



Olmsted 200

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

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Olmsted's Quarries Were Dusty and Dangerous

The establishment of sandstone quarries in Olmsted Falls and West View during the 1870s brought many changes to those communities. One of those changes was a new type of occupational danger.

Prior to the quarries, most men in the communities made their livings either as farmers or as merchants. Farming always had occupational risks, and in those days when horses were common means of transportation, almost everyone – men, women and children – faced some danger from horses that would get spooked or otherwise out of control, causing accidents that sometimes caused serious injury or deaths. But quarry work was especially dangerous, as well as dirty, dusty and noisy.



This undated photo shows part of the quarry operation that began in Olmsted Falls in the 1870s. It was located where David Fortier River Park now stands.



This photo was identified as "Stone Cutters in Quarry." Presumably the quarry was in Olmsted Falls.

"Quarrying was treacherous work," Patricia Mote wrote in her 2012 book, *Legendary Locals of Berea*, "Accidents were frequent and fatal."

Well, not all of them were fatal, but they often caused serious injuries. News of such accidents appeared sometimes in the Olmsted and West View columns of the Berea newspaper, the *Grindstone City Advertiser* (which became the *Cuyahoga Republican* in 1876 and 1877, then the *Cuyahoga Republican and Advertiser* briefly in 1877 and then just the *Republican and Advertiser* from

1877 to 1879).

"Mr. Ed Reynolds of Olmsted Falls, while turning a grindstone in the R.R. Stone Quarry, received a severe injury, the bar with which he was turning caught, and flying up, struck him under the eye, cutting a bad gash," the newspaper reported in a West View column written on September 10, 1877. The Rocky River Stone Company operated the quarry along what is now East River Road just north of Sprague Road. That area is part of Olmsted Falls but formerly was West View.

The West View column in the April 4, 1878, edition of the paper contained news of both a serious injury to one quarry worker and the death of another. The first item reported:

"A serious accident occurred [sic] in the R.R. Stone Quarry Thursday afternoon. There are two derricks which stand in front of the mill that are fastened together by a guy reaching from one to the other, another guy leads from one of the derricks to a tree to which it is fastened. While engaged in hoisting a stone the guy which led to the tree broke loose [sic], and both derricks fell, one of the guys striking George Boon in the side and, it was thought at first, breaking several ribs. Dr. Rose, of Olmsted Falls, was sent for who pronounced one of his ribs broken and one cracked."

The other item was shorter and grimmer: "Mr. James Sullivan died, of the grit consumption, Saturday morning, at two. He is buried to day." Grit consumption was the term then used for silicosis, the disease that results from inhaling dust created by blasting or cutting sandstone and other materials that contain silica. It would scar workers' lungs and steadily reduce their capacity to breathe.

“The constant specter of ‘grit consumption’ threatened the life of every quarry worker,” Mote wrote in her 2004 book, *Berea*. “The fine beige-white dust created from the constant chipping of the sandstone damaged the lungs of those who spent their lives in the quarries.



Controlling the danger from quarry dust was a problem impossible to resolve. A quarry worker’s only defense against this hazard was a bandana tied over his nose and mouth, which he probably removed on very warm days.”

These stones in David Fortier River Park were left over when quarrying ended in Olmsted Falls. Workers risked injury and death to produce stones like these.

Several days after the two previously mentioned items appeared in the newspaper’s West View column, the column written on April 15, 1878, contained this account of an accident involving the train that hauled stone out of the Rocky River Stone Company’s quarry:

“Quite an accident happened to the pony engine last Saturday. While engaged in hauling out some cars from the R.R. stone quarry, they had reached a point opposite the switches when the tender jumped the track and fell on its side. The engine jumped the track also, but did not fall over. The hind trucks of the tender were torn from their places and jammed in between the ties and the tender so as to form a brace. The track for the space of fifteen or twenty feet was torn up and a number of rails were beat. No one was hurt, although the engineer and fireman had a narrow escape. The relief train was telegraphed for and arrived at the place of accident about three o’clock. After several hours of hard labor they succeeded in clearing the track and started for Cleveland a little after midnight.”

Two 1877 items from the Olmsted column of the *Advertiser* also provide some insights into the dangers of quarry work. They refer to the quarry that was just south of West View in Columbia Township:

- *Advertiser*, August 9, 1877, OLMSTED: “A derrick fell in Clough’s quarry in Columbia on Monday last, and William Reynolds of this village, in getting out of reach of it stepped off the edge of the rocks and fell about

thirty feet on to some loose spalls below. He is considerably bruised but it is not thought that he is seriously injured.”

