



# Olmsted 200

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

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## Grand Pacific Hotel Got an Old Name and a Fresh Look

*This is the fourth 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 each issue since then.*

The Grand Pacific Hotel certainly is a prominent building in downtown Olmsted Falls, but its historic name is a bit of a misnomer. It brings to mind French Enlightenment writer Voltaire's comment about the Holy Roman Empire. He said it was "neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire." The Grand Pacific Hotel is no longer a hotel and hasn't been since 1892, when Joseph Peltz and Philip Simmerer bought it to serve as their hardware store. The building also is almost 2,500 miles away from the Pacific Ocean. However, it could be considered grand, at least in the context of Olmsted Falls, where few buildings have more than two stories.

Nevertheless, the name is useful. First, it reincarnates the name the building bore for a brief period in the 1800s. Second, it is distinctive and unlike the name of any other building in the area. Third, it provides a brand for the whole section of historic buildings renovated and put to new uses by developer Clint Williams: Grand Pacific Junction.

Like its name, the building itself is a reflection of its past, but it doesn't represent exactly the way it was at any specific time in its history. Clint Williams restored the building in a manner that represented the past but also gave it a modern function as a banquet hall.



*A sofa sale was advertised in the windows of what was Kucklick's Village Square Annex in the years between the building's use as a hardware store and its renovation as the Grand Pacific Hotel.*

description of the building:

## KUCKLICK'S ANNEX

8112 Columbia Road – Built about 1811 or 1812 for a seminary, in 1850 was made into a hotel by Grand Pacific Railroad and sold in 1888 for hardware store remaining in the Simmerer family, who operated the hardware business until 1971. Then bought by Kucklicks – since then occupied as their Furniture Warehouse and Showroom.

After their street address, that ad didn't get much right. The building could not have been constructed in 1811 or 1812 because that was a few years before the first white settlers – James Geer and his family – moved in 1815 into what later became Olmsted Township and, still later, Olmsted Falls. As noted earlier in this series, the building now known as the Grand Pacific Hotel was built a generation later about 1840. It was moved across Rocky River to its current location in 1858 – not 1850 – and it was sold to Peltz and Simmerer four years later than the ad says. Also, no railroad by the name of Grand Pacific ever ran through Olmsted. (Western Canada once had the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. The closest it got to Ohio was Winnipeg, Manitoba.) And the railroad had nothing to do with the hotel that operated in the late 1800s, except to bring lodgers to Olmsted Falls. However, it is interesting that the ad used the words “Grand Pacific,” well before anyone realized the building later would reclaim that name. And to be fair,

When Williams bought that building, as well as other buildings on the site, in late 1989, it had served for almost two decades as an extra showroom and warehouse for Kucklick's Village Square Shoppe, a furniture store that was located nearby in the Depositors Building. Bill Kucklick called it Kucklick's Village Square Annex. Fittingly for someone who sold Early American-style furniture, he played up the history of the building, although he didn't always get that history correct. One of his ads that appeared in the *Plain Dealer* on July 18, 1979, included this

Kucklick was not the first person, and far from the last, to get facts about Olmsted history wrong.

It was during the years when Kucklick owned the building that it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Its date of entry is listed as October 10, 1975. It was noted for being an example of Greek Revival-style architecture.

As Williams began renovating that building, as well as others, in the early 1990s, it wasn't clear to him what new use the building might have. One photo from his collection shows the building early in the process painted yellow and bearing the name, Grand Pacific Hardware Co., although its hardware days were long past.



*The yellow color and Grand Pacific Hardware name were used temporarily while Clint Williams renovated several buildings to create Grand Pacific Junction.*

At that time, the building still had an enclosed stairway on the Mill Street side. That stairway was added in the early 1900s to allow people to get to the doctor's and dentist's offices on the second floor without having to go through the hardware store on the first floor. Williams removed it. That allowed him to install more windows on the south side of the building and let more natural light inside.



*This photo shows the building after the enclosed stairway had been removed but before new windows were installed on the south side.*

Williams both added to and subtracted from the building. For example, before renovation, only two dormers stuck out from the roof on the south side. The renovation added two dormers on that side and four on the other side. In addition to putting in windows, Williams reconfigured doors and removed a step that didn't belong with the building. He added a room on the north side, restored

a staircase in the middle of the building and installed a wooden bar in the rear.

At times during renovation, the building had wide gaps in its sides as construction workers fixed it up, reconfigured it and updated it to maintain an old appearance while allowing for modern uses.

