



# Olmsted 200

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

Issue 84

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## Local Quarries Went Quiet

In the last three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the quarries were a constant presence in Olmsted Falls and West View. Although they shut down for varying periods during the cold-weather months, and sometimes longer, and their workers could not always depend on constant work or steady wages, they were the biggest employers in each community and important factors in the local economy.



*These grindstones from the Olmsted Falls quarry never went to market but were simply left on the ground after the quarry closed. They remain in David Fortier River Park, not far from the falls on Plum Creek and just down the hill from the path leading to the falls.*

But extractive industries, such as quarries, mines and oil wells, don't last forever. Resources run out or become uncompetitive as markets change.

The quarries of Olmsted Falls and West View operated at least until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it's not clear how long they operated after that. Perhaps that information is contained in one or more small local newspaper items that have not come to the attention of *Olmsted 200*, but

searches so far have failed to yield such tidbits. And back then, most news of each community came in items that were strung together, usually in no order of importance, in columns put together by local correspondents.

For example, one item about the 1896 quarry strike in the West View column of the *Berea Advertiser* (see last month's issue) came below an item that said little more than that two couples spent the Fourth of July together and just ahead of a small item that the local chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union had met the previous Thursday. In other words, news that seems noteworthy now was wedged into columns mostly about fleeting social matters and gossip.



*Tom Barnum, Olmsted Falls quarry superintendent, chiseled his name on the side of Inscription Rock near the quarry. It can be found in David Fortier River Park near the stone bridge over Plum Creek.*

However, considering that finished or partially finished grindstones and cut blocks of sandstone were left lying around in both the Olmsted Falls and West View quarries, it seems likely the quarrying halted quietly, ending with a whimper rather than a bang. The histories that have been written of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township have not pinpointed exactly when quarrying ended. The closest any came to doing so were in two of Walter Holzworth's books. In one paragraph in his 1966 history of Olmsted, he wrote that Tom and Harry Barnum each served as superintendent of the Olmsted Falls quarry after the Cleveland Stone Company bought it (and other local quarries) in 1886. He wrote that continued "until the Stone Company closed down all the smaller quarries" and the Barnums were transferred to the company's operations at Grindstone City, Michigan.

In his book about Berea history, *Men of Grit and Greatness*, Holzworth had a little more to say:

*When the quarries at Olmsted Falls were abandoned by the Cleveland Stone Co., the Barnum Brothers were transferred to supervisory jobs in other quarries of the Company. Harry went to Peninsula, Ohio, and Thomas to Grindstone City, Michigan. Eventually Thomas Barnum came to Berea to succeed Patrick Morrissey as general superintendent of the Cleveland Stone Co. Thomas died April 27, 1940.*

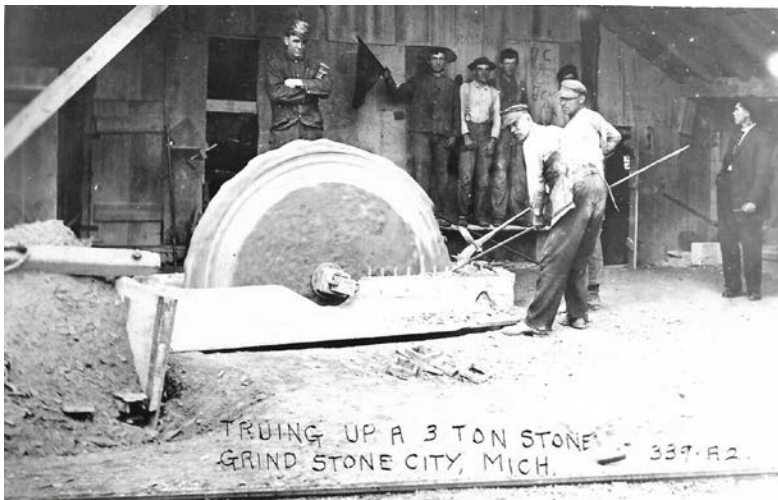
Not all the facts were quite as straightforward as Holzworth presented them. Items from the *Berea Advertiser* seem to confirm indirectly that the Olmsted Falls quarry probably ceased operating around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They also indicate that Harry Barnum did not go directly to the Peninsula quarry.