- *Advertiser*, August 16, 1877, OLMSTED: “Will Reynolds, who fell at Clough’s quarry last week, is able to be out again. That quarry must be a lucky place to fall, or the stone must be very soft.”

Such items not only reveal how dangerous quarry work could be but also provide some insights into how the quarries worked. As that item indicated, small railroad engines called pony engines would pull small gondola cars filled with stone out of the quarries. Derricks with pulleys and chains were used to lift quarried stones from the



Piles of cut stones remain at what once was West View’s busy, noisy quarry with derricks, railcars and other equipment to remove sandstone from the ground to get it to customers.

ground and into the railcars. In the early years, the derricks were operated by hand, but they later were powered by steam.

Walter Holzworth, who wrote an extensive book on Olmsted history in 1966, also wrote the 1970 book, *Men of Grit and Greatness: A Historical Account of Middleburg Township, Berea, Brook Park and Middleburg Heights*, with a big chapter on the operation of Berea’s quarries. They operated much like the quarries in Olmsted Falls and West View. He wrote that, after the initial quarrying of sandstone slabs for grindstones by John Baldwin in the 1830s and

1840s: “The business developed to a point where it became necessary to start quarrying with the backbreaking job of channeling with picks and pointed bars and the blasting with gunpowder and lifting the blocks with ox-powered hoists. The splitting of the blocks into the desired thickness was done with iron wedges and heavy hammers. David Stearns...is credited with the first sawing of stone slabs and building blocks in 1846.”

By the time quarrying began in Olmsted Falls and West View in the 1870s, quarrying methods had not evolved too much from that.

“Working in the quarries was a hazardous job at best,” Holzworth wrote. “The handling of gunpowder, operating of machinery and derricks, the quarry railroad and the inhaling of sandstone dust took a heavy toll of lives and health and left many widows with small children to support. About the only compensation was an expression of sympathy in the days when big business considered that the health, safety and welfare of its employees was *[sic]* a matter of their own personal concern. John Baldwin Jr. did invent a blower system to take away the dust while turning out grindstones, but this did not improve conditions in the quarry pits, and grist consumption became common.”

The quarrying process generally began by removing the overburden, which was the soil, rocks and vegetation that covered the sandstone. According to Holzworth, sections of stone 40 feet square would be marked off and then a channel would be dug around each section. In the early years, the work was done with shovels, picks and other hand tools. Later, steam shovels removed the overburden and dug the channels. Then iron wedges were driven into the stone at the bottom of the channel to separate each section of stone. Here is more of Holzworth's description of the process:

This large section was cross marked into smaller sections and holes drilled in a straight line down through the thickness of the seam by steam powered drilling machines. A tool or heavy steel rod with a special shaped head with spars protruding from opposite sides was then driven down through the hole to make a score mark in line with the row of holes.

The discharge of gunpowder in the holes split the layout into even and quite accurate smaller sections, which were hoisted by derricks and loaded onto quarry cars to be hauled to the gang saw mills.

In addition to the use of explosives to split big chunks of stone into smaller pieces, quarries also used a method called "plug and feather." The plug was a metal wedge, while the feathers were the shims into which the plug was inserted. The feathers' tops were curved and tapered.



A modern example of a plug and feather – essentially a metal wedge inserted into a pair of tapered shims – is seen on the left. On the right is what appears to be the feather part of a plug-and-feather system left in sandstone from a former quarry in David Fortier River Park in Olmsted Falls.

Several sets of plugs and feathers were set into holes that were cut or drilled several inches apart into a large piece of stone. Quarry workers then would strike the plugs with hammers until they heard the stone crack. A few plugs and

feathers can still be found in stones left over from the quarries in Olmsted Falls and West View.

Stones also were cut using gang saws, which Holzworthn wrote were “steam driven sets of long, hardened steel blades arranged in a series to the width desired and dragged back and forth across the block under a stream of water to keep the steel blades cool. Thus units of stone of any desired size were produced.”

Quarrying attracted many workers, including immigrants from Poland and other European countries, but as Holzworth wrote, the work was seasonal, “as operations were suspended during mid-winter. Heavy rains flooded the pits, causing long delays while pumps were in operation.”

