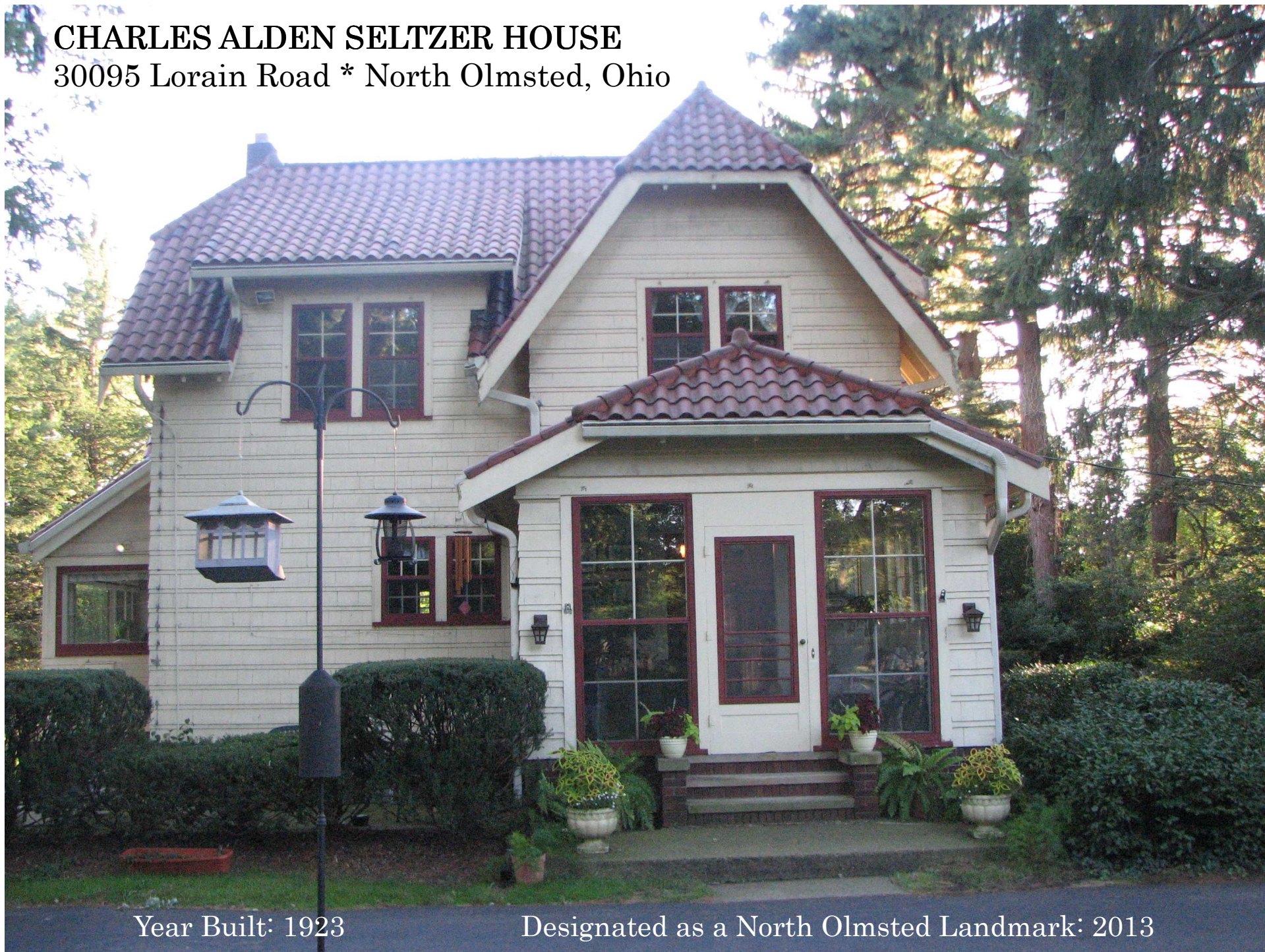


CHARLES ALDEN SELTZER HOUSE
30095 Lorain Road * North Olmsted, Ohio



Year Built: 1923

Designated as a North Olmsted Landmark: 2013



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Attachments

LANDMARK COMMISSION STATEMENT

The Landmarks Commission of the City of North Olmsted has researched and assembled the documented historical information contained in this Landmark Designation Proposal. The Commission recommends that the Charles Alden Seltzer House be designated as a Landmark and a plaque signifying such status be affixed to the front of the house.

This process followed for Landmark Designation was in conformance with the Charter and Codified Ordinances of the City of North Olmsted, specifically Chapter 165, Landmarks Commission, Section 165.05 DESIGNATION OF LANDMARKS, which states:

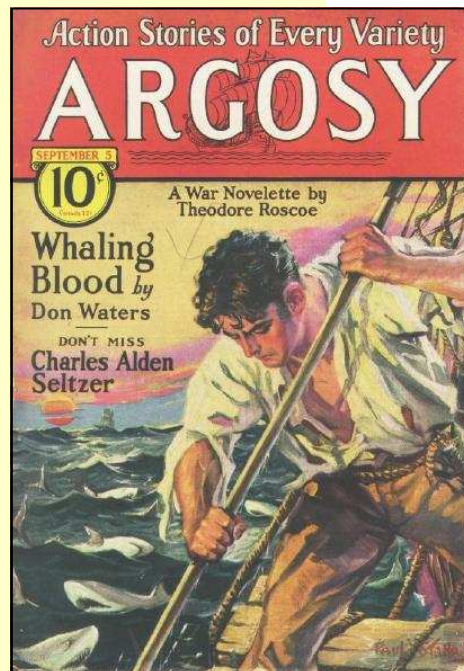
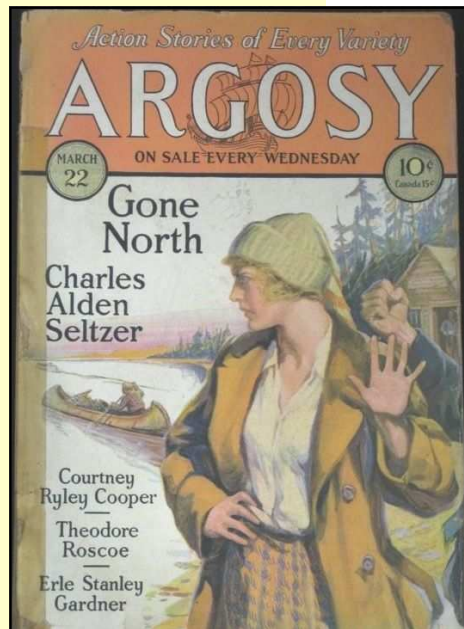
- (a) A building or other structure may be designated by the Commission as a landmark if the Commission determines, on the basis of the evidence before it, that the building or other structure meets two (2) or more of the following criteria:
- (1) It has character, interest or value, as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, State or Nation;
 - (2) It is the site of an historic event with an effect upon society;
 - (3) It is identified with a person or group of persons who had some influence on society; or
 - (4) It exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historic heritage of the community.

The features of the Charles Alden Seltzer House, in combination with the contributions of Charles Seltzer in North Olmsted, Ohio, and in the nation, provide evidence that the property in question specifically meets the criteria (1), (3), and (4) as listed above necessary for the designation of Landmark status.