*This view of the building, taken from a video, shows how extensively workers tore it apart before putting it back together again. This is the north side away from Mill Street in an area that later received an additional room off of the main banquet room.*



*The white stripe in this photo shows where the enclosed stairway had been removed. This was at a time when the south side of the building was being refitted for new windows on the Mill Street side. Looking at the windows*

*today, it is hard to tell that they had not been there all along. Compare this picture to earlier pictures to see how the building changed during the renovation process.*

*This photo, dated May 10, 1992, shows the western end of the building that now contains the big wooden bar. (A photo on page 5 in Issue 21 of **Olmsted 200** shows Clint Williams standing at that bar.) As work progressed, the*



*blank panel above the door and windows was repainted with the Peltz & Simmerer name. (See page 1 of Issue 23 of **Olmsted 200** for a photo of its current appearance.)*



*This photo from when only part of the building had been painted white shows a new room being added onto the north side looking out toward the brick walkway that runs between the Grand Pacific Hotel and the former Simmerer house. Note that the carriage, light poles and at least one bench had been installed before renovation of the hotel building was finished.*



*This pair of pictures from the upper floors of the building shows how the interior was stripped before being rebuilt.*



*Since the renovation, the upper floors of the Grand Pacific Hotel show off their wooden floors, as well as period-appropriate chests, tables, chairs, lamps other furniture and rugs gathered by Clint Williams. Although the upper floors are not always open to the public, they usually are during Olmsted Heritage Days, which is a good time to*

*explore the Grand Pacific Hotel and other buildings at Grand Pacific Junction. This year, Olmsted Heritage Days will be held August 6-9.*

“It being a historical building, you just have to jump through hoops to get anything done,” Williams said after overcoming many obstacles to complete his Grand Pacific Junction renovations. “I think any building can be restored if you want to take the effort and time to do it. You really have to start from the ground up.”

The renovation of the Grand Pacific Hotel was completed in August 1992, which was almost three years after Williams had bought the building and others on the site from Bill Kucklick. Since then, it has served as a banquet facility. But a description of the building on the Grand Pacific Junction website indicates Williams is still open to other possibilities. That description ends with these words: “Today, the Grand Pacific Hotel is being used as a banquet facility as it awaits it’s [sic] next role in the history of Olmsted Falls.”



The sign says "Hotel" in the building's name, but also correctly notes that it now is being used as a banquet facility.

The walls of the Grand Pacific Hotel, especially in the barroom, have many photos, newspaper articles, documents and other items that tell about the building's past uses as a hotel and then as a hardware store. One of those framed items is a calendar from P. Simmerer's Sons Hardware from 1966. Such calendars could be found in homes and businesses around Olmsted Falls, Olmsted Township and West View for many years. This page has been framed with a gold circle around the 29<sup>th</sup>. Clint Williams said that is because the renovated Grand Pacific Hotel opened to the public on August 29, 1992. That was more than two decades after the Simmerers closed their hardware store.



*Many of the pictures of the renovation of the Grand Pacific Hotel were taken from personal videos and photos from the collection of Clint Williams and used with his permission. They are available on two DVDs on sale at Grand Pacific Junction. One is called "20 Years of Construction at the Grand Pacific Junction in Historic Olmsted Falls." The other is called "Heritage & Freedom at Grand Pacific Junction in Historic Olmsted Falls."*

## **Story about Simmerer's Hardware Evokes Many Responses**

The story in Issue 23 of *Olmsted 200* about the hardware store that the Simmerer family (as well as Joseph Peltz in the early years) operated in what now is the Grand Pacific Hotel stirred several kind responses from readers who remembered the store.

On Facebook, Linda Zinn wrote: "I loved that store with it's [sic] creaky wooden floors. That photo brings back great memories." Virginia Vance Copeland wrote: "Loved reading this story. I met most of those men and remember how kind they were. My folks bought alot [sic] of their items. 78 rpm record player, butter churn and other things. Thanks for the memories Jim." And Sherrie Scarton wrote: "loved that store."

Another reader, who prefers to be identified only as M.L., sent this longer response by email:

*Dear Jim,*

*Thank you for calling attention to the historical roots of Olmsted and reminding us of what has transpired before our time. You have brought to light how important our foundation is.*

*Through your newsletter, I have learned of many men and women of strong character who lived in Olmsted and I am proud to know them through your writing. They are cheering me on to become a great influence to the people I come in contact with. Their lives and what they built live on today and I would like my life to do the same. I wanted to write to encourage you that even us philosophical people read your newsletter and are inspired by it.*