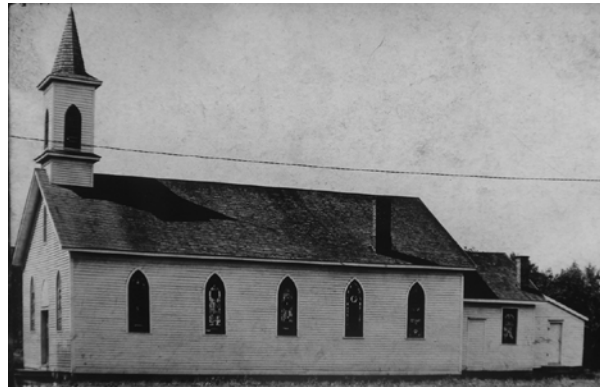
The seasonal shutdowns varied from year to year, perhaps depending on market conditions, as well as weather. For example, an item in the Olmsted column in the May 1, 1874, edition of the *Advertiser* indicated the winter shutdown extended well into the spring: “BUSINESS seems to be rather dull here yet, the quarries have not opened, and the proprietors dont [*sic*] seem to be in any great hurry about it either.”

A few weeks later, in the May 28 edition, the same column included this item: “THE quarries have not opened business yet, and business of all kinds is very dull.” It’s not clear from subsequent issues of the *Advertiser* when quarrying resumed in Olmsted Falls in 1874.

By contrast, the quarry at West View seemed to have a very brief shutdown in the winter of 1878. An item in the West View column, written on January 7, 1878, for the January 10 *Advertiser* said: “The R.R. Stone Co. shut down last week.” Then just two weeks later, a column written January 21 for the January 24 edition said: “The R.R. Stone Co. commenced stripping for Spring work, last week.”

In addition to the effects quarrying had on workers’ health and employment, quarries also affected their communities’ appearances and development. In Berea, that meant frequent changes in the contours of the community when quarrying moved from spot to spot, which forced people to move homes and businesses.

In Olmsted Falls, quarrying likely was the reason the Catholic Church ended up on the southern end of the downtown district instead of the northern end. St. Mary’s originally was built in 1858



Except for the addition on the rear, this was the St. Mary’s building that was rolled down Columbia Street (now Columbia Road) in 1873 probably to get it away from the dirty, noisy quarries at its original location at the at the northern end of downtown Olmsted Falls.

about where the Olmsted Community Church stands now. But in 1873 – just a few years after quarrying began nearby in what now is David Fortier River Park – the wooden church building was rolled down the street to where St. Mary’s stands today. The reason for the move presumably was to get away from the noisy, dusty quarry operations. Several decades later – long after quarrying ceased – that spot, which formerly was Catholic, became home to the largest Protestant church in town. If not for the quarries, downtown Olmsted Falls might look much different today.

Throughout the 1870s and the first half of the 1880s, the quarries in Olmsted Falls, West View and other communities were operated by individual small companies. The newspaper columns sometimes noted comings and goings in those companies. For example, a West View column written January 14, 1878, for the January 17 edition of the *Advertiser* reported: “The stockholders of the R.R. Stone Company held a meeting last week, and the following officers appointed: Mr. James White, Pres.; Mr. Hinsdale, Supt.; and Mr. M.E. Baker, Sec. and Treas.”

However, that changed in the late 1880s when Cleveland Stone Company bought up the quarries in several communities and consolidated operations. That helped expand the use of Berea sandstone in many communities in the United States and Canada. But many local people became discontent with Cleveland Stone’s operations, and turmoil eventually disrupted life in the quarry towns. *Olmsted 200* will have more on that next month.

Reader’s Discovery Could Be Site of Former Olmsted School



Ross Bassett, who took this photo, believes it shows the foundation of the former Number 4 School at the top of Spafford Road.

People interested in Olmsted history have an advantage because evidence of so much of that history is on display in many ways. Good examples exist in David Fortier River Park in Olmsted Falls where sandstone blocks and grindstones left over from the quarries, as well as other artifacts from the past, can be found easily. Many other such examples can be spotted around Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township for those who know what to look for.

Olmsted 200 reader Ross Bassett is one such person who knows what to look for. He happens to be president of the West Park Historical Society. While he was walking with his grandson one day on Metroparks land in northeastern Olmsted Township on the top of what he identifies as Sheppard Hill, he came across the foundation of a building he believes was one of eight small schoolhouses that were scattered around the township in the late 1800s

and early 1900s. He doesn't know for certain that the foundation is from the former school, but it seems to be in the right spot near Spafford Road according to at least one old map.

"I am thinking that the foundation picture may only be of the front door area as it looks too small to hold the entire school house," Bassett wrote.

Three of the township's eight schools went with North Olmsted in 1909, when it became a separate village. After Olmsted Township and Olmsted Falls merged their school districts in 1915, the consolidated district built a single school (now Olmsted Falls City Hall) to replace all the remaining small schools.