Charles Alden Seltzer was a notable figure in the history of North Olmsted and the nation. He made significant contributions in his capacity as a council member and two-term mayor of the community, undertaking new initiatives and improving community services that benefitted North Olmsted residents during the challenging times of the Great Depression. Also, as author of dozens of western stories and novels, Charles Alden Seltzer was widely published and later made inroads into the burgeoning film industry. A number of his stories became feature films in the early days of Hollywood, first silent films and later talkies. The Seltzer property itself has a combination of unique architectural design features not found in properties elsewhere in North Olmsted. It was the site where Mayor Seltzer held mayor's court, developed his plans to create a municipal bus line, and made other decisions that would have a broad impact on the community.

This Landmark Designation Proposal is hereby submitted to the North Olmsted Planning and Design Commission and the North Olmsted City Council, for their review and approval for the granting of Landmark Status to the Charles Alden Seltzer House.





WHO WAS CHARLES ALDEN SELTZER?

Charles Alden Seltzer is best known as a nationally-recognized author who wrote at least 40 western novels and quite a few western short stories, and one book on economics.¹ His stories were mainly published in the *Argosy*,² the best-known pulp magazine covering western stories, and many others.³ He also was the writer for 16 Hollywood films, some of which were based on his novels.⁴ Charles wrote under the pen name Hiram Hopkins on occasion.⁵ He was mayor of North Olmsted (1930-1935)⁶ for two terms where he built a very unique house. Mayor Seltzer is often remembered for creating the North Olmsted Municipal Bus Line, but there are many other examples in historical records where he changed the status quo or battled powerful companies to protect North Olmsted residents. One of his sons, Louis Seltzer, became the editor of the *Cleveland Press* and editor-in-chief of Scripts-Howard Newspapers of Ohio and appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine.

Charles was born in Wisconsin on August 15, 1875, but spent most of his life in Ohio or traveling in the west, with five influential years on an uncle's ranch in Union County, New Mexico. He had a long list of occupations before his career in writing took off and even while writing, especially for a man whose formal education ended in the second grade,⁷ and who, as a child, ran away from home and joined the circus.⁸ While still a child, he was a steeplejack's assistant, a floorwalker in a five and dime, and a railroad brakeman.⁹

As a teenager, Charles lives on his uncle's Union County, New Mexico ranch, working as a cowpuncher.¹⁰ Around this time, a number of towns have united in their desire to separate from their respective counties, feeling isolated and unrepresented, situated long distances from their county seats.¹¹ Together they create a new county called Union County in New Mexico territory. Statehood is two decades away. Once the bill creating Union County passes, a power struggle takes place with several towns competing to be the county seat. The town of Clayton wins out, due to its proximity along the railroad and its hasty construction of a new courthouse. The Clayton Town Company is said to have exerted undue influence to have the courthouse built in a location favorable to it, not town residents.¹²

1. The *Cleveland Press*, February 10, 1942. After spending 17 months of research, Mr. Seltzer used an unknown British publisher and said of his book "What I want to do is bring people to their economic senses... After the war is over, people will have plenty of time to think about the laws of economics. They had better starting about them pretty soon if the want to save this civilization"

2. *Argosy* editions with Charles Alden Seltzer authorship: 9/22/17-11/10/17, 3/30/18-5/4/18, 9/14/18, 11/23/18-12/28/18, 1/18/19, 7/19/19, 11/1/19-12/6/19, 3/13/20-3/27/20-4/24/20, 8/28/20-9/11/20, 3/5/21, 4/2/21, 11/5/21, 6/17/22-6/24/22, 8/4/23, 8/18/23-8/25/23, 3/15/24, 7/19/24-7/26/24, 1/17/25-1/31/25, 2/7/25-2/14/25, 4/20/25-5/25/25, 8/15/25, 8/29/25, 9/17/25, 5/22/26, 4/2/27, 11/17/28, 12/8/28, 4/20/29-5/4/29, 5/25/29, 5/15/26-5/29/26, 6/12/26, 3/20/30, 4/5/30, 4/26/30, 8/29/31-10/3/31, 6/18/32-7/23/32, 10/22/32, 6/24/33 - 8/5/33, 8/4/34 - 9/8/34.

3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Alden_Seltzer and <http://www.philsp.com/homeville/fmi/s3122.htm#A100699>. Some of the other "pulp" that Mr. Seltzer published in were *Adventure*, *Complete Novel Magazine*, *Blue Book*, *Double-Action Western*, *Giant Western*, *Golden West*, *Grit*, *The Outing Magazine*, *Pearson's Magazine* (US edition), *The Popular Magazine*, *The Railroad Man's Magazine*, *Real Western*, *Short Stories* (US and UK editions), *Thrilling Ranch Stories*, *Thrilling Western*, *Triple Western Magazine*, and *Western Story Magazine*.

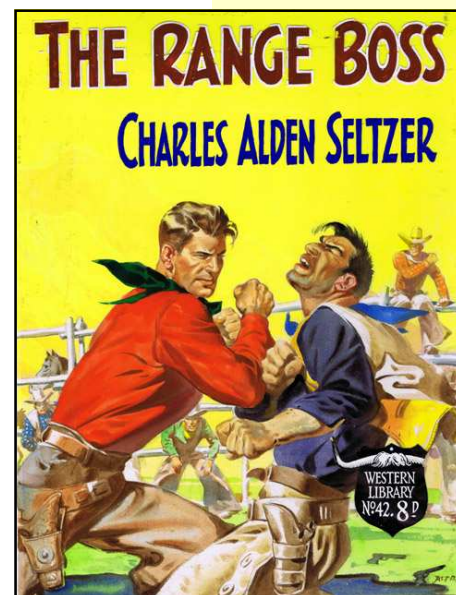
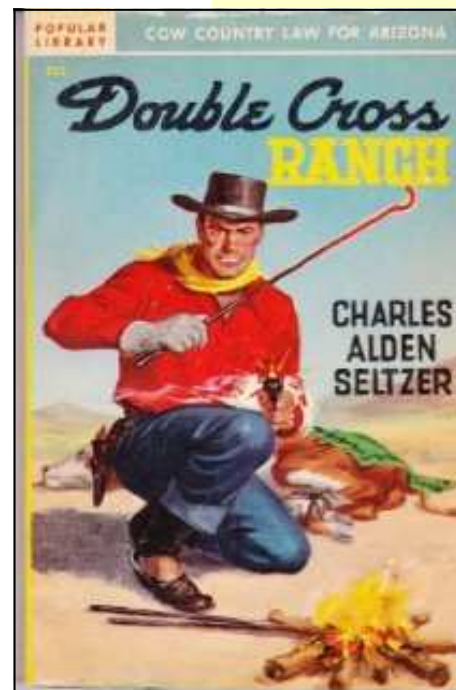
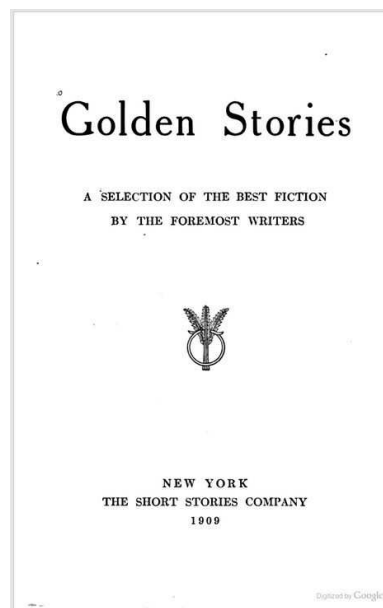
4. <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0783541/>

