



Olmsted 200

Two Centuries and More History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township –
First Farmed in 1814 and Settled in 1815

Issue 122

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Bronson Was a Big Name in West View

It was almost 190 years ago on December 4, 1833, that two people who played an important role in the development of West View were married. One was Ransom Bronson, whose ancestors came to America almost two centuries earlier and whose family was among the first settlers in Columbia Township. The other was a previously married woman, Mrs. Harriet M. Frink, who was more than six years older than him.



Harriet and Ransom Bronson lived in the southeastern corner of Olmsted Township known as West View. Selling land to entrepreneurs for new businesses is one way they influenced the development of West View's business section.

Today, they are commemorated in the name of Bronson Street in the southern section of Olmsted Falls that formerly was West View. Probably few people are aware of why the street has that name, but in the late 1800s, Ransom Bronson was one of the most respected residents of West View.

Following his death at age 80 on January 2, 1887, the West View column in the *Berea Advertiser* on January 14, 1887, had much to say about him, including this:

Mr. Ransom Bronson was a well to do citizen of this place, leaving considerable property. He has done more no doubt than any other citizen to build up this place. One of the best of neighbors, he will be missed by a host of friends. In his last hours he was very patient and seemed to be aware that his journey through life was nearing the end. He died without a struggle.



The road where Ransom and Harriet Bronson lived has generally been called Bronson Street, as the sign (at the left) on the corner of Columbia Road shows. But for some unexplained reason, the sign at the corner of Herb Street calls it Bronson Avenue.

One way Bronson contributed to the development of West View was by selling parcels of his land to entrepreneurs who started new businesses. That was noted in a May 30, 1873, West View column in what then was called the *Grindstone City Advertiser*: “Most of the buildings being erected here are due to the public spirit of Mr. Bronson who offers to sell lots for reasonable prices.”



This portion of an 1876 Olmsted Township map shows Ransom Bronson owned land at West View located west of what now is Columbia Road and next to the railroad tracks. It also shows some of the plots he sold to individuals who established businesses in the center of West View.

Bronson's land was west of what is now known as Columbia Road near where the railroad tracks intersected the road. Thus, the street along the tracks took the Bronson name. Bronson originally also owned some land farther south of there.

In addition, Bronson and his wife played an important role in the religious life of West View. His 1887 obituary in the *Advertiser* said that, in 1834, the year after his marriage, he "experienced religion and joined the church." The church he joined was the Methodist Episcopal Church, which was located a short distance south along the Copopa-Liverpool Trail, which now is East River Road, in Columbia Township. But (as explained in Issue 118 of *Olmsted 200* from March) the Bronsons and a few other families left that church in

1843 when the church wouldn't take a strong stand against slavery. They founded the Wesleyan Church. Until he died almost 44 years later, Bronson was the last surviving charter member of the church. The church building still stands at the northeast corner of Columbia Road and Sprague Road.



The Bronsons were among the families who founded the West View Wesleyan Church after they broke away from the nearby Methodist Episcopal Church in 1843. The Wesleyan Church building no longer serves as a church, but it still stands at the corner of Columbia Road and Sprague Road as it awaits its next use.

Ransom Bronson's ancestors didn't come to America on the Mayflower, but they weren't far behind that. The first immigrants were John and Frances Bronson, who arrived in Connecticut in 1636. John, who was born in Essex, England, in 1602, served as a soldier in the colonists' battles with the Pequot tribe of Native Americans in 1637. He lived in Hartford County, Connecticut, until his death at age 78 in 1680.

John Bronson's son, Isaac, was born in 1645 in Farmington, Hartford County, but later moved to Waterbury, New Haven County, Connecticut. Among the eight children he had with his wife, Mary, was a son named John, who was born in 1673 in Farmington and died in 1742 in Waterbury. That John Bronson and his wife, Mary, had seven children, including son Joseph, who was born in Waterbury in 1709 and died in Waterbury in 1771. Joseph, who acquired the title "Captain," had four children with two wives. Among the three he had with his first wife, Anna, was a son named Seba, who was born in 1740 in Waterbury and lived until 1816.