The Olmsted Falls column in the December 4, 1896, issue of the *Advertiser* included this item: “Mr. Tom Barnum and family left Thursday for Grindstone City, Mich., their future home.”

The column followed up with a longer item in the December 18, 1896, issue:

*Mr. Thos. Barnum, accompanied by Mr. J. Nichols, of the Cleveland Stone Co., left on Thursday for Grindstone City, Mich., to assume the superintendency of the Cleveland Stone Co.’s extensive quarries at that place.*

*Mr. Barnum has been in charge of the Olmsted Falls quarries for over eight years, and has proved an able and efficient manager. Hence his promotion to a larger and more important field of labor. As a worthy and prominent citizen and member of the board of education his loss will be keenly felt. His friends however will rejoice at his promotion and hope that success and prosperity will attend him and his estimable family in their new home.*



*The writing on this photo from the quarry at Grindstone City, Michigan, refers to the stone shown here as weighing three tons. Perhaps it was the grindstone said to have weighed 6,660 pounds.*

It’s not clear why Barnum would have left for Grindstone City on two different Thursdays two weeks apart. Perhaps he returned to northeastern Ohio between those days to close out his affairs in Olmsted Falls or get further instructions from higher officials at Cleveland Stone. Grindstone City is almost 300 miles from Olmsted Falls.

It should be noted that the company reassigned Tom Barnum to its larger operation at Grindstone City just half a year after the quarry strike. Perhaps that was a reward for keeping order at the Olmsted Falls quarry when violence broke out in West View and Berea.

If you picture Michigan's Lower Peninsula as a mitten, Grindstone City is at the tip of the thumb, sticking up to the north where Saginaw Bay meets Lake Huron. Quarrying began there in 1836 not of Berea Sandstone, but Marshall Sandstone, which was prominent in Michigan and ideal for grindstones and scythe stones because of its fine, abrasive grit. The Cleveland Stone Company acquired all the quarries there by 1888 to become the sole quarry company in town. It employed about 150 workers, who typically made 35 to 40 tons of grindstones each day. One particularly large grindstone was said to have weighed 6,660 pounds. Thus, the reassignment to Grindstone City was a nice promotion for Tom Barnum.

Tom Barnum did not lose touch with family and friends back in Ohio. In November 1898, for example, the *Advertiser* noted that his sister, Cecile Barnum, was about to leave to spend the winter in Grindstone City.

In its March 10, 1899, edition, the *Olmsted Falls* column included this item about Tom's brother Harry: "Mr. C.H. Barnum, our esteemed and worthy mayor, has gone to



*Parts of sandstone blocks and grindstones from the West View quarry remain strewn in or about Baker Creek near East River Road in what now is the southern end of Olmsted Falls.*

Grindstone City, Mich. and we are reliably informed that he will take a lucrative position for the Cleveland Stone Co. at that place. Well, Harry we hate to lose you but you are a hustler and this old town is too dead for the ambitious. Good luck to you always."

If Cleveland Stone shut down the Olmsted Falls quarry when it transferred the second Barnum brother

away from there, it might mean the end of that quarry's operations came in 1899. Mentions of the quarry seemed to disappear from the *Olmsted Falls* column of the *Advertiser* after that, but the newspaper's *West View* column continued to mention the quarries in that community and in Columbia Township. Here are some examples:

- November 9, 1900: There were about 100 young men from here and surrounding quarries who took the special train at Olmsted Falls for Cleveland Saturday and a great many people took the morning train here to attend the celebration [apparently for the re-election of William McKinley as president].

- January 25, 1901: ...There has also been a larger amount of strip[p]ing done in the quarries on account of the open weather.
- April, 5, 1901: Houses for rent are in good demand here. The opening of the new quarry at Columbia Station is thought to be the cause.
- May 10, 1901: Mr. Wallace Walrath is recovering from the injuries received one day last week in a fall of 16 feet from a building in the new quarry, where he was at work as carpenter.
- August 2, 1901: There was unusual quietness in this place Thursday as both the quarries shut down work and Lock's store was closed on account of the Business men's picnic at Cedar Point and many attended from here.
- September 27, 1901: A good many quarrymen and others here attended the Grand Army Encampment exercise last week.
- October 4, 1901: The quarries shut down Wednesday, so the workmen could attend Berea fair.