5. CATALOGUE OF TITLE ENTRIES OF BOOKS AND OTHER ARTICLES ENTERED IN THE OFFICE OF THE REGISTER OF COPYRIGHTS, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, AT WASHINGTON, D.C., UNDER THE COPYRIGHT LAW, WHEREIN THE COPYRIGHT HAS BEEN COMPLETED BY THE DEPOSIT OF TWO COPIES VOL. 28 Third quarter, 1901 documents that Seltzer used this pseudonym for "Sparks of Fun. A Series of Humorous Lectures" available from the University of Minnesota. "Flashes of wit from the Buffalo Show" is available from USC Special Collections Rare Books and San Francisco Public Library. Both were published by Sparks of Fun Publishing Co, Cleveland Ohio. An archive copy is available at http://archive.org/stream/catalogoftitlee190128libr/catalogoftitlee190128libr_djvu.txt

In the mid 1890s, Charles travels back east, where he finds work as a typesetter and a writer for small town newspapers in a number of towns along the Mississippi River¹³ before settling in Cleveland. He forms a contracting business as carpenter and painter. On July 28, 1896, Charles marries Ella Albert¹⁴ in Cuyahoga County, Ohio. Between 1897 and 1908, five children are born to the couple: Louis, Robert, Helen, Charles Jr., and Edna.

The first known western fiction by Charles Alden Seltzer is a story called "The Council of Three" in 1900.¹⁵ This never sold however. An often repeated story of Charles' early writing is that the family was so poor that they could not afford writing paper, so Ella obtained butcher paper for him to write on. That paper was provided free by Mr. Belz, probably from a butcher shop at 2935 Fulton Road.¹⁶ At the time, the Seltzers lived nearby in a small house on Seymour Avenue with no electricity. Charles' father also lived in the house and would send young grandson Lou across the street to Noss' Saloon at 2900 Fulton Road for pails of beer.¹⁷ It was about 1908, and Charles had just sold his first short story, "Mary Jane's Diversion," which appeared in *Golden Stories*.¹⁸ Charles was now a building inspector for the city of Cleveland.

Eight years passed between Charles' first known story written and his first story sold; however, this gap was not due to a lack of trying. While sources vary on the number of stories he wrote during this time period, a conservative estimate is that Charles wrote at least 100 stories before he sold one. For someone writing under oil lamps on butcher paper, facing rejection from publishers over many years, this is an amazing level of persistence.



6. Note that many printed and online sources have this date wrong, but this was verified using actual ordinances signed by Mayor Seltzer. Even the Cleveland Press obituary for Charles Alden Seltzer and "Cleveland: The Making of a City" (normally authoritative sources) had the wrong years.

7. "The Years Were Good" by Louis B. Seltzer, Page 29

8. The Years Were Good Page 29. The Sells-Floto circus to be specific, working as a water boy for the elephants. More on Sells Floto: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sells_Floto_Circus

9. The Years Were Good Page 29

10. The Years Were Good Pages 29 and 287

11. <http://www.nmgs.org/artUnionCoHist.htm>

12. Both <http://www.nmgs.org/artUnionCoHist.htm> and <http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails.php?fileID=24099> document this.

13. The Years Were Good Page 29

14. In early public records, Ella's maiden name is Albert, but it is Alberts later.

15. The Cleveland Public Library and Kent State University have a copy of this on microfilm http://clevnet.bibliocommons.com/item/show/800555048_the_council_of_three and <http://olc1.ohiolink.edu/search~S0?/t%22The+Council+of+Three%22/tcouncil+of+three/1%2C1%2C3%2CB/frameset&FF=tcouncil+of+three&2%2C%2C3>

16. The Years Were Good Page 24 cross referenced with the 1906 Cleveland City Directory

17. The Years Were Good Page 39 cross referenced with the 1906 Cleveland City Directory

18. Available via the Gutenberg Project here: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/19356/19356-h/19356-h.htm#MARY_JANES_DIVERSION

Father now lived in a growing westerly suburb. He had a big rambling house with a red tile roof, and about fifteen acres of land. Back of the house he built a skeet arrangement where he would spend hours shattering the discs as an automatic device sprung them into the air. He liked for my brothers to join him, and when they were out on the skeet range their laughter came rolling back toward the house.

Father had two repressed desires. He wanted to be a successful businessman and he wanted to get into politics. The family tried to dissuade him from either venture, but he persisted.

His books were making him a great deal of money and he wanted to invest some of it. He decided to convert part of his land into a gigantic chicken hatchery and invested many thousands of dollars in the enterprise, obtaining the best equipment and superintending the job himself. But it didn't work. He was philosophical about it.

"I got taught a lesson," he said. "It was an expensive one. I won't repeat that."

But he did. He got interested in an oil-burning furnace that looked good, obtained a franchise on it for a large region, put together an organization, and set up offices. He went at it with the same enthusiasm and energy he had expended on the chicken hatchery. Like the chicken hatchery it didn't work out.

"The child went back and got his fingers burned a second time," he said, in his almost shy, modest way, a curiously charming characteristic for a man so big in physical stature, and so successful with his writing.

Father was cured of business. That left one other field of desire yet unexpressed -- politics. He was tremendously interested in the little municipality in which he had built his home. He saw many things that needed to be done and he decided to run for Mayor to help accomplish them.

An excerpt of *The Years Were Good: The Autobiography of Louis B. Seltzer* by Louis Seltzer

Like another well-known western author, Zane Grey,¹⁹ Charles Alden Seltzer lived in the east and material for stories had to be researched. Lou Seltzer describes his father as being a perfectionist:

"He wanted every item of descriptive matter, every article of wearing apparel, precise and indisputably correct. He studied about western horses, idioms, ranches, traditions, history, geology, towns, places... his early books were... the result of meticulous and painstaking research."²⁰

With success, eventually the Seltzers move to a house with electricity on 39th Street at Archwood. Around 1918, Charles is invited out west for the filming of *Trail to Yesterday* but does not go at the urging of his wife who seems to be concerned about Anna Q. Nilsson's impact on 'Charley.'²¹ In June, 1919, Charles purchases his first house in Lakewood, Ohio on Detroit Road at Arthur Avenue. It is likely that around this time, he becomes a member of one of the Lakewood Masonic lodges since it is known he was a freemason.²²



By 1923, Charles builds his own house in North Olmsted on Lorraine Road at stop 43½ on the interurban railway. Of interest, it is Ella, not Charles, who signs the title transfer of their Lakewood house in January of 1924. At the same time as Charles builds his dream house, the now famous Hollywood sign is going up (it read "Hollywoodland" until 1949).²³ Movies are still silent. And this is the year that he writes the film *Brass Commandments*, the first time the film version precedes the novel version. Charles still has son Charles Jr. and daughter Edna living at home with him, but sons Lou and Robert and daughter Helen have moved out into their own homes.