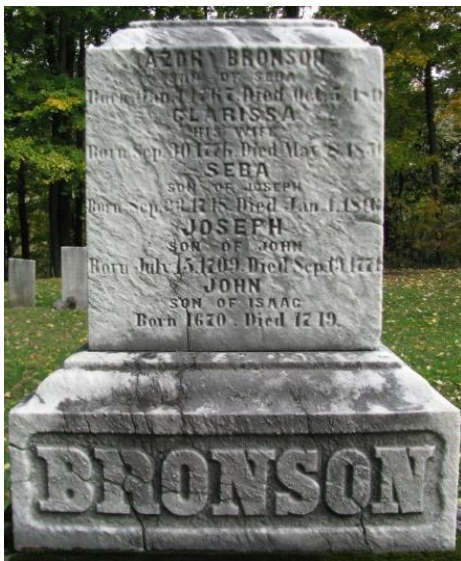
Seba Bronson, who served as a recruiting officer for Connecticut during the Revolutionary War, had 14 children in Connecticut with his wife, Mary, before moving early in the 19th century to the land in northeastern Ohio that was known as Connecticut's

Western Reserve. They moved initially to Ashtabula County. In 1808, Seba and Mary Bronson moved with two sons, Seba and Daniel, to Columbia Township. The elder Seba and Mary both died there in 1816.

Another of their sons, Azor – Ransom’s father – is credited with being one of the founding fathers of Columbia Township, although he did not last long after moving there. He was born in Waterbury in 1768. With his wife, Clarissa, he had four sons from 1799 to 1809. In 1807, Azor and his brothers, Levi and Harmon, were among Waterbury men who pooled their funds to form the Waterbury Land Company with the goal of buying an entire township from the Connecticut Land Company, which oversaw the distribution of Western Reserve land. With a few others, they obtained Columbia Township. (Similarly, Aaron Olmsted and others bought land from the Connecticut Land Company that became Olmsted Township.)

In June 1811, Azor, Clarissa and their family left Waterbury for Ohio. According to a history called *The Bronson Family of Loraine County*, it was a difficult trip:

They had difficulty in getting through Cataraugus Swamp, NY State, night over took them while a long way from a tavern, in the woods while the wagon was buried to the axle in the mire. Mr Bronson went on foot to get help and got the wagon out. While in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, the wagon finally broke and the wife and children were carried by horseback to Columbia, Ohio. Arrived July 4, On October 5, 1811 Azor Bronson died. Brother Bela died on October 13, 1811 from some fever that was prevalent at the time.



This Columbia Center Cemetery gravestone lists four generations of Bronsons, including Ransom’s parents, Azor and Clarissa, at top.

Clarissa Bronson survived another 40 years until her death in 1851. Azor and Clarissa’s four sons included Ransom, who was in the seventh generation of Bronsons in America. He was born September 11, 1806, so he was just five years old when his father died.

Ransom, along with two brothers, Albert and Horatio, eventually moved to Cuyahoga County to what became Olmsted Township. Ransom was the most prominent among them as a landowner, farmer and contributor to the development of the West View community with Harriet at his side until she died in 1877. The exact date of her death is unknown, but she was born on April 10, 1800, so she was age 76 or 77 when she died. They had no children together.

But Ransom did not stay single for long. The West View column in the January 3, 1878,

edition of the Berea newspaper, which then was called the *Republican and Advertiser*, included this item:

Married – Mr. Ransom Bronson, one of our most esteemed citizens who has done more for this place than any five men, has lately made a raid on the State of Pennsylvania and captured one of her fair daughters. He celebrated the event with a social gathering of the young folks last Friday evening and an oyster dinner for the old folks last Saturday. Instrumental and vocal music was the order of the day and evening. May he live long to enjoy his happiness is the best wishes of his friends.



Ransom and his first wife, Harriet, share a gravestone at Columbia Center Cemetery. She died in 1877, and he died a decade later in 1887, but neither death date is recorded on the stone.

Unfortunately, the columnist left out a few pertinent facts, such as the name of Bronson’s new wife, as well as any other information about her. An item in a later West View column in the January 4, 1883, edition of the newspaper, then called the *Berea Advertiser*, indicated her name before marriage might have been Adams because it included this item: “Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Bronson’s mother, is sick with lung complaint.”

That same West View column in that issue of the paper included another tidbit of information about Ransom Bronson’s second wife: “Mrs. Anderson of Minnesota, a daughter of Mrs. Bronson, has come, (with four children) to spend the winter with her mother.”