*This is one of the grindstones from the Olmsted Falls quarry left over after the quarry ceased operating. It lies near Plum Creek in David Fortier River Park.*

Meanwhile, the Olmsted Falls column contained items about the Barnums and their family members, but nothing about the local quarry. Here are a few examples:

- October 29, 1899: Mrs. F.J. Moley is visiting her daughter and son-in-law and family Mr. and Mrs. T.R. Barnum. Mr. Barnum is superintendent for the Cleveland Stone Co., Grindstone, Mich.
- October 11, 1901: Mrs. T.R. Barnum and son Frank of Grindstone City are here visiting her parents, F.J. Moley and wife, and other relatives.
- October 11, 1901: T.R. Barnum is expected to visit his friends here in a few days.
- November 22, 1901: Mr. Harry Barnum is expected home from Grindstone City, Mich., where he has been employed since last April. [That's an apparent error because the paper earlier reported he went to Michigan early in 1899.]
- November 29, 1901: Mr. Harry Barnum is home from Grindstone City, Mich.
- December 20, 1901: Mr. C.H. Barnum has returned to Grindstone City, Michigan.

Reading between the lines, it seems that the Olmsted Falls quarry quit operating just before the turn of the century, while the West View quarry went on a bit longer.

At some time, Harry Barnum returned to the Olmsted area. The West View column written March 11, 1930, for the *Berea Enterprise* included this item: “Our community is saddened by the loss of its good friend and neighbor, Mr. Harry Barnum, who died at Community hospital, Friday. He had been in poor health for several years. The family has the sympathy of the village.”



*George Worthington’s article on Ohio’s stone industry included this picture of the Canyon Quarry at Amherst.*

Although Cleveland Stone abandoned its quarries in Olmsted Falls and West View, the company did well, but it also faced changing fortunes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The company was still at the top of its game when the April 23, 1904, issue of *Harper’s Weekly*, included an article by George Worthington, president of Cleveland Stone, titled “Ohio Industries: The Stone Industry.” It was partly a geology lesson and partly a history lesson on mainly the sandstone industry, but it also included the

limestone industry. Worthington concluded the article by saying: “The supply is practically inexhaustible, and the demand increasing year by year. The actual capital invested in the production of sandstone and limestone in the State is estimated at over \$6,000,000.”

But the future was not as bright as he expected. It was around that time that the products of the sandstone quarries started to be replaced by other materials. In the 1890s, synthetic silicon carbide, also known as carborundum, began to be produced in Monongahela, Pennsylvania. It was found to be suited well for grinding, cutting and polishing, and it was inexpensive to produce, so the production of grindstones from quarries became less profitable.

The other product that made sandstone less competitive was concrete, which could be used both for building materials and for sidewalks in place of sandstone. Although early forms of concrete had been used for centuries, reinforced concrete was invented in 1849, and its use increased during the rest of the 1800s and into the 1900s. The invention of the concrete mixer truck in 1916 (by Ohio resident Stephan Stepanian) further proliferated the use of concrete, which squeezed out most of the demand for sandstone.

Recently, in “A Cradle of Sandstone: The Origins of Industry in Northern Ohio” in *Armstrong Undergraduate Journal of History* in April 2017, Christian York Ellis of Baldwin Wallace University wrote that Zachary Carpenter, president of the Cleveland Quarries Company (successor to Cleveland Stone), told him in a 2016 email message: “Our industry has been most affected by concrete products...What was once built with stone is now often built with concrete.”

While concrete and silicon carbide gradually replaced sandstone, the federal government presented a more immediate threat to Cleveland Stone in 1913 with the filing of a lawsuit contending the company had violated the Sherman Anti-Trust Act by fixing prices. That could have led to a court-ordered breakup of the company. Instead, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio stopped short of that in the order it issued on February 11, 1916.