Charles tries his hand at business around this time, starting a "gigantic" chicken hatchery and an oil burner franchise.²⁴ Neither worked out for him; however, ninety years later, the chicken house building still lives on as a workshop and the small house used by his gardener is still heated by an oil burner.

Some Hollywood actors now come to visit Charles at his North Olmsted house, most notably Hollywood bad boy Harry Carey (the actor, not the sports announcer), and William S.

19. Zane Grey and Charles Alden Seltzer corresponded often - see *The Years Were Good* Pages 281-283.

20. *The Years Were Good* Page 289

21. *The Years Were Good* Pages 286-287

22. Note the Masonic symbol on his grave

23. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hollywood_Sign

24. *The Years Were Good* Page 294

25. *The Years Were Good* Page 281

26. *The Years Were Good* Page 293

27. Argosy 3/22/30 available at http://web.archive.org/web/20050110043038/http://pulprack.com/arch/2003/01/charles_alden_s.html

28. *The Years Were Good* Pages 290-292. More on Johnny Risko: http://boxrec.com/media/index.php/Johnny_Risko

Hart.²⁵ Charles has set up a skeet shooting range behind the house,²⁶ and in Charles own words,

"I have broken ninety-two out of a possible hundred clay targets. In a pistol shoot in competition -- with a thirty-eight Colt -- at twenty yards I have made a ninety-one and a quarter per cent target."²⁷

Charles starts to follow boxing, traveling to both Dempsey-Tunney bouts, but mainly follows Johnny Risko, usually attending with Cleveland fire warden Tom Connell.²⁸ Some of his new neighbors who are progressives in the Bull Moose Party ask Charles to run for political office.²⁹

Elected to city council, Charles Alden Seltzer is sworn in on January 3, 1928.³⁰ One of his first actions is to use his connections with area fire chiefs to audit the North Olmsted fire department. Legislation he introduces at various meetings creates the first North Olmsted fire house, purchases the first pumper truck and hose, and provides training to the volunteer force.³¹ As a result of these improvements, fire insurance rates are cut in half, in effect making this insurance affordable to some North Olmsted residents for the first time.³² Councilman Seltzer is known to visit the new fire station regularly. The daughter of one of the volunteer firemen he befriends, Beryl Peck, becomes owner of the Seltzer house in 1959.³³

There is substantial controversy during Councilman Seltzer's two year service. Ordinance 232 introduced on April 3, 1928 by Councilman Seltzer allows for Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company (municipally owned, the very one that Dennis Kucinich fought to keep 30 years later) to provide electricity to North Olmsted residents. The issue with this piece of legislation is that at the time Mayor Coe sits on the board of the train company that supplies North Olmsted with electricity. On first reading of the legislation, no council member other than Charles votes for it and it fails to pass on all future readings. Two city council meetings after it fails, Councilman Seltzer introduces identically worded Ordinance 243 that the meeting minutes of June 19, 1928 simply record as passing unanimously.

What could explain this change of heart within a two week period by all council members? The answer is in the *Plain Dealer*, reporting that Councilman Seltzer moved the city council meeting out of a small room into larger Town Hall and that "more than 300 villagers" attended that meeting.³⁴ This wasn't a new strategy for Charles, in light of the 1912 plot of

29. Cleveland Plain Dealer 12/14/29 page 5

30. North Olmsted City Council Meeting minutes 1/3/28

31. North Olmsted City Council Meeting minutes, especially 2/7/28, 4/3/28, 6/5/28, and 4/1/29. Fire chief Wise of Medina ends up being the most helpful. North Olmsted residents may wonder which one of the current fire halls was the original, and the answer is neither; the fire house Councilman Seltzer sponsors is centrally located in North Olmsted and was torn down when the additional fire stations were built. A picture of the original is currently available at <http://www.orgsites.com/oh/iafflocal1267/img231.1.JPG.jpg>

32. Cleveland Plain Dealer 12/14/29 page 5

33. Frank Heiser is later appointed Fire Chief of North Olmsted once Charles becomes mayor. Beryl Heiser comes with her father Frank to the Seltzer house at some point for a visit.

34. Cleveland Plain Dealer 12/14/29 page 5

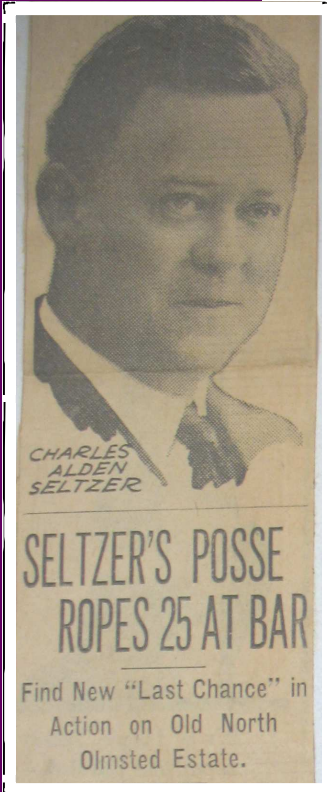
Article appearing in the December 14, 1929 edition of the *Plain Dealer*, just weeks before Charles Alden Seltzer takes office as mayor of North Olmsted

TWO OHIO WRITERS JOIN WET CRUSADE

212 Artists and Authors
Form Group to Fight
Prohibition.

Plain Dealer Bureau,
611 Albee Bldg.,
WASHINGTON, April 25,
Two Ohioans, Edmund Vance Cooke
of Cleveland and Charles Alden
Seltzer of North Olmsted are listed
by the Association Against the Pro-
hibition Amendment among 212 writ-
ers, cartoonists and illustrators who
have organized an authors' and arti-
sts' committee to co-operate in the
fight against prohibition, according
to an announcement here today.

*Seltzer opposed prohibition
before taking office as mayor
in April 1929. In July 1930 he
issued a search warrant au-
thorizing a raid on a suspect-
ed North Olmsted speakeasy.*



The Coming of the Law, a story in which a newcomer to town uses the newspaper to achieve justice when corruption and abuse of power block any other means.

Following adoption of the legislation, the change in electricity providers causes rates to drop by 25 percent.³⁵ Next, Councilman Seltzer proposes legislation limiting the fare that the train company can charge North Olmsted residents. Soon, the train company responds to city council with a rate reduction.³⁶ Councilman Seltzer organizes a transportation council, essentially a partnership with neighboring Fairview Park to work together toward affordable transportation. When Councilman Seltzer asks Mayor Coe and Councilman Christman to participate, they refuse,³⁷ as does Councilman Schindler, saying he is “opposed to bus lines.”³⁸ Councilman Seltzer proposes legislation in 1929 to form a municipally-owned bus line. The proposal is soundly rejected.

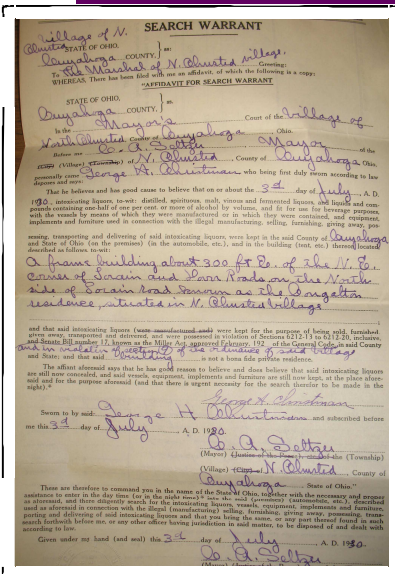
Councilman Seltzer was not one to avoid conflict if he thought someone wasn’t doing right. There are at least two meetings where he moved that the city engineer be found incompetent – during meetings when the city engineer was presenting status updates.