Maybe that made the house in West View a bit too crowded because the column also included this item: “Mr. Ransom Bronson went last week to Collinwood to visit Mrs. Wm. Stuart, with whom he spent two days.”

Fortunately, some information the *Advertiser* left out can be found online. Sources indicate Bronson’s second wife was named Mary Adams at her birth on August 6, 1832, to Moses Adams and Almira Smith Adams in Stockton, New York. (Note: certain records indicate she might have been born in 1837, not 1832, but Census and

other records corroborate that 1832 was the correct year.) On July 6, 1853, she married Aaron Taylor Chapin. They had two children born in Minnesota – Jennie Ida Chapin in 1854 and John Minnesota Chapin in 1856. She gave birth to her third child, Elmer Chapin, in Riceville, Pennsylvania, in 1861.

Census records show Mary Adams Chapin lived in Riceville in 1860 and 1870. Her husband, Aaron, who was born in 1832, died in 1870. She married Ransom Bronson on December 26, 1877, and showed up in the 1880 Census in West View.

Research has revealed little about her oldest and youngest children, but the middle one, John, was born on June 6, 1856, in Pleasant Grove, Minnesota (which coincidentally is in Olmsted County). He came to the West View area of Ohio after his mother's marriage to Ransom Bronson. He died December 26, 1945. The southern section of Olmsted Falls that formerly was West View has a Chapin Street. Like Bronson Street, it is west of Columbia Road, but it is south of the railroad tracks while Bronson is north of the tracks. It is possible Chapin Street was named for John Chapin.

More than two years after Bronson's death, Mary married John T. Smith in West View on September 8, 1889. Smith died in 1896. Census records show Mary subsequently lived in Brunswick, Ohio, in 1910 and then in Olmsted in 1920. She was 93 years old when she died in 1925. She and her son, John, were both buried in the Columbia Center Cemetery along Columbia West River Road in Columbia Township just north of Route 82.

Ransom Bronson and his first wife, Harriet, also were buried in Columbia Center Cemetery. They share a headstone, which lacks the year of death for either of them. The cemetery, which is the oldest in Lorain County, was started in 1811 on land that Bela Bronson, a brother of Azor Bronson, cleared for his home.

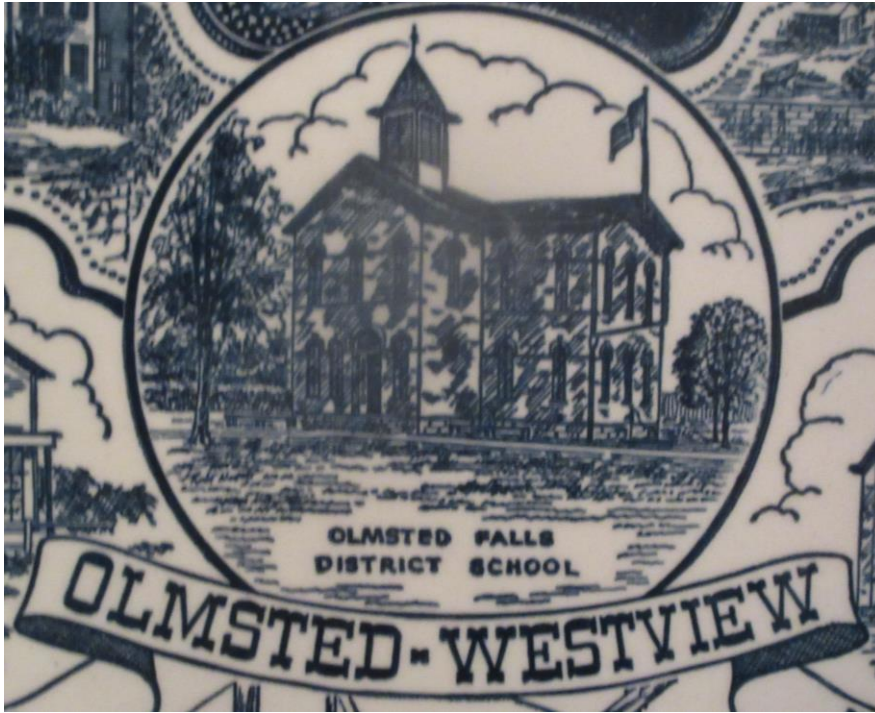
Thanks go to David Kennedy for his research that yielded the information about Ransom Bronson's second wife, Mary, and her children.