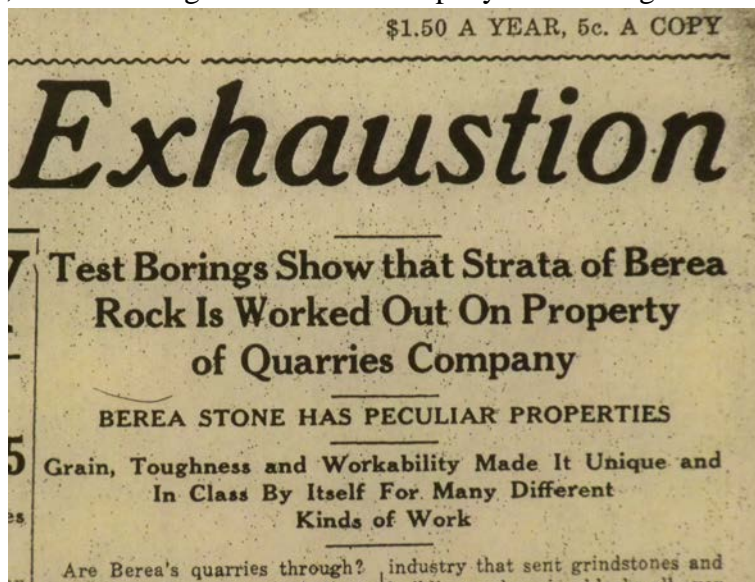
Judge John H. Clarke wrote that Cleveland Stone and 18 subsidiaries that went by different names would “be perpetually enjoined and restrained from entering into any contracts or agreements with their competitors to fix or agree upon the prices of grindstone, grindstone frames, mounted grindstones, grindstone fixtures, scythe stones, whetstones, flag stone, curb stone, building or other stone, and from inducing any competitor to enter into any such contract, agreement, or understanding.” He went further to say pretty much the same thing in at least six other ways.

Thus, Cleveland Stone went on but was not as formidable as before. On January 9, 1924, George Worthington, one of the organizers of the company and its longtime president, died in Cleveland’s Hollenden Hotel. He had just been re-elected a director of the company, although he had stepped down as president several years earlier.

In April 1929, Cleveland Stone merged with Ohio Quarries Company and Ohio Cut Stone Company to become the Cleveland Quarries Company.

The beginning of the end for the quarries in Berea was signaled in 1930, when Cleveland Quarries

did some test drillings. The *Berea Enterprise* reported on that in its July 25, 1930, edition with a story under the headline, “Stone Quarries Are Approaching Exhaustion”:



*These were the sub-headlines in the Berea Enterprise story on July 25, 1930, that Berea’s quarries had almost run out of sandstone of high quality.*

*Extensive borings the past few months indicate that the layer of stone that has made Berea famous the world over, has run out on properties now owned by the Cleveland Quarries Co., or that they might possibly acquire.*

*The Berea rock that is so valuable has a different grain, running the long way of the block, that makes it especially easy to work, yet is tough and durable. There is plenty of rock left, but that particular vein, extending sometimes to a depth of 11 feet, seems to be exhausted in every direction except to the north.*

*In that direction lie Bridge-st. and its homes, impossible to acquire at a price that would make the quarrying of stone profitable.*

In *Men of Grit and Greatness*, Holzworth wrote: “In the flourishing and promising days of the early 1900’s, the Company may have been tempted to buy out the whole town, but now the carborundum wheel made the sandstone grindstone obsolete and



*This May 6, 1932, Berea News story announced the end of almost a century of quarrying in Berea of the sandstone named for the town.*

concrete was fast replacing sandstone for building material, curbstones and sidewalks.”

the suburb’s business section, the *Berea News* reported in its May 6, 1932, edition. “No longer are columns of dusty men trudging along Front street after the final whistle. For the economic crisis has finally caught up with Berea’s lucrative stone industry and forced suspension of activities at the Cleveland Quarries Co.”

In 1932, Berea’s quarries, which both built the community and changed its contours many times, ceased operating.

“The clanking of hoists and the rasping of drills are strangely absent from the vast chasm which adjoins the

The Berea quarries had a brief reprise in 1934, when a large break wall project along the Lake Erie shore needed a vast amount of stone, and it didn’t need to be high quality. According to Holzworth, all quarrying ceased in Berea on October 21, 1946, and so did the jobs of about 100 men. “The quarry railroad was scheduled for removal and Berea’s greatest industry passed into history,” he wrote.