Beyond North Olmsted politics, Charles Alden Seltzer takes a clear position on another controversial topic of the day – prohibition. In April 1929, he publicly joins a list of a couple hundred authors against prohibition.³⁹

Late in 1929, Charles Alden Seltzer runs for mayor of North Olmsted on a reform platform. He is elected and signs his first piece of legislation on January 2, 1930.⁴⁰ He holds Mayor’s Court in his house. The most common offense is for speeding on Lorain Road, with a number of tickets showing speeds of 55 mph. If unable to pay with cash, people pay fines with whatever they have of value such as violins, watches, etc.

Despite his public stance on prohibition, Mayor Seltzer organizes at least two speakeasy raids with Marshal George Christman, both on Lorain Road near the Town Hall. One occurs on July 3, 1930 at the Congalton residence, just east of Dover Center Road on the north side of the street; the other occurs near Porter Road. A newspaper article notes that the reason for suspicion was a sign that listed chicken dinners sold at the estate at too high a price.

Mayor Seltzer’s next challenge comes on February 20, 1931, when the railway company



35. Cleveland Plain Dealer 12/14/29 page 5

36. North Olmsted City Council Meeting Minutes 5/21/29

37. North Olmsted City Council Meeting Minutes 4/16/29

38. North Olmsted City Council Meeting Minutes 4/16/29

39. Cleveland Plain Dealer 4/29/29 page 4. The list also includes Edgar Rice Burroughs and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

40. Resolution 1930-445 created the position of city solicitor.

serving North Olmsted announces it has gone bankrupt and will be ending service. Mayor Seltzer organizes a municipally-owned bus service and puts it quickly in place despite the opposition during the 1929 attempt. However, the city has no money for buses. Mayor Seltzer buys the first two buses himself.⁴¹ The first run is on March 1, 1931, starting at John Schindler's garage at the western end of Lorain Road in North Olmsted ending at the intersection of West 3rd and Superior in Cleveland. Driven by Robert Dunford, Mayor Seltzer is onboard, along with the other members of the transportation committee that now include Councilman Schindler and newly elected Councilman Decker.⁴²

The city of Cleveland and a remaining railway company both immediately sue. After years of court battles, all the way to the Ohio Supreme Court, North Olmsted retains the right to operate its bus line.⁴³

Just over six months later in 1931, in the midst of the Great Depression, Mayor Seltzer hands over a list of able-bodied North Olmsted residents to Cuyahoga County for a ditch digging project.⁴⁴

By 1933, Mayor Seltzer may have had enough of politics. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* reports that he resigns on January 26, 1933.⁴⁵ However, nothing appears in City Council's meeting minutes about this. Mayor Seltzer's last piece of signed legislation is on December 31, 1935,⁴⁶ several years later.

Before the end of his term as mayor, the *Cleveland Press* interviews him to summarize his accomplishments. Besides the notable events of his term, he makes one interesting remark not printed elsewhere, "All the villages west of Rocky River might easily become one, without losing too much of their personality."⁴⁷ Was this remark based on his experiences in Union County, New Mexico?

Mayor Seltzer saw North Olmsted through the Great Depression and Prohibition. He created the first bus line owned by the city when the train line serving the community went bust and purchased the first buses with his own money. His legislation created the first fire station, purchased the first pumper truck, and provided the first fire training. He sought out a new electricity provider to reduce rates. In retrospect, he is one of the most accomplished and historically significant mayors of North Olmsted. He served six years, while the man who replaced him, Mayor Gross, lasted only six days.⁴⁸

41. Interview with Grace Oring (secretary for Mayor Seltzer) in Olmsted Historical Society records

42. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 2, 1931 Front Page

43. North Olmsted's right to operate its bus line prevailed in the Common Pleas Court and was affirmed on appeal, exempting the Village from regulations imposed by the City of Cleveland and the railways' franchise claim. In 1935 the Ohio Supreme Court ultimately sustained Cleveland's regulatory authority but the ruling did not diminish North Olmsted's authority to operate its bus line, in general, and rejected the Railway's claim. *Cleveland Ry Co. v Village of North Olmsted*, 130 Ohio St. 144 (1935).

44. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 8, 1931, Page 3

45. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 26, 1933, Page 3

46. Resolution 1935-757, requesting a release of security to Cleveland Trust Company of Cleveland.

47. Newspaper clipping available from Olmsted Historical Society

48. 1/7/36 City Council meeting minutes

NORTH OLMSTED
OPENS BUS LINE



*The Cleveland Interurban Railroad, early Lorain Road
and the first North Olmsted Bus Line bus*



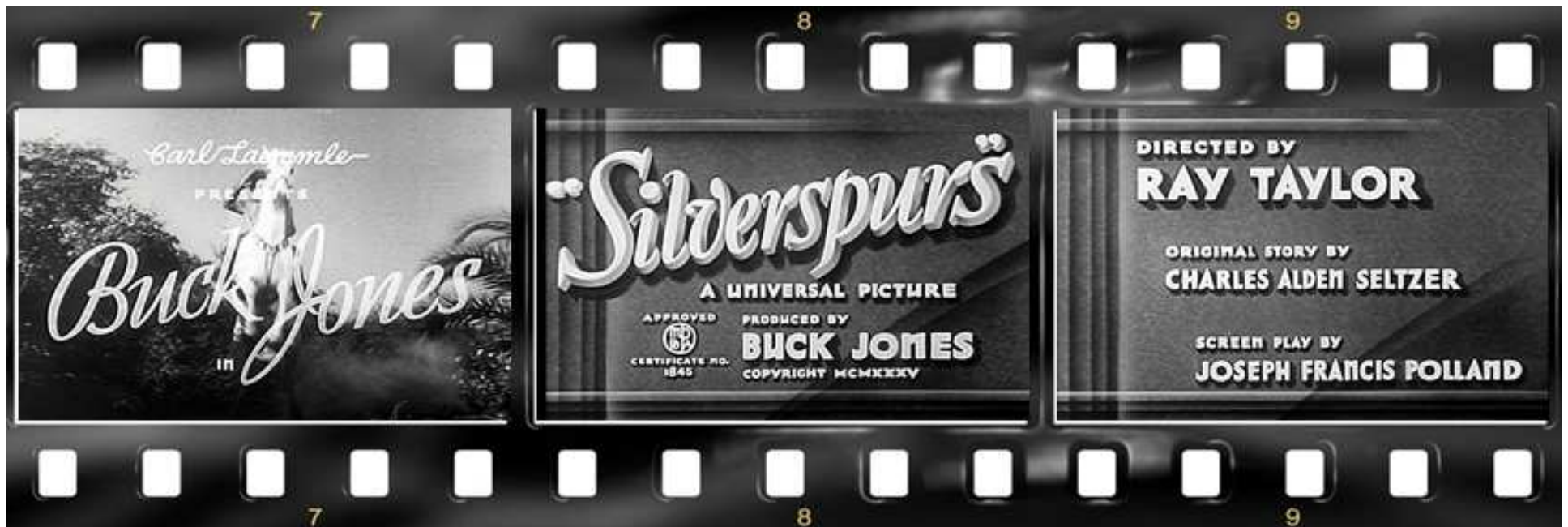
In 1936 Charles' first talkie is produced, *Silver Spurs*, starring Buck Jones, which is also the last film he wrote. *Silver Spurs* is shot at the famous Ahmanson Ranch at Lasky Mesa where *Gone With The Wind* is filmed just three years later.⁴⁹ *Silver Spurs* and *Drag Harlan* are the only films still available to the general public today. *Square Deal Sanderson* is retained in a couple film archives, and one reel of *Riddle Gawne* is available in a Russian film vault.