Plea to Save Schoolhouse Bell Was Heeded

The newly restored photos from 1880 and 1886 of the Union Schoolhouse on the Village Green, as seen in Issue 121 of *Olmsted 200* last month, have recalled the dismay many people had – and some still do – about its demolition in 1960. One woman, Loretta (Dodd) Nickels, wrote her thoughts down on July 14, 1960, as the building was coming down. A few years later, in 1964, Bernice Offenbergs preserved that essay in *Over the Years in Olmsted*, her collection of stories about Olmsted's history that she compiled as Olmsted Falls, Olmsted Township and West View approached their sesquicentennial.



The bell from the old Union Schoolhouse remains on display.



Although the old school building on the Village Green had been torn down in 1960, its depiction was the centerpiece of the commemorative plate issued four years later for the celebration of the sesquicentennial for Olmsted and West View. The bell Loretta Nickels wanted to save had been located in its tower.

Here is what Nickels wrote in her essay titled “Memories of the Old School House” in Offenbergs’s book:

One by one the old land marks go and now Old School House it’s your turn --- taking memories of our mom’s and dads, recalling the teaching of John Scheer, Charles Harding, Will Locke, Mary McKean, Kate (Dall) Hall, Edna (Stearns) Dall, Essie Hickey, Ray Moley, Cloye (Neal) Rooney, Mabel (Neale) Romp, Ethel and Neva Burt, Frank Bohn and many many more.

Entering the door to the left was the first, second and third grades, while the room on the right held the fourth, fifth and sixth grades. Then there was the big step when the stairs were climbed for the seventh and eighth grades, and in later years the three years of high school. How proud we were of our graduations --- our orations all full of memories. Eight grades were all the old timers had --- Dreaming of the old pot belly stoves, full coal buckets by its side, the old iron pump outdoors with its tin dipper --- the bandstand, games of pump-pump pullaway, one in one out -- programs – all beautiful memories.

Then, in 1914, condemned --- yet forty-six years later still standing, but so abused that now the hand of the wrecker is there.

Six years ago one old pupil had her hand on an open door --- all smiles --- recalling her days there until 1891, eight grades completed then

--- and out in the world. Ah yes, let's not forget the singing teacher, Charles Harding who came from Oberlin each Monday on the "Old Plug" returning on 23 which stopped at noon for him, but always a visit to Sulphur Springs for a drink.

Mary McKean ruled with an iron hand, afraid of neither large or small pupils. Later Si Pincombe came each day in horse and buggy from his home where the Airport is now, facing many bitter winters for three years to teach high school.

I could go on and on about those days of yesteryear. Memories come back to us, but I speak for all old timers, I know, when I make this one request, -- please, oh please save our bell!!!! That bell called many of us to classes over the years --- leave us this memory.



Scenes like this inside the Union Schoolhouse were in the memory of Loretta Nickels when she wrote her essay that later was included in Bernice Offenbergs book. This photo and the first one in this story are courtesy of Bruce Banks.

move the bell to the former school (built in 1916 and expanded later) at Bagley Road and Mapleway Drive as the community was considering making it the new Olmsted Falls City Hall. Certain City Council members favored that idea, but members of the Parks and Recreation Board didn't want to see the bell moved from the Village Green to a former school that was unassociated with its history.

In 1998, officials started developing plans for a new pavilion that would somewhat resemble the long-gone school, at least in its general shape. However, it would be just a 24-foot-by-40-foot brick shelter with four open sides and picnic tables inside.

Nickels would be pleased to know that the school bell is still being preserved. For many years after the school's demolition, the bell was displayed in a 10-foot-by-10-foot wooden structure on the Village Green until a severe storm damaged it in the early 1990s. After that occurred, city officials considered a few different plans for housing the bell.

One proposal was to build a 24-foot-tall brick tower with a wooden top. But that was sidetracked in 1997 by another proposal to

The bell would be placed in a tower on top, just as it had been in the tower on top of the Union Schoolhouse.

That's what was done. The bell remains on public display on the Village Green near to where it once was housed in the former schoolhouse that was fondly remembered by Loretta Nickels and many other students who passed through its hallways, as well as younger Olmsted residents who never attended school there but still hated to see the old building disappear from the Village Green.