*I am long overdue in telling you that what you write about history reminds me of the tree of life because growth proceeds in both ways – upward and onward as well as deep and rich. Every time you write about the perseverance of the men and women of generations before me, I think of them as roots and how important roots are to life as we know it today. Like a tree, we need roots for stability as well as nourishment. In this fast-paced world where we are all growing in leaps and bounds, I had somewhat forgotten my roots because the generations before seemed to be dead and buried. There have been hurts in my past that, at the time, seemed to poison my growth, but your newsletter has given me insight. I've realized that rallying to preserve the strengths of past history and admiring what is still standing as a good memory of fortitude is the only way we as humans can move forward. Each of us is challenged through your newsletter to look for*



*past strengths of character so that the life we are building now, the life that everyone can see, can provide energy for our own lives as well as beauty and resources for the community that needs our life. Someday we will all be remembered, too. Maybe our life will appear in a newsletter.*

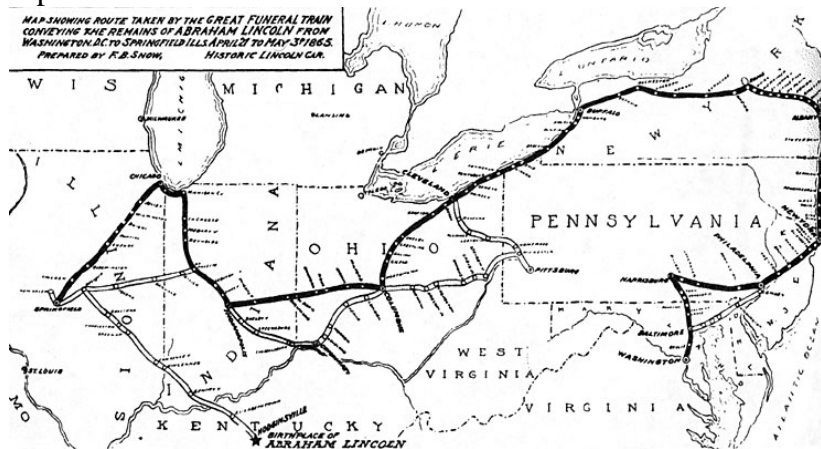
*In the analogy of how human life is much like the picture of a tree, the part of the tree that is exposed to us and is called the now or present moment is not more important than the tree's roots, because without the roots the tree could not live and provide fruit and shelter for the animals and birds as well as give the resources that humans need to live. There would be no carbon dioxide exchange for oxygen if the tree did not have roots. In other words, what transpires today is a product of our lives that are unseen, and just being here and living in this moment has value. In general, your newsletter has taught me that even though I may be unaware of the importance of historical roots, they play a great part in my life today.*

*Another thought that I had that is related to your newsletter is that all growth is patterned in a way that one part is related to the other through branching off. One idea leads to another. I am thankful to your readers for providing new information for you to share, branching off in your newsletter into other areas of interest that you might not have thought of writing about, but all very important to the life of each Olmsted resident. Thank you for boosting my life's philosophy through the historical documents you are creating.*

Such reactions to *Olmsted 200* are pleasantly surprising and always welcome.

## **Lincoln Passed through Olmsted but Never Saw It**

President Abraham Lincoln was not known ever to have set foot in or laid eyes on Olmsted Falls or Olmsted Township, but he did pass through the township – a bit late for either of those possibilities.



*The solid line on this map shows the route of Lincoln's funeral train in 1865, while the non-solid line shows where the route of his inauguration train in 1861 differed. The 1865 train passed through Olmsted Township, but the 1861 train did not.*

A little more than 150 years ago, two weeks after his assassination, the body of Lincoln passed through the southeastern corner of Olmsted Township, the section known as West View. Although much of the train's route retraced the route Lincoln had taken to Washington, D.C., in 1861, it was different through most of Ohio. In 1861, his inauguration train approached Cleveland from the southeast after a visit to Pittsburgh, so it did not use railroad tracks that passed through Olmsted. However, the funeral train went directly from Cleveland to Columbus without a stop in Pittsburgh, so it used tracks of the Cleveland, Columbus & Cincinnati Railroad, which went through the West View section of Olmsted Township.

Local residents who wanted to see it had to stay up late on the night of Friday, April 28, because the train was scheduled reach Olmsted at 12:51 a.m. on Saturday, April 29. That was after leaving Cleveland at midnight and passing through Berea at 12:43 a.m. It was scheduled to reach Columbia Station at 1:02 a.m. and Grafton at 1:23 a.m. They

**Cleveland, Columbus & Cincinnati R. R.**

**SPECIAL TIME SCHEDULE**

FOR THE TRAIN CONVEYING THE

**URNA OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN, LATE PRESIDENT OF THE U. S., AND ESCORT**

FROM WASHINGTON, D. C., TO SPRINGFIELD, ILL.