The Hollywood Walk of Fame hasn't come into being yet, but by this 13th film, over a dozen actors and actresses with a current star have acted in at least one film written by Charles Alden Seltzer: Buck Jones, William S Hart, Tom Mix, Lon Chaney, George Hayes, John Bowers, Katherine MacDonald, Alan Hale, Alice Calhoun, William Farnum, Helen Ferguson, Anna Q. Nilsson, and Lloyd Bacon.

Charles continues to write until 1942, when he becomes very ill from diabetes. He refuses hospital care at first. The family gathers and persuades him otherwise. As he leaves the house he built for the last time to be taken to the hospital, perhaps feeling his end was near, he waves to his son Lou and speaks his last known words, "So Long, Sucker,"⁵⁰ the title of his last book. On February 9, 1942, Charles Alden Seltzer passes away at the age of 66.



49. <http://www.moviesites.org/lasky mesa.htm>
 50. *The Years Were Good* Page 298



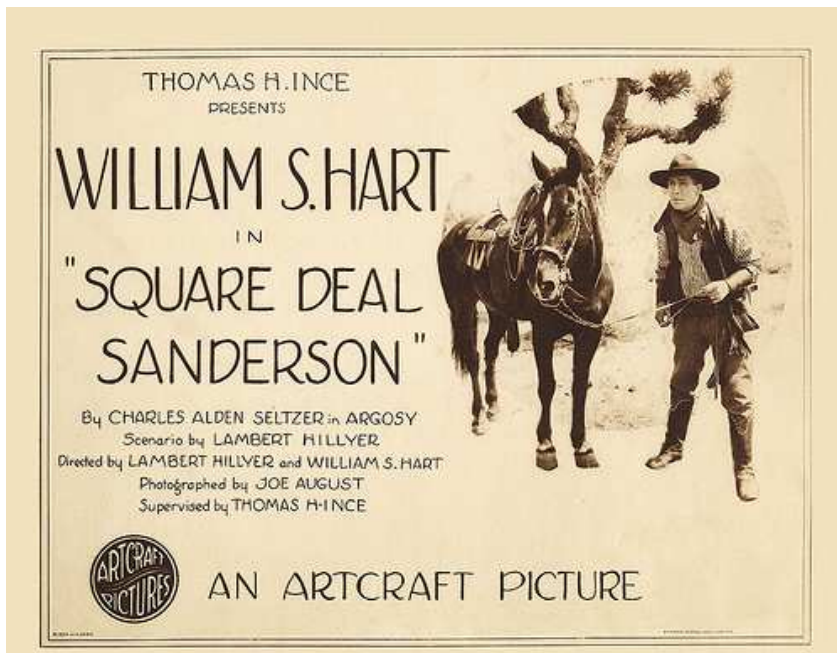
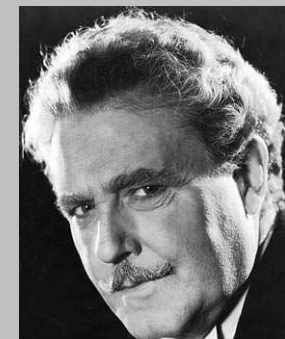


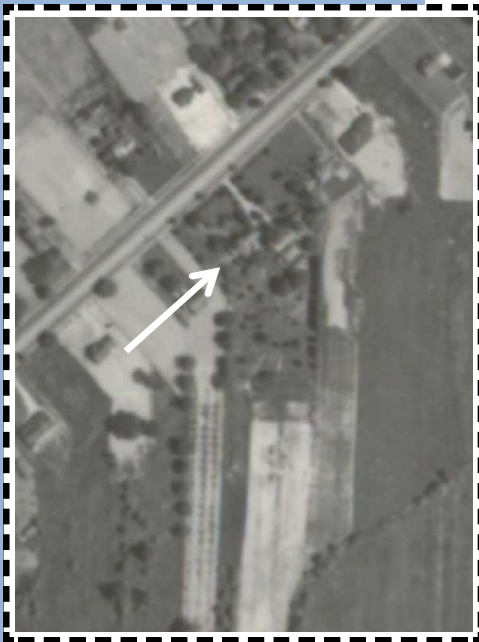
Left: Buck Jones was one of the greatest B-western stars of his day, appearing in *Silver Spurs*, *Chain Lighting*, *Roughshod*, *Forbidden Trails*, and *The Coming of the Law*. He first joined the film industry as a stuntman and bit player, drawing on his real life experience as a cowboy on a ranch in Oklahoma. His star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame is located at 6834 Hollywood Boulevard.

Top Right: Called by many “the original screen cowboy,” William S. Hart was in Seltzer’s stories-turned-films *Square Deal Sanderson* and *Riddle Gawne*. His home in Newhall, California was built in Spanish Colonial Revival style starting in 1924. His star is located at 6363 Hollywood Boulevard.

Middle Right: Katherine MacDonald appeared with William S. Hart in *Riddle Gawne*. She was a model turned actress and later was one of the first female producers in Hollywood. Her star at 6777 Hollywood Boulevard.

Bottom Right: William Farnum is known for his role in Seltzer’s *Drag Harlan*, as well as the original *Ben-Hur*. He also starred in another Seltzer silent film, *Brass Commandments*. One of the highest paid actors of his day, Farnum’s star is located at 6322 Hollywood Boulevard.





House and aerial photos are from a 1951 survey of the property

HISTORY AND DESIGN OF THE HOUSE

Early Development and Context

Beginning operations in 1895, the interurban railroad played a major role in the development of the community that would become North Olmsted. Residents could work in Cleveland and return home at night. Farmers benefited because the interurban carried farm produce to outside markets in Cuyahoga and Lorain Counties.

| Year | Population |
|------|------------|
| 1910 | 1,030 |
| 1920 | 1,419 |
| 1930 | 2,624 |
| 1940 | 3,487 |

Source: U.S. Census

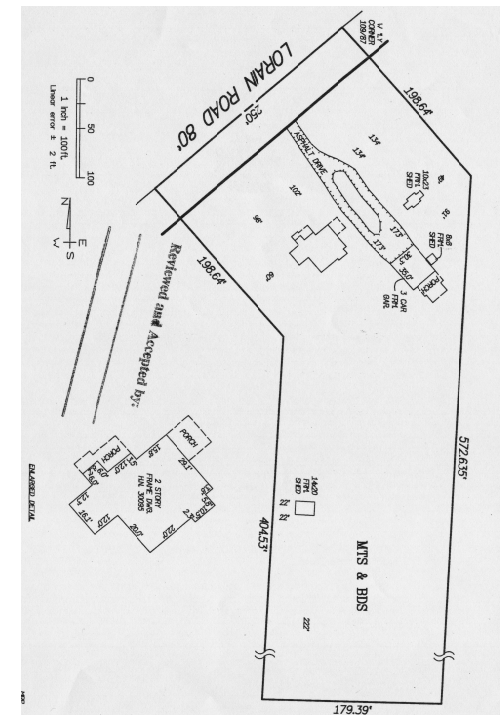
The Village of North Olmsted incorporated in 1909 after voter approval the previous November. Within its borders were ten square miles of northern Olmsted Township and four square miles of southeastern Dover Township known as Coe Ridge. Town Hall construction began in 1912. Completed a year later, the building housed all the village offices including the newly created police department. The construction boom after World War I began to change the agricultural landscape of the village, but the Great Depression postponed further significant development until after World War II.

