



Olmsted 200

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

Issue 25

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Contents

Peltz and Simmerer Built Houses Close to Work	1
Californian Digs into History of Peltz Family and Olmsted	5
Olmsted Marks Century of School Consolidation	6
Still to Come	9

Peltz and Simmerer Built Houses Close to Work

This is the fifth 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 read each issue since then.

The Grand Pacific Hotel is the namesake building for Grand Pacific Junction, but it is just one of many buildings in the central business district of Olmsted Falls that Clint Williams restored and put to new uses. Two of those buildings are closely associated with the Grand Pacific Hotel. They are the two Victorian-style houses directly north of the hotel building.



Joseph Peltz posed for this photo outside his house and near his dog. This is one section of the larger photo below.

The one at 8086 Columbia Road that now is home to Mary's Hair Salon was built in 1889 to be the home of Joseph Peltz and his family. At that time, Peltz was still operating a drugstore that had expanded to sell hardware items. He had brought on his brother-in-law, Philip Simmerer, as a partner, but it was still a few years before they bought the building now known as the Grand Pacific Hotel.



This is the full photo showing Joseph Peltz outside his house, which now is home to Mary's Hair Salon as part of Grand Pacific Junction. The writing on the bottom is by Alice Stilwell McPeak, granddaughter of Peltz's second wife, Minnie. The photo was on a postcard. Written on the back is: "Residence of Cousin Minnie Peltz." No date is on the postcard, but Joseph and Minnie married in 1910. Photo courtesy of Doug Peltz.

Some historical references (including Grand Pacific Junction brochures) have given other years for the construction of the Peltz house, but an item in the October 18, 1889, edition of the *Berea Advertiser* leaves no doubt when the house was built: "Mr. Peltz's new house is moving on at a good pace toward completion and the village school house is being treated to paint and troughing." Thus, it seems likely that Peltz and his family were able to move into the house by the end of 1889.

That was 100 years before Clint Williams acquired the house in 1989 as part of the property that became the main section of Grand Pacific Junction. He renovated the house and other buildings there in the early 1990s.



The Peltz house looked like this before its renovation as part of Grand Pacific Junction. Photo courtesy of Clint Williams.

Peltz and Simmerer bought what had been the community's only hotel in 1892 and, by early 1893, converted it to be their hardware store. It remained a hardware store for almost eight decades, mostly under the ownership of Simmerer and his sons.



This is one view of the Simmerer house before it was renovated. Photo courtesy of Clint Williams.

Simmer of the firm of Peltz & Co. is excavating for a cellar preparatory to building his residence near their store.”

Within a few years, both the Peltz and Simmerer families wanted more room, as this item in the October 28, 1898, issue of the newspaper indicated: “Messrs. Peltz and Simmerer has each built an addition to his residence. Now, gentlemen, tear down that old barn and build a new one in its place; then you will have the finest property in the township.” (It is not clear whether “that old barn” was a reference to a predecessor of the stable that now contains Clementine’s Victorian Restaurant and Bakery, as well as Falls Ice Cream. It also is odd that the news item referred to “the finest property in the township” because it was in the village, not the township.)



This is another view of the Simmerer house before renovation. Photo courtesy of Clint Williams.

One week later, the November 4, 1898, edition of the paper ran another item that gave an indication of what else was on the property: “Philip Simmerer lost both of his nice fat hogs this week.”

In 1912, Simmerer and Peltz dissolved their partnership, and Peltz returned to the drugstore business across the street. The next year, a huge fire threatened Peltz’s house, and if his had gone, surely Simmerer’s would have been in jeopardy. About 10:45 p.m. on Tuesday, January 7, 1913, a fire broke out in the storeroom of W.G. Locke’s store. It destroyed Locke’s store and the adjoining store and barbershop of Joseph Anton, as well



This is another view of the side and rear of the Simmerer house before a new porch was added. Photo courtesy of Clint Williams.

as well as a two-story residence where the Anton family lived along with the family of B.H. Rydman. Those buildings stood where the Depositors Bank Building was built about a decade later.