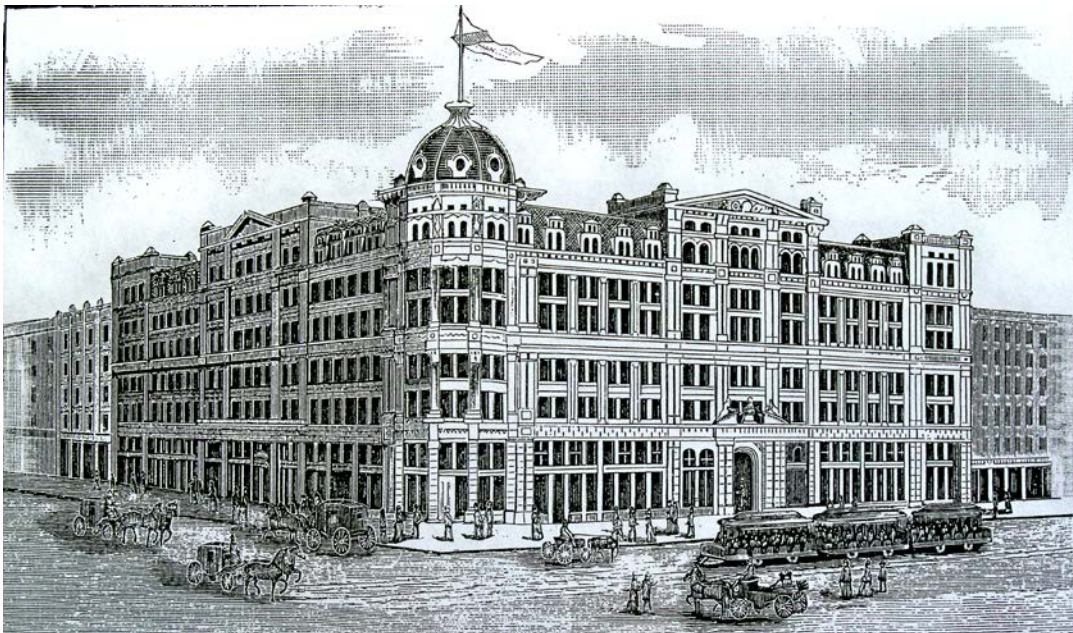
By then, Cleveland Quarries Company had shifted its main operations to the Amherst area, where it expected to have enough sandstone to quarry for another century.



In the 1980s, Standard Slag Company of Youngstown took control of Cleveland Quarries. In 1993, after shutting down for a short period, Cleveland Quarries received a new owner, Walter Molnar.

What is still known as Berea Sandstone, even though it's not quarried in Berea or its neighboring communities anymore, has found new uses in the renovation of old buildings, the construction of high-end residences and in landscaping for walls and patios because it is strong and durable.

As noted earlier, the quarries in Olmsted Falls and West View had been idle long before Berea's quarries ceased operating. The quarries in Olmsted Falls and West View had similar beginnings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but their fates in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were quite different. *Olmsted 200* will go into what happened to them in the next issue.



*At the company's peak, Cleveland Stone's catalogues boasted of the many buildings made of its sandstone, including the Palmer House hotel in Chicago, as seen here.*

## **Film Is Found**

An answer has come for the mystery mentioned in stories in Issues 82 and 83 of *Olmsted 200*. That mystery was about what happened to an old film with scenes of Olmsted Falls and Berea that Mayor William Mahoney showed in the early 1980s.

About half an hour after Issue 83 was emailed to readers, one of them, Jim Boddy, responded, "I have a copy." He explained that Ken Knuth located the film about 25 to 30 years ago and was able to copy it to videotape and then make a copy for Boddy. His plan is to get a digital copy made of it and then share it with *Olmsted 200*. It might take longer than normal to do that because of the restrictions related to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, but he is determined to get it done as soon as he can. He added that he might have another resource that could provide more information about what is in the film.

Ross Bassett, the reader who recalled seeing the film when Mahoney showed it at an Olmsted school and wondered what had happened to it, was overjoyed to learn someone had a copy.

“Boy oh boy that is just wonderful news!” he wrote. “Please do not get too excited as it was pretty much just old street scenes but it was still pretty cool especially when the mayor added some old time ragtime music to the showing.”

Bassett said he would like to see it again someday and maybe even get his own copy.

“Oh joy, oh joy!” he said.