The Charles Alden Seltzer House

Charles Alden and Ella Seltzer purchased the property in May of 1922. The property contains two parcels of land owned by the different generations of the Robb family. Originally, the Robb family had just one large plot of land that Jackson Robb obtained from the Briggs family in May of 1861. Amos Briggs, one of the original North Olmsted settlers, obtained this plot from Charles Olmsted in June of 1832.

The Seltzers built their house in 1923 according to tax records from 1923 and 1924, when a major jump in building value is recorded. Also, the Seltzers sold their Lakewood house in January of 1924, clearly indicating they had moved in by then. Tax records indicate a previous structure on the property in 1923, but worth little.

The house architecture is a blend of Craftsman and Spanish Colonial Revival style. The



exposed rafter tails and walls of cedar-shake define Craftsman architecture, whereas the combination of a Spanish tile roof with a small front porch defines Spanish Colonial Revival. Contrary to the archetype, stone pillars and a large front porch are missing from the Craftsman style, although stone pillars were placed out at the street. Also, Spanish Colonial Revival has stucco walls, ornaments, and half-round arcades, all of which are missing from the house.

Highlights of the house include a Spanish tile roof, a stone fireplace that represents all 48 continental states (and in 1923, there were only 48), hardwood floors, extensive oak paneling, coffered ceilings in several rooms, an elliptical barrel vault ceiling in one wing, a second floor skylight, and wormy chestnut paneling and hardwood floors in the basement.

The original property consisted of 4.5 acres around the house, a three-bay garage with a concrete tile roof, a small house for a private gardener, and a pavilion with a cedar roof. Master carpenter Percy Sprague built the house and master electrician Mr. Calloway wired it. The property also had a stone fountain and a separate waterfall and small pond.

Later History of the House

Since the Seltzers lived in the house, there have only been three subsequent owners. The house has seen little change to the exterior since it was built. The ownership history of the property is as follows:

1. In December 1942, Mark and Orra Gardner purchased the house from Ella Seltzer. The Gardners owned a hardware store in nearby Lorain County.
2. In February 1959, Clark and Beryl Peck purchased the house from the Gardners. Clark Peck was a professor at the Case Western Reserve University School of Dentistry, and many Cleveland area dentists learned from him. He was also on the North Olmsted School Board. Both of the Pecks were very active in the community as well.
3. In August 2009, James Morse and Daniel Hocevar purchased the house from the Pecks.

Updates by the Seltzers

The fireplace wasn't completed at the time the Seltzers moved in, as a story has been handed down homeowner to homeowner of how Ella complained about all the dust while it was being constructed. A few years after the





house was constructed, Charles started a chicken business and erected a chicken house, mentioned in a book by Louis Seltzer. In 1930, the Seltzers changed the east screen porch into an enclosed space, with the story being Ella wanted a room for non-native plants.

Updates by the Gardeners

In 1945, the back door entrance area and small entrance were reworked into a breakfast nook. All that is visible from the outside since the roof wasn't changed is a missing eave on the south side of the breakfast nook where the wall was pushed out one foot, and the eave is small on the east side, where the wall was pushed out a half foot. The exterior paint color scheme was also changed.

On the inside, the Gardeners added built-ins to the dining room. They also removed doors between the living and dining room and changed several doors, and updated the electric systems. Concerning the rest of the property, they installed a large cistern, moved the chicken house behind the garage to become one building, and sold over an acre of land to North Olmsted schools.

Updates by the Pecks

The Pecks added a party room on the end of the chicken house, a shed to the garage, and added wings to the Pavilion. They installed hand-made paneling (the paneling features book-facing, not possible with machine-made) around the stone fireplace, replacing the previous large framed red Chinese silk panels which covered the walls. Electric service



was also updated, upstairs air conditioning added, intercom installed, and the kitchen and bathrooms remodeled. Original wallcoverings were replaced over time.

Updates by Morse/Hocevar

Two basement windows were replaced with glass block that face the driveway, as one was already broken by ice damage. An outdoor wood burner was also added near the garage.

For the most part, the original floated glass panes are intact, the original windows, original redwood-frame storms, and many of the original screens made of brass. The original skylight had to finally be replaced. Most of the Ludowici tiles are original and inside the hardwood floors, radiators and interior floor and ceiling trim is in general original, excluding kitchen and baths. The house still has the original P&F Corbin locks.



For those into behind the scenes information, the Frank Adams electric panel is likely original as a 1928 ad from the company shows nearly the identical panel (three others are obviously updates). Note that Frank Adams was the standard electric equipment provider to early movie theaters, and Charles Alden Seltzer was very familiar with the film industry. Lights are controlled (even today) by Swiss-made desparts, not light switches. The basement stairwell is exactly "house wedge type stringers" in Audels Carpenters and Builders Guide (popular 1923-1939) and according to carpenters is rarely if ever seen in the area, and to this day doesn't squeak (the design's purpose). Also, there are firestops between the first and second floors, unusual for 1920's construction, and a possible testament to Charles' building inspection experience.



Charles Alden Seltzer used to describe the property around his house as a 5-acre private park. He selected unusual *Chamaecyparis pisifera*, Cedar, Juniper, and Larch trees and unusual fruit trees for the area, besides Norway Spruce, White Pine, and Chinese Elm. Only one original apple tree remains, none of the apricot and other odd fruit tree choices. The current owners had to cut down most of the remaining Chinese elm, and a ring count confirmed they dated back to the time the house was built. Road salt may have killed most of the cedars near Lorain Road, but one remains. However, all or most of the *Chamaecyparis pisifera*, Norway Spruce and White Pine remain, and many appear in both a 1952 survey picture of the property and a 1938 film.



Early Post Office Air Mail Beacon

One remaining landscape feature of interest remains – a lighted beacon for Cleveland Municipal airport on the property from September 1924 until late in 1927. We know about this beacon because an old pilot informed the Pecks in the 1960's that the house originally had the westward beacon for the airport, even before the entire system was operational. Charles Seltzer, Jr. would have lived in the house at the time and his son, Kim Alden Seltzer also recalls his father mentioning a beacon placed on the property to help with “the glide path” into Hopkins. Both of these descriptions exactly fit the original system of lighted beacons the post office placed when extending the national air route (New York to San Francisco) to Cleveland, which opened on July 1, 1925 before the rest of the national air route beacon system was in place. However, no documents exist to fully prove the beacon installed on the property was one of the original postal beacons. Below is a summary of what is documented.

