister Terri who I believe was under 5 years old. My grandparents were childhood friends and went on to become high school sweethearts. [They] never had eyes for anyone else and my grandma never dated or married again!

Her brother, Russell Ingersoll, played a significant role in my dad's life after his father passed away. Hence why he was so close to us and why I spent so much time on Herb Street."



The photo to the left shows Amy Young's great uncles, Russell and George Ingersoll, on the grounds of the Herb Street property in about 1940. Russell is in his Army uniform, while George wears his Sohio gas station uniform. The photo on the right from about 1910 shows Young's grandparents, Herbert Charles Ingersoll and Mary Hazel Chapin Ingersoll. Herb Street is named for him. Chapin Street is named for her family. Photos courtesy of Amy Young.

In addition, Young found another reference in *Olmsted 200* to her great-grandfather that connects him to the school built in 1916 that was partially replaced 50 years ago by construction of the current Olmsted Falls High School. A story in Issue 30 from November 2015 quoted Walter Holzworth from his 1966 book on Olmsted history about how much land the school board purchased along Bagley Road before building the 1916 school.

"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."

Thanks to Amy Young for sharing the story of her family and confirming not only how Herb Street got its name but also explaining how Chapin Street got its name. Street names often have much history behind them, but sometimes that history gets lost as families responsible for the street names move on and pass away. Thus, it is good to preserve that history whenever it can be found.

Do you know the story of the naming of any of street or road around Olmsted Falls or Olmsted Township? If so, please share it with *Olmsted 200* readers. Send the information to wallacestar@hotmail.com. If you also have photos to help illustrate a story, as Amy Young did, please share them, too.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will address one of the longest-running errors about Olmsted history that has been repeated for many decades, as well as other stories about the history of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township.

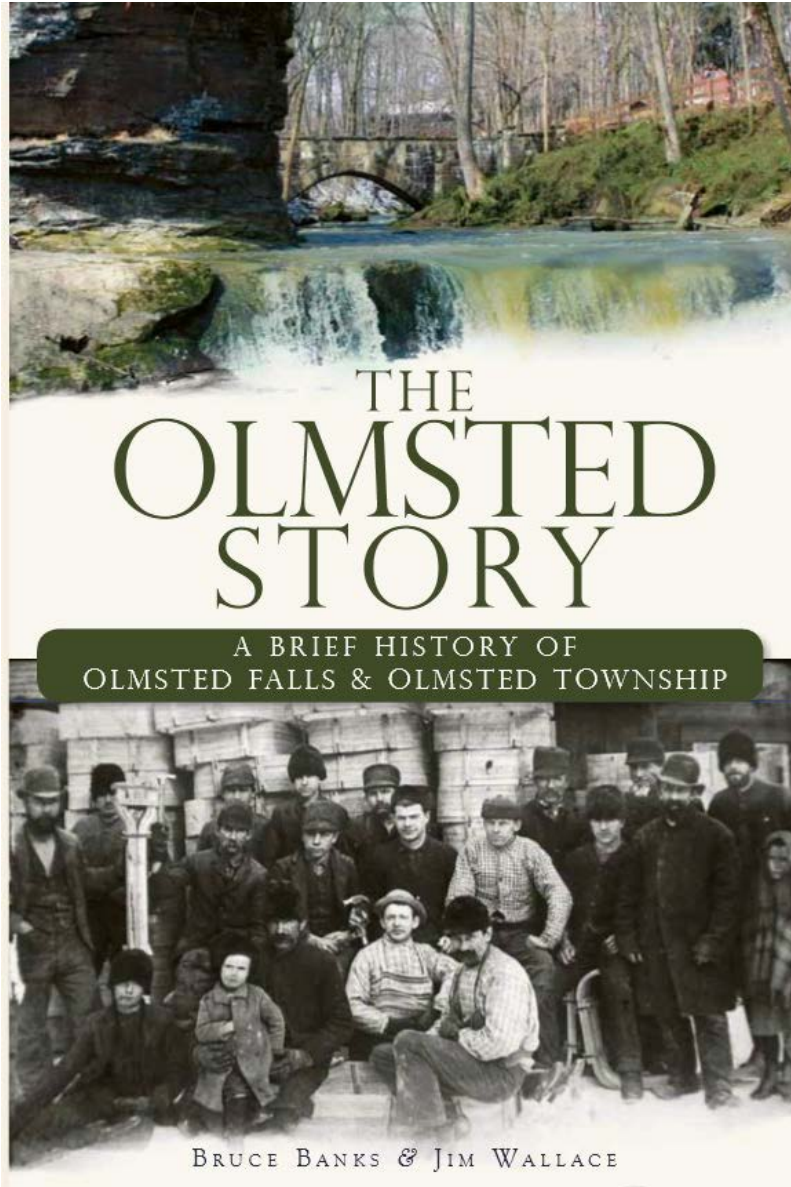
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Your questions and comments about *Olmsted 200* are welcome. Perhaps there is something about Olmsted's history that you would like to have pulled out of *Olmsted 200*'s extensive archives. Or perhaps you have information or photos about the community's 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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