The January 10 edition of the *Berea Enterprise* reported that, by the time the volunteer fire department could respond, the only hope was to save nearby buildings: “Three frame buildings across the street were in grave danger from the tremendous shower of sparks falling on the roof, but a vigorous bucket brigade and the chemical engine kept

these, as well as the residence of Jos. Peltz, occupied also by the family of J.W. Phelps, safe from harm, the fire being confined to the Locke buildings, which were totally destroyed.”



This is how the rear of the Simmerer house looked before the porch was added. Photo courtesy of Clint Williams.

When Clint Williams renovated the Simmerer house in the 1990s, he added onto it. He constructed a porch that extended across the back of the building and around part of the side. At the corner, he put a gazebo-like structure. Until recently, the building housed Abigayle’s Quiltery, which has moved to Berea.



These photos show the Simmerer house during renovation as the new porch was being attached. Photos courtesy of Clint Williams.



The photo on the left shows the porch at the rear of the Simmerer house as it appeared last year during Olmsted Heritage Days. The photo on the right shows the fronts of the Simmerer house (left) and the Peltz house as the Heritage Days parade passed by on the evening of August 14, 2014. This year Olmsted Heritage Days will be held one week earlier. The parade is scheduled for the evening of August 6.

Californian Digs into History of Peltz Family and Olmsted

It often has been said that one thing leads to another, and that's certainly proven true in researching and writing about the history of Olmsted. One of the most rewarding results of putting out *Olmsted 200* has been the way it has encouraged others to share information relating to the history of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township that would have been hard, if not impossible, to find otherwise.

During the past several weeks, one source of such information has been someone who lives in California and has only infrequently visited Olmsted Falls. Doug Peltz, cofounder of MysteryScience.com in San Francisco, is the great-great-great-grandson of Florin and Magdalena Peltz, who immigrated to the United States from Germany and moved to Olmsted Falls in the mid-1800s. He also is a descendant of their son, Joseph Peltz, mentioned in the previous article and founder of Peltz & Simmerer Hardware.

"I'm 33 years old, but have long been interested in family history, as I've been told since a young age that I'm the last Peltz to carry on the name," Doug Peltz wrote in an email. "Back in the 1990s, I visited Olmsted Falls and got to see the family plot at Chestnut Grove. We were all completely bowled over when we saw the Peltz & Simmerer Hardware Store in town." (That's a reference to the re-creation of Peltz & Simmerer signage that Clint Williams put on the Mill Street side of the Grand Pacific Hotel, which once was the hardware store.)



*When Doug Peltz met Alice Stilwell McPeak in California this spring, they posed for this photo with a copy of **The Olmsted Story: A Brief History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township.***

research, Doug Peltz was able to track down a granddaughter of Minnie, Alice Stilwell McPeak, who is 84 and still living in California. The good news for anyone interested in Olmsted's history is that she has photos not only of Joseph Peltz but also of his former stores in Olmsted Falls – photos that haven't been seen around Olmsted in many decades. The photo of Joseph Peltz by his house, as well as the close-up taken from it, in the previous article comes from that collection.

In the future, *Olmsted 200* will have more on the Peltz family using the information and photos acquired by Doug Peltz.

Olmsted Marks Century of School Consolidation

This year is not only the 200th anniversary of when the first settlers moved into what became Olmsted Township but also the centennial of the merger of the Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township school districts. The result was the first consolidated school district in Cuyahoga County.

On June 3, 1915, the Olmsted Falls Village Board of Education met for the last time. It turned over all of its assets, which included a check for \$323.07, to the board of

Because *Olmsted 200* is available online at Olmsted Township's website (thanks to the township trustees), he found more information about his ancestors and was able to contact not only *Olmsted 200* but also Kevin Roberts, the lawyer and Olmsted Falls councilman who lives in what was Florin and Magdalena Peltz's house on River Road. Doug Peltz has continued to research his ancestors and has turned up some interesting information.