## Report on Lecture Shed Light on 1870 Olmsted Life

An item in the Olmsted Falls column of Berea’s *Grindstone City Advertiser* from 150 years ago this month provides interesting insights into life in the community back then. This was in the May 6, 1870, edition:

*Mrs. E. Palmer, who has been giving a course of lectures here during the past week, closed them by delivering a temperance lecture, on Sunday evening. She spoke to a large and appreciative audience, in the M.E. Church, presenting the subject in its broad and true sense – Temperance in all things, and illustrated with diagrams the effect of intoxicating liquors upon the stomach. Mrs. P. seems to understand her subjects; and we are glad to see prejudice and ignorance melting away in the public mind – allowing women as well as men to speak or write whenever they have anything of use or interest to communicate.*

The M.E. Church referred to in that item was the Methodist Episcopal Church, which was the building now known as the Grand Pacific Wedding Chapel.

One insight into Olmsted life back then was that the lecture was about temperance. That was the subject of many meetings and lectures in Olmsted Falls and West View for decades because the communities were split over the presence of saloons. The newspaper was firmly opposed to the saloons and often railed against them. Many citizens seemed to share that position but never enough to win an election over whether the community should go dry until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



*The Fenderbosch Saloon and Pool Hall was popular with many Olmsted Falls residents but despised by others.*



Although they probably were established well after 1870, two of Olmsted's other saloons were the Blue Hen (left) and the White Elephant (right). The latter was located between Olmsted Falls and West View.

Another interesting insight was the way the writer marveled at the concept that women were allowed as much as men to speak or write about anything of use or interest. And he saw it as evidence of "prejudice and ignorance melting away in the public mind." That might have been one example of 1870 optimism.

For more on the long-running battles over saloons, see *Olmsted 200* Issues 9, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 15 from 2014.

## Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include a story about what happened in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the former quarries in Olmsted Falls and West View and one about what life was like at Olmsted Falls High School 70 years ago.

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

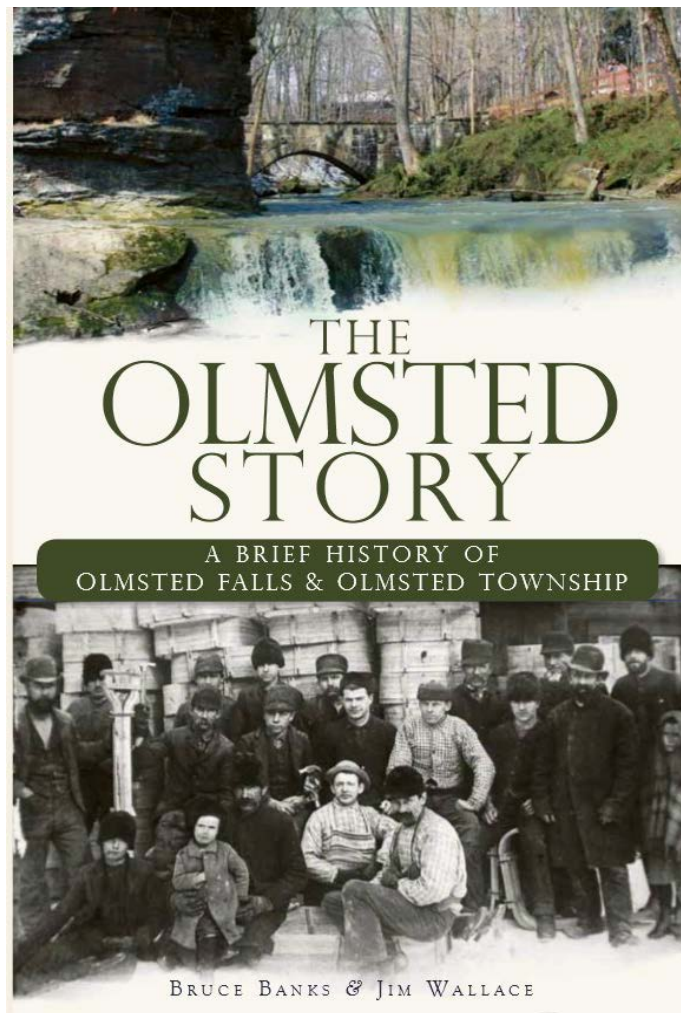
Your questions and comments about *Olmsted 200* are welcome. Perhaps there is something about Olmsted's history that you would like to have pulled out of *Olmsted 200*'s extensive archives. Or perhaps you have information or photos about the community's history that you would like to share.

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](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](mailto:wallacestar@hotmail.com).

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



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