



# Olmsted 200

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

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## Olmsted’s First Railroad Connected West View to the World

In 1850, a new sight and sound broke through the quiet forests and farm fields in the southeastern corner of Olmsted Township known as West View. Over the past 170



*This right-of-way in southern Olmsted Falls is where the first set of railroad tracks in Olmsted Township went into use in 1850.*

years, such sights and sounds have become common features of Olmsted life since that inaugural trip of a train on the first section of the Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati Railroad. Accounts differ over exactly when in 1850 that first train chugged its way through West View, but there is no dispute that railroads affected Olmsted’s development and daily life ever since then.

Some reports say the first train ran on Monday, July 1, with a load of dignitaries, but other reports say that first train actually ran as early as Thursday, May 16, 1850. Walter Holzworth, in his 1966 book on Olmsted history, wrote that “a small but jubilant crowd”

witnessed the first train to pass through any portion of Olmsted Township on July 1, 1850. He wrote further:

*A brass trimmed wood burning locomotive with no cowcatcher or head lights, pulling a box like car piled high with fire wood, a small tank car as water tender, and three small open passenger cars with curtains rolled up and its seats filled with dignitaries, started from Cleveland and*

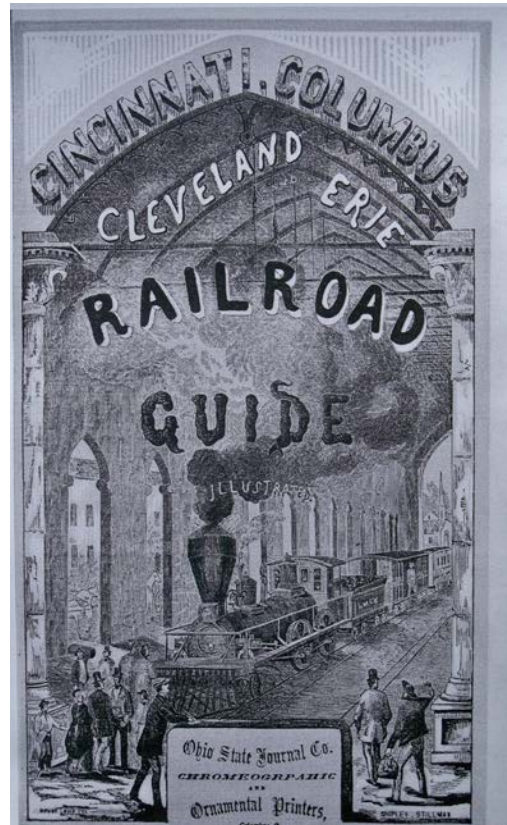
*sped along at the amazing speed of fifteen to twenty miles per hour. It was making its first trial run to Wellington and return.*

In *Men of Grit and Greatness*, his history of Berea, Holzworth gave a similar account of when the same train passed through Berea on that July 1. In that book, he indicated he got the story from an article in the March 3, 1939, edition of the *Berea Enterprise*. But older accounts say trains began running on that Cleveland-to-Wellington section weeks earlier in 1850 than July 1.

According to William B. Thomas in “Recollections of the Bee Line” in the Fall 1920 issue of *Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen’s Magazine*, the first train, which included three freight cars, ran between Cleveland and Wellington on May 16, 1850 – not July 1. The *Plain Dealer* on June 3, 1850, reported that passenger service along that section began on May 27. Perhaps that service in May 1850 was what now would be called a “soft opening” that was followed by the ceremonial opening on July 1.

But getting to the point of having service between Cleveland and Wellington – not to mention the eventual goal of reaching Columbus and Cincinnati – was not easy for the railroad. The company was initially chartered in 1836, but a national recession known as the Panic of 1837 prevented the backers of the company from proceeding. By the mid-1840s, the company tried again to get going but still had trouble with a weak economy.

The company’s fortunes changed only with the August 13, 1847, appointment of a new president, Alfred Kelley. It could be argued that Kelley, a Connecticut native who moved to Cleveland in 1810, was more instrumental in helping Cleveland become the industrial and population center it grew into during the 20<sup>th</sup> century than other leaders who might be given such credit. He was a lawyer, banker and financier who became known as the “father of the Ohio canal system” for getting legislative approval for canals and overseeing the construction of the Ohio and Erie Canal in the 1820s and 1830s. He also ensured that Cleveland was chosen over other rivals, including Sandusky, as the northern terminus for the canal.