Joseph Peltz had been married to Anna Simmerer, but she died in 1906. Sometime later, he moved with his second wife, Minnie, to California. Through genealogy

the Olmsted Township Rural School District. (A decade later, the combined district changed its name to the Olmsted Falls School District.) The consolidation between the village and township school systems occurred more than a decade after the township itself had gone through its own consolidation in 1904 by forming a five-member school board to take charge of small schools in several sub-districts around the township. (Three of those schools were included in a new school district after North Olmsted became a village in 1909.)

The township and Olmsted Falls might have maintained separate school systems even longer if the village had not run into a big problem in 1914. Until then, all Olmsted Falls students had been taught in the Union School since it had been built on the Village Green in 1873. But in 1914, that building was declared to be structurally unsafe. Classes were moved to the old Town Hall (where the Moosehead restaurant now is located) while Olmsted Falls officials and citizens considered their options. The best option apparently was for Olmsted Falls to give up on going its separate way in schooling students and to join the township's district.



This photo of the Union School was taken in 1912, two years before it was determined to be unsafe and its use as a school ended.

The Olmsted Falls correspondent for the *Berea Enterprise* advocated not only the merger of the two districts but also the construction of one school for all of the students of the township and the village. An item the reporter filed March 30, 1915, for the April 2 edition of the paper said: “The people of the village and township are divided on the question of centralization.”

But in the same edition of the paper, the correspondent had these two items dated March 31: “Rapid strides are being made toward the centralizing of schools. Be a booster and help a good cause along. If you are in doubt, don’t condemn the move on the strength of information given by those that are less conversant with the subject than yourself.”

“An interesting public school meeting was held last week at the town hall to consider consolidation of schools. Parents are getting interested and are anxious to do the thing that will be to the best interests of their children.”

On April 9, the two school boards met to discuss consolidation and set April 20 for an election on the issue. It’s not clear whether or how township residents voted on the



This was one of the Union School classrooms.

matter, but the April 23 edition of the *Enterprise* had this report on the village's vote: "The progressive element of the village are [sic] more than pleased by the result of election Tuesday. 50 to 32 in favor of better school conditions."

After the school districts merged, the big question was whether to put all the students into one school. In the June 4, 1915, edition, the *Enterprise* ran this long article titled "SCHOOL CENTRALIZATION MEANS":

A new modern building, safe – lighting, seating and heating properly designed for the comfort and health of the pupils – with proper accommodations for all the students of the township, including four-year first class high school. Grounds comprising four or five acres, with room for teaching agriculture properly – this study has revolutionized conditions in communities where it has been properly taught, and for play grounds. Children living at any distance from the school will be transported between their homes and the school in properly equipped wagons, under the supervision of a competent driver, who will have the necessary authority to preserve perfect order to the wagons. That district school teachers who now have over thirty recitations per day, and can give less than ten minutes to each of them, will be all brought together and the teaching force can be so arranged that the same number will be able to provide a special teacher for music, writing and drawing, with most of the other teachers only none [sic – probably should be "one"] grade – one of them more than two grades – and a four-year high school. Larger classes and more interest shown by the pupils will encourage pupils to go to high school, who could not do it if they had to pay railroad fare or board in Cleveland or Elyria. That our children will have as good educational advantages as the city schools can give. Don't we owe it to them? Then if we do, how can we refuse to vote for the bond issue to give these advantages to them? June 8 is the day. The township school board met Saturday night; because of the failure of the village district board to close up its affairs and turn the district over to the township, as voted on April 20, but which will be done early this week, the board was not in position to elect teachers for this year, but will do so at a meeting next Friday night – applications should be addressed to F.R. Gallagher, clerk. It was also decided that all high school pupils of the township would have to attend Olmsted Falls high school, or pay their own tuition elsewhere, and that the high school will be maintained for the next year on the

present basis. A budget asking for \$8500 for the coming school year was approved.