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**Cleveland to Columbus, Saturday, April 29th, 1865.**

Leave Cleveland.....	12.00	Midnight.
Berea.....	12.43	A. M.
Olmsted.....	12.51	"
Columbia.....	1.02	"
Grafton.....	1.23	"
La Grange.....	1.37	"
Wellington.....	2.00	"
Rochester.....	2.17	"
New London.....	2.36	"
Greenwich.....	2.59	"
Shiloh.....	3.19	"
Shelby.....	3.39	"
Crestline.....	4.07	"
Galion.....	4.23	"
Iberia.....	4.41	"
Gilead.....	5.05	"
Cardington.....	5.20	"
Ashley.....	5.43	"
Eden.....	5.55	"
Berlin.....	6.19	"
Lewis Centre.....	6.32	"
Orange.....	6.57	"
Worthington.....	6.56	"
Arrive Columbus.....	7.30	A. M.

This Train will have exclusive right to the Road against all other Trains & Pilot Locomotive will be run ten minutes in advance of the above schedule time.

E. S. FLINT, Superintendent.



*Lincoln's portrait was attached to the front of the engine of his funeral train, just above the cattle guard. His son, Robert, was among about 300 people who rode the train.*

were the first few of 22 communities the train was supposed to pass through – but not necessarily stop at – on the way to a stop at Columbus scheduled for 7:30 a.m. The train's schedule was published to give mourners the chance to watch it pass by.

The train, called the Lincoln Special, left Washington, D.C., on April 21, 1865, about a week after Lincoln's assassination. It arrived at the Euclid Street Station in Cleveland about in Cleveland about 7:00 a.m.

on Friday, April 28. A hearse took the coffin to a pagoda in Monument Square, where an estimated 150,000 people passed by it over 15 hours. Cleveland was the only stop where the viewing of the coffin was done outside, which avoided problems faced in other cities that tried to move people through tight spaces indoors and left many disappointed mourners still in line when the coffin had to depart to continue its journey.

The coffin rode on the eighth car of a nine-car train. At the front of the engine, a photograph of Lincoln was mounted above the cowcatcher. The train traveled between five miles per hour and 20 miles per hour. About 300 mourners rode on the train. Many more lined the route for the opportunity to see the Lincoln Special pass by. For example, it was estimated that about 15,000 people showed up to watch in Richmond, Indiana, at 3:15 a.m. on Sunday, April 30. That was more than Richmond's population at the time. It is not recorded how many people might have turned out to see the train pass through Olmsted Township.



*This is the car that carried Abraham Lincoln on his funeral train. The exact color was a mystery to historians for many years because a fire destroyed it in 1911 and no color photographs of it existed. But recently, a researcher who gained access to an original train window, which still had paint from the trim on it, determined that the color was deep maroon.*

*Thanks go to Kevin Roberts for help with this story.*

## **Still to Come**

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include the next story in the series about Grand Pacific Junction. It will feature the houses that Joseph Peltz and Philip Simmerer built near their hardware store.

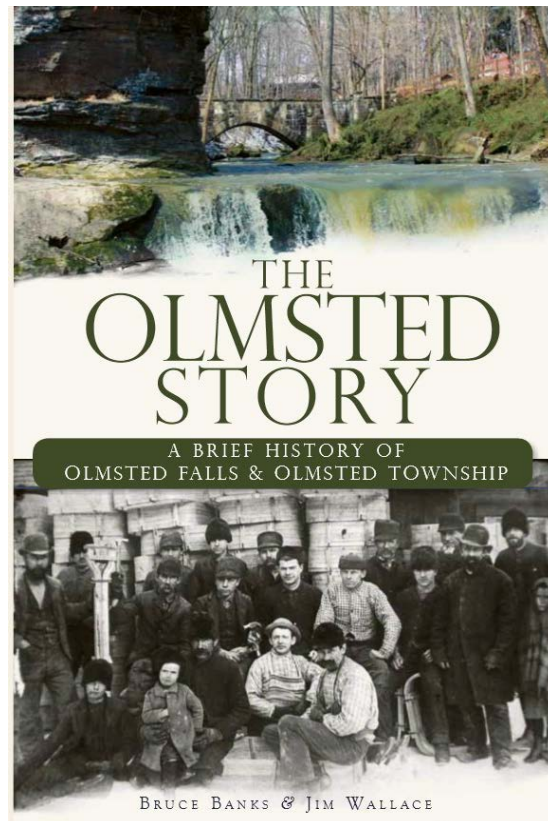
If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: [wallacestar@hotmail.com](mailto:wallacestar@hotmail.com). *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including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