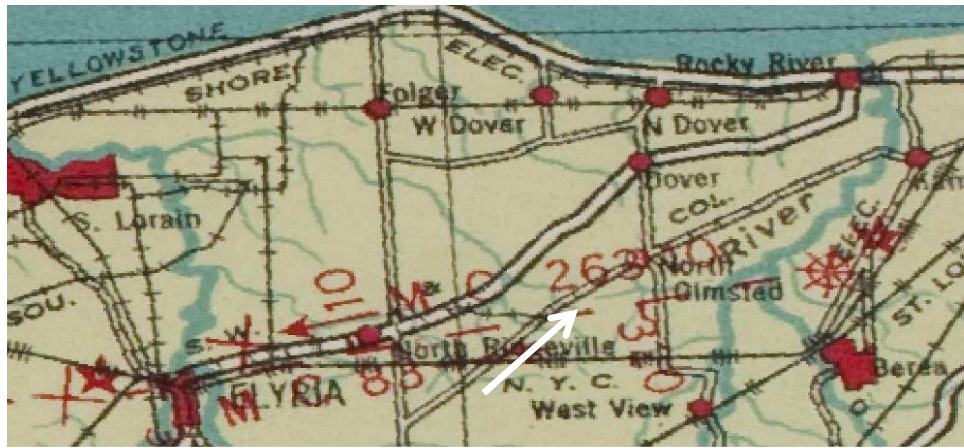
There are three relevant acts of Congress to be aware of:

- ◇ Departments of Commerce and Labor Appropriation bill, 1924, funding the post office to place beacons for a national air route
- ◇ H.R. 7064: the Contract Air Mail Bill/Air Mail Act of 1925 or the Kelly Act, privatizing air mail
- ◇ 1926 Air Commerce Act, which placed all air navigation aids under the control of the Bureau of Air Commerce, and establishing the first aeronautical maps. Only 616 of the beacons placed by the post office were transferred.

Furthermore, Cleveland Municipal airport was opened on July 1, 1925, as the existing airport at Martin Field (16800 St. Clair Ave, Cleveland Ohio) could not be used for night landings, with all three major players (Mr. Martin, Mr. Hopkins, and Mr. Egge) agreeing in written letters contained at the Western Reserve Historical Society.

The national route went through four revisions during the early years:

1. The first path was unlighted and pilots flew on a specific compass bearing for a length of time and navigated by street maps. Martin Field was the Cleveland airport at the time and the air route would have been a bit north of North Olmsted, as the route looks for the intersection of five rail lines in Elyria and keeps five miles north of that.
2. The second path used beacons between Hopkins and Bryan, Ohio (the next stop). This one was never documented, but some assumptions can be made comparing to the third path.



Air Navigation Map No. 21, Cleveland, Ohio to Chicago, Ill, US Army Corps of Engineers, prior to the radio range update

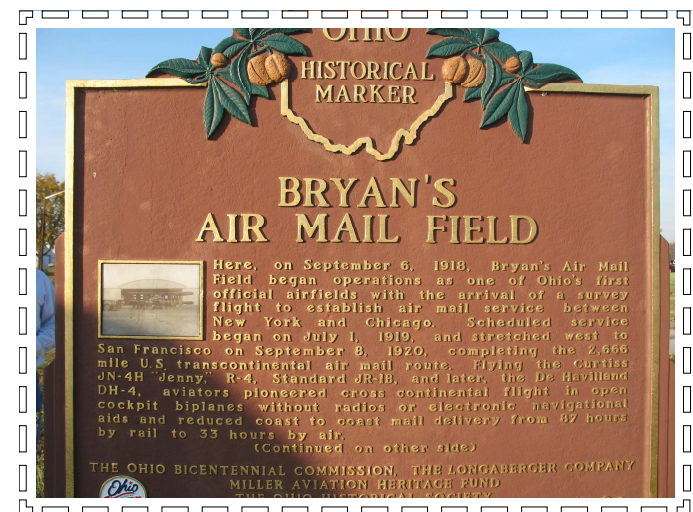
3. The third path was documented by the Bureau of Air Commerce in 1927 after the majority of post office beacons were decommissioned, and crosses North Olmsted at Lorain Road near Barton Road (see map on previous page).
4. The fourth path was created using the radio range, had nothing to do with lighted beacons, and steered planes a bit north of the North Ridgeville lighted beacon, and therefore crosses Lorain further east near Porter Road and also is documented on 1927 aeronautical maps.

The existence of four air routes is also documented by Ohio Historical Marker 3-86. Bryan's Air Mail Field, where this marker is located, was on the first path. The back side of the marker describes where the airfield moved to on July 1, 1925, and the reason the airfield moved, which was to align with the lighted beacon path. The marker also describes the transition to the third national air mail path when many facilities were abandoned and, in this case, the entire landing field in Bryan was abandoned on September 1, 1927.

There is quite a lot of documentation online describing the first transcontinental air route, and how beacons were originally spaced every 10 miles, but unfortunately, those web sites are reporting the first *documented* route, the third path above. The beacon at the Seltzer house would have been on the second path above, as was the second airfield in Bryan, and both were abandoned late in 1927.

The spacing of beacons on the second path is documented as being every 3 miles around 1924, later changed by the Bureau of Air Commerce to a spacing of every 10 miles in a 1927 letter. In short, two-thirds of the beacons on the original Chicago to Cleveland segment were abandoned and never documented.⁵¹

The Seltzer property is nearly on the line between the Elyria beacon kept by the Bureau of Air Commerce and Hopkins Airport. It is also just over 3 miles from the airport beacon, at a high point in the landscape and readily accessible, near a recognizable structure from the air (the only house with a red tile roof), meeting all the criteria used to place these beacons. The northeast corner of the Seltzer property may have been the closest to proper alignment. In the 1950's, residents remember a 'very stout metal flagpole' being at that corner of the property. The Pecks recall taking the pole down when it became unstable. The base of that metal pipe is still visible today. It's an unproven assumption that this is a remnant of the original tower, but it is also an unusual location for a flagpole, far off to one side of the property, and also an unusually large diameter flagpole.



51. http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/museum/1d_Airmail_Beacon.html The spacing of beacons on the second path is documented by both the Smithsonian Postal Museum as being every 3 miles, in Letter from C.F. Egge, General Superintendent, Post Office Department, to Mr. T.W. Noblitt, Flat Creek, Tennessee, February 23, 1924 available on page 14 here <http://www.marylouiseclifford.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/uslhsairways.pdf> and in the Cleveland Plain Dealer May 5, 1925, page 13, and the Cleveland Plain Dealer June 28, 1924 page 18. The Bureau of Air Commerce changed the spacing to every 10 miles, and a letter went out documenting that change, from F.C. Hingsburg, Chief Engineer, Airways Division, to General Electric Company, September 1, 1927.



Special thanks to homeowners past and present... Beryl Peck, whose memories have been an invaluable contribution to this report... and Jim Morse and Dan Hocesvar, whose tireless research and enthusiasm for local history will ensure that the Seltzer story lives on for future generations.