The old school has been gone for 63 years, but its bell remains on top of this Village Green shelter.

Accident Cut Short Life of Peltz Family Member

An unfortunate event that occurred 150 years ago in July 1873 certainly shook



The Peltz family and friends posed for this photo in the 1860s behind their home on River Street (now River Road), where Florian operated a wagon wheel business. Henry is probably the small child in the middle, next to his brother, Joseph.

one Olmsted Falls family and might have affected the community's development in untold ways.

Much has been written in *Olmsted 200* and other publications about the life of Joseph Peltz, who was one of the most prominent citizens of Olmsted Falls in the late 19th century and early 20th century. But he had a brother who might have made his own mark on the community if his life had not been cut short 150 years ago.

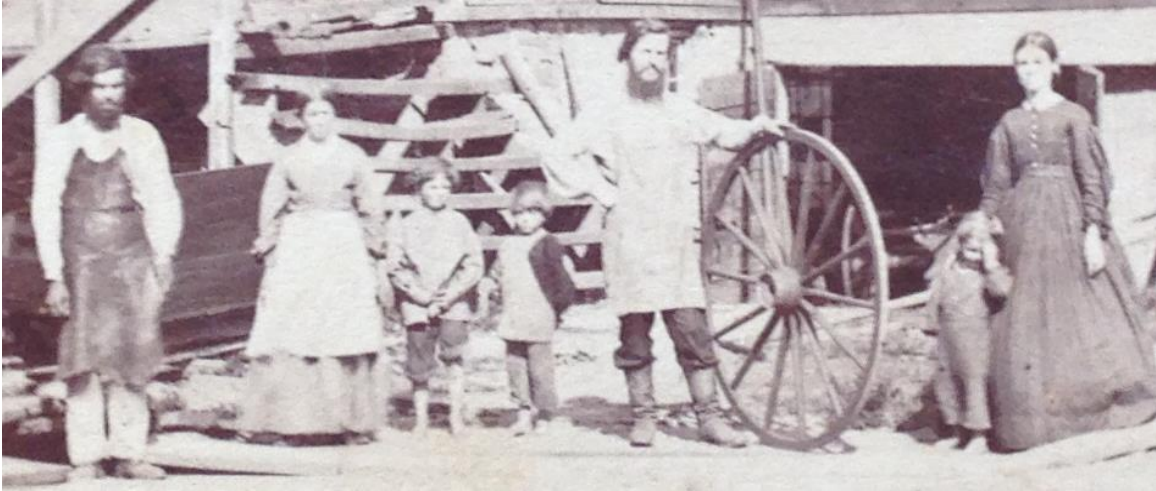
Berea's *Grindstone City Advertiser* on July 25, 1873, published this item in its Olmsted

column:

LAST Tuesday Henry Peltz aged fifteen years, a son of Mrs. F. Peltz was killed by a pulley falling from a machine that is used for drilling wells. He was standing near looking on when the fastening gave way and the pulley came down striking him on the back of the head, near the top, fracturing the skull and killing him almost instantly.

Henry and Joseph Peltz were the sons of Florian and Magdalena Peltz, German immigrants who came to Olmsted in the mid-19th century. Florian, who was born January

18, 1818, died on March 1, 1870, when he was 52 years old. Henry, who was born on July 17, 1858, died just three years after his father on July 22, 1873 – which was five days after his 15th birthday.



This enlargement of a section of the previous photo shows the members of the Peltz family a bit better. Again, Henry is probably the small boy in the center, standing next to his older brother, Joseph. Henry died in an accident about a decade later. Their house still stands at 7486 River Road.

The Petlzes also had two daughters, Magdalena and Thresa, but both died in infancy. Thus, Joseph was the only one of their children who lived to adulthood. He was born September 12, 1856, and lived more than 81 years until June 26, 1938.

To the right is a rare photo of one of the drugstores operated by Joseph Peltz in Olmsted Falls. For a few decades, he partnered with his brother-in-law, Philip Simmerer, to operate a hardware and drugstore in the building now called the Grand Pacific Hotel. Perhaps his brother, Henry, would have been part of the business if he had lived. Photo courtesy of Doug Peltz.