The one in the northeastern section of the township was officially known as the Number 4 School, but it also was called the Gage School because members of the Gage family lived in that area of the Township and at least one Gage was a teacher there. In his 1966 book of Olmsted history, Walter Holzworth wrote that, after the school district sold off the old school properties, the Harrison Gage family of Ruple Road bought the school's outhouses for two dollars each. He also wrote that the park board acquired the property and let the schoolhouse serve as a home until it became a nuisance and was torn down.



This undated photo shows what the Gage School once looked like.

It's the Sesquicentennial of Regular Olmsted News



Berea's newspaper provided the first regular coverage of Olmsted news.

Along with marking 150 years since significant quarrying began in Olmsted Falls and the former West View, this year also marks a century and a half since news from Olmsted Falls, Olmsted Township and West View began appearing in regular newspaper reports.

Before then, an item of Olmsted news might have made it into a Cleveland newspaper on occasion, but those occasions were rare, and many events in community life went by unrecorded. For example, it

would be nice to have contemporary reports on exactly when the former seminary building now called the Grand Pacific Hotel was moved across the railroad bridge from Lewis Road (then Seminary Road) to its current location. Likewise, it would be nice to be able to read old reports of when other buildings, as well as bridges and roads, were constructed. But many of those details have been lost to history.



Olmsted's W. W. Mead ran newspaper ads before the paper began covering Olmsted news.

W. W. Mead,
HARNESS MAKER,
OFFERS for sale, at the **Lowest**
Prices, his Extensive Stock of
HARNESS, SADDLES, WHIPS,
&c., &c., &c.
Custom Work, of all kinds, made in
the best manner, on the shortest notice.
Repairing neatly done, and satisfac-
tion guaranteed.

Tailoring.

H. Moley,
MERCHANT TAILOR,
Has a full supply of
Ready-Made
Clothing!
GENTS' FURNISHING GOODS!
And makes up Gents' Garments to order, in
the best style and fashion.
Mr. M. is always at his Olmsted store
until 2 P. M.

Tanney's West View Store.

GOODS
Sold for
Cash Only!

Best Dollar Tobacco,	\$.80
Best \$1.75 Tea, -	1.60

At **L. C. Tanney's.**

Tin Ware and Stoves,
ADAMS & OSBORN,
Manufacturers of
TIN WARE,
—And Dealers in—
Stoves and Furniture!
We make a specialty of
DAIRY TIN WARE,
Which we warrant to be unequalled by any
dealer in the country. Particular attention
will be paid to putting up Eave Troughs,
etc.

General Merchandise.

N. P. Loomis,
—Dealer in—
DRY GOODS, GROCERIES,
PROVISIONS, CROCKERY,
Hardware,
BOOTS & SHOES, WALL PAPER,
Drugs and Medicines,
PAINTS, OILS, DYE-STUFFS, &c., &c.,
IN ODD FELLOW'S BUILDING.
A full stock of goods is offered, and sat-
isfaction is guaranteed both as to quality
and price.

Harness

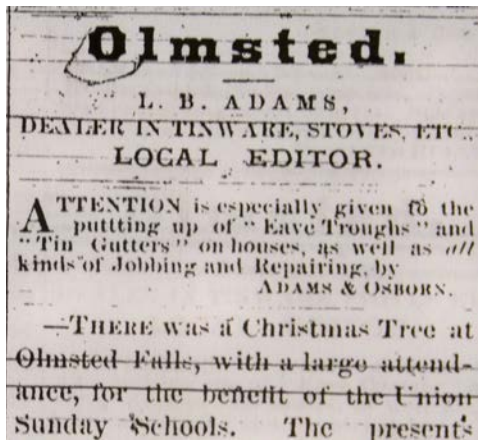
W. W. Mead,
HARNESS MAKER,
OFFERS for sale, at the **Lowest**
Prices, his Extensive Stock of
HARNESS, SADDLES, WHIPS,
&c., &c., &c.
Custom Work, of all kinds, made in
the best manner, on the shortest notice.
Repairing neatly done, and satisfac-
tion guaranteed.

In the 1870s, other Olmsted Falls and West View merchants became regular advertisers in Berea's newspaper, which began as the Grindstone City Advertiser but went through several name changes.

Berea's *Grindstone City Advertiser* began in 1868 with a heavy emphasis on Berea news. Gradually, the newspaper expanded its coverage to neighboring communities over the next few years. In the case of Olmsted Falls, small ads from local merchants began showing up in the paper before Olmsted news items did.