On June 8, the consolidated school district held an election for the approval of a \$40,000 bond issue to build a school. It would have been built at the corner of Columbia and Bagley roads on five acres of land that Edward Holton offered for free. But voters rejected the bond issue by just six votes – 131 to 137. Holton withdrew his offer of free land. If the bond issue had passed, downtown Olmsted Falls and the school system would have looked much different in the following decades.

The effort to get the district to build a single school for all the students included the creation of a publication to promote it. The *Olmsted Recorder* lasted only long enough to achieve its goal.

On November 2, 1915, residents of the school district voted 146 to 138 to approve a \$65,000 bond issue that led in the next year to the construction of a school at the corner of what now is Bagley Road and Mapleway Drive (then Division Street). That building received later additions. It now serves as Olmsted Falls City Hall. *Olmsted 200* will have more about that later this year.

For now, it is interesting to reflect that the Village Green once was the site of the Union School, but it was the deterioration of that school by 1914 that led to the real union of school districts and a unified school, not at the Village Green but about a mile southwest of there.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include the next story in the series about Grand Pacific Junction.

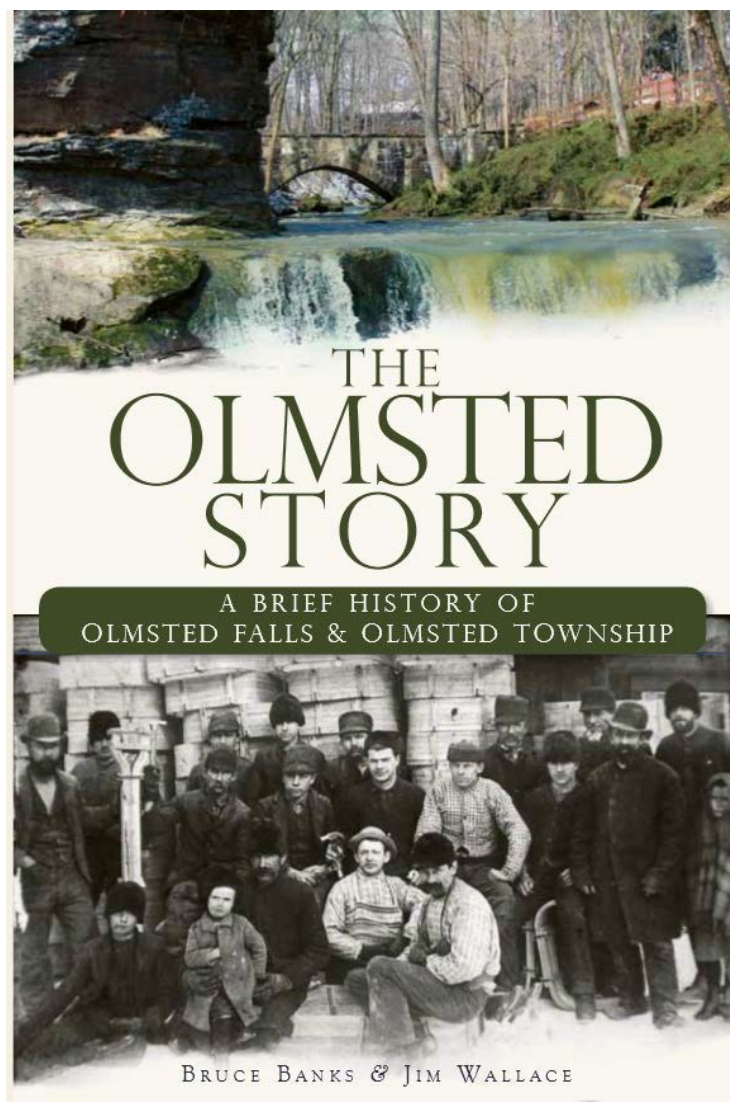
If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: wallacestar@hotmail.com. *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, Colorado, Texas,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

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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