During his long life, Joseph operated drugstores and hardware stores both with and without his brother-in-law, Philip Simmerer, in Olmsted Falls until he and his second wife moved to Los Angeles in 1920. One of those stores was in the building now known as the Grand Pacific Hotel. It's possible Henry Peltz might have joined his brother in

business if he had survived to adulthood – or he might have started his own business in Olmsted Falls.

More about Joseph Peltz and his family can be found in several issues of *Olmsted 200*, including Issue 23 from April 2015, Issue 25 from June 2015, Issue 33 from February 2016, Issue 34 from March 2016, Issue 35 from April 2016 and Issue 42 from November 2016.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include more stories about the history of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township, including one about marks of progress 150 years ago in coping with the railroad, building a new school and welcoming the telegraph.

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 Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin, and as well as overseas in the Netherlands, Germany and Japan.

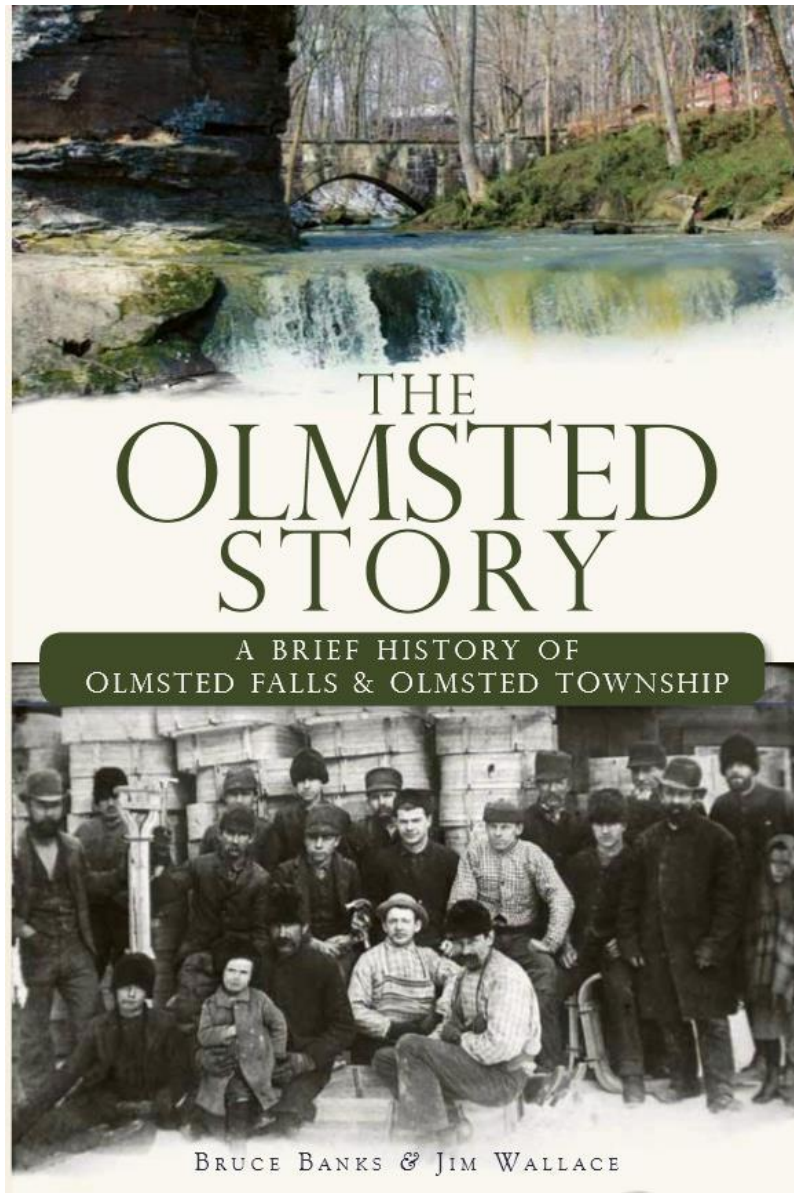
Your questions and comments about *Olmsted 200* are welcome. Perhaps there is something about Olmsted's history that you would like to have pulled out of *Olmsted 200*'s extensive archives. Or perhaps you have information or photos about the community's history that you would like to share.

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. Thanks also go to David Kennedy for frequently contributing research and insight for some stories. 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 Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.



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