The first item of Olmsted news perhaps was this one from June 19, 1869: "FOURTH OF JULY to be celebrated at Olmsted Falls on Saturday, July 3rd 1896 [*sic*]. The citizens of Berea and vicinity are notified that a meeting will be held at Nokes Hall on Monday evening, June 21st, at 8 o'clock, to make arrangements by committees &c., to join Olmsted, in celebrating the day and time aforesaid." Underneath were the names of three organizers:

P.B. GARDNER
D.R. WATSON
GEO. NOKES"



Shortly after L.B. Adams became the Olmsted editor, he got plugs for his business added at the top of his column.

However, regular reports from Olmsted still were months away. In the November 20, 1869, edition, the *Advertiser* had a column headed with the title, "Olmsted." But under it was this notice: "[LOCAL EDITOR WANTED]."

Underneath that was one item of local news: "The Good Templars will present the Temperance drama of 'The Fruits of the Wine Cup,' and the Farce entitled 'Aunt Judy,' at the Town Hall, Nov. 25th and 26th. Fifteen cents is only charged for admission, which is altogether too little."

By December 4, 1869, the paper had an Olmsted column with L.B. Adams listed as the local editor, but items of local news still were few. A couple of weeks later, in the December 17 issue,

he was listed this way:

L.B. ADAMS
DEALER IN TINWARE, STOVES, ETC.
LOCAL EDITOR

In later weeks, he had a paragraph of promotion added in smaller print:

"Attention is especially given to the putting up of 'Eave Troughs' and 'Tin Gutters' on houses, as well as all kinds of Jobbing and Repairing by
ADAMS & OSBORN."

As the weeks went on, more items began appearing in Adams's column. For example on February 4, 1870, he had an obituary for Levi Jennings, who had died at age 31. Then he had this item, which took on the character of the types of news he would report in the months and years ahead:

Mr. Lewis Hess, came very near meeting with a serious accident a few evenings since. He had been in at the Barber Shop getting smoothed up a little, and, on rising from his chair shoved a fluid lamp from the table to the floor. It burst, and he was enveloped in flames. "Lute Barnum" soon hustled him from the Shop into a snow bank— gave him a good rolling and succeeded in extinguishing the flames.

Many items Adams reported were of minor comings and goings among Olmsted residents, as well as who was ill and who was visiting whom. Others items have preserved insights for later readers about what life was like in the community back then. For example, this item appeared in the February 25, 1870, edition of the *Advertiser*: "MUCH activity is manifested among our dairy men in this vicinity. They are enlarging their stocks of cows, notwithstanding high prices. We hope that our Cheese factory may be supplied with the milk of five-hundred cows for the coming season."

Eventually, the newspaper added columnists for West View and other parts of Olmsted Township, such as Butternut Ridge and an area called East Olmsted. Columnists came and went, sometimes using pseudonyms and sometimes not being identified at all. They were far from consistent. Sometimes they reported items that seemed to be based on inside jokes or information only those present at the time would understand. Frequently, their word choices or grammar or spelling were odd.

Nevertheless, they preserved many details of events that explained how Olmsted life developed and changed over the years – details that might have been lost forever. And it all began about 150 years ago.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include a story about how the Cleveland Stone Company changed quarrying in Olmsted Falls and West View.

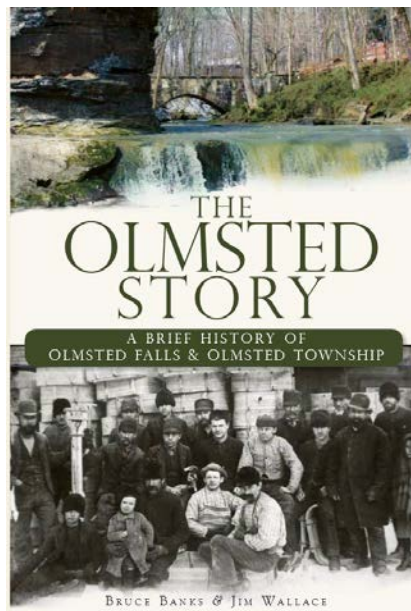
If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: wallacestar@hotmail.com. *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including California, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Michigan, Wisconsin, New York, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Maine, 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. Written contributions and photos, as well as comments and questions about items in this newsletter, will be considered for publication. Send any correspondence by email to: wallacestar@hotmail.com.

Olmsted 200 is written, researched and edited by Jim Wallace, who is solely responsible for its content. He is co-author (with Bruce Banks) of ***The Olmsted Story: A Brief History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township***, published in 2010 by The History Press of Charleston, S.C. *The Olmsted Story* is available at the Village Bean in Olmsted Falls and the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.



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