*Perhaps the first CC&C Railroad train that passed through Olmsted Township looked something like this one shown on the cover of this 1854 publication from the Ohio State Journal Company.*

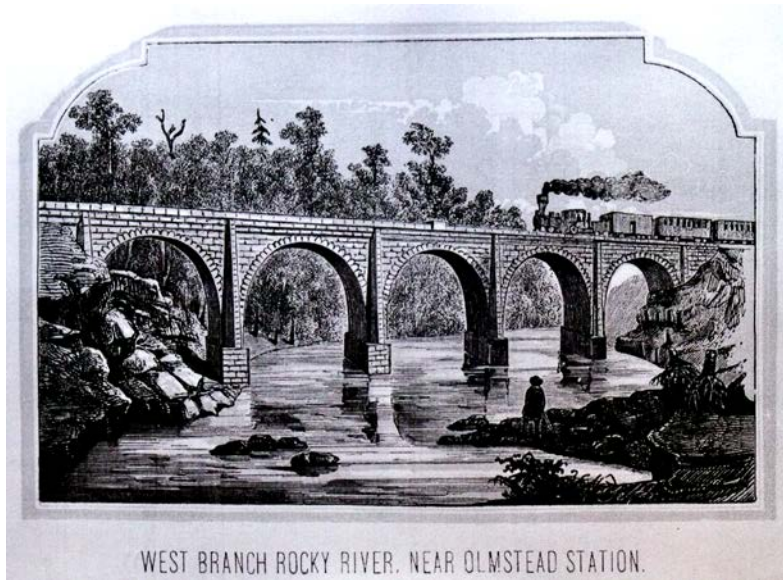


*Alfred Kelley brought the first railroad not only to Cleveland but also Olmsted Township.*

However, in the 1840s, even as the canal headed toward its peak usage, Kelley was among those who realized that railroads soon would surpass canals as America's preferred means of transportation – and Cleveland was being bypassed. By 1850, Ohio had about 300 miles of tracks, but not a single railroad connected to Cleveland. Within a year of appointment to his position with the Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati Railroad, Kelley raised a few hundred thousand dollars, which was enough to begin construction.

Starting in Cleveland, work on building the railroad began in May 1849. By the end of that July, as many as 4,000 men were working to grade and build the track bed and lay the rail. The section of track from Cleveland to Wellington, which passed through West View, was completed by September 1, 1849. One man who came to Olmsted Township to help build the railroad bridge over the west branch of Rocky River at West View was James Hickey, who was born in Ireland. He stayed and became the largest landowner in the township for many years. He was among a number of immigrants who first came to Olmsted Township to help build the railroad and ended up settling there. Many of them were Catholics, whose numbers increased in Olmsted both because of railroad construction and the opening of quarries in the 1870s.

But even though the railroad had quite a stretch of track laid by September 1849, it didn't have a locomotive to run on it until a couple of months later. On November 3, 1849, the railroad hooked its first locomotive to a series of flatcars near River Street in Cleveland. It was enough for the *Cleveland Herald* to proclaim, "The whistle of the locomotive will be as familiar to the ears of the Clevelander as the sound of church bells." The railroad received its first passenger cars that December.



*This is the depiction in The Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland and Erie Railroad Guide, Illustrated, from 1854 of the bridge that carried the CC&C Railroad over Rocky River near West View, which was identified as "Olmstead Station."*

In 1850, Kelley brought in Amasa Stone, who had earned a reputation in New England for building railroad bridges. Stone, who went on to become one of Ohio's leading industrialists, supervised construction of the Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati Railroad. He subsequently became the construction superintendent for the second railroad built through Olmsted Township, which will be the subject of a story in the next issue of *Olmsted 200*.



*Brought to Ohio to help build the CC&C Railroad, Amasa Stone played a role in both of Olmsted's railroads.*

By late April 1850, the CC&C's first 25 miles of track, which included the section through Olmsted Township, was ready for the first train, which passed through weeks later. On November 12, 1850, the tracks reached Shelby. The railroad was completed to Columbus on February 18, 1851, with a ceremony to lay the last rail including Kelley and Columbus Mayor Lorenzo English. A train carried them out of Columbus that morning to the site of the ceremony and then continued on to Cleveland, where it received a three-cannon salute.

Freight and passenger operations between Cleveland and Columbus began on February 21, 1851, with a trip that included Governor Reuben Wood, all of the Ohio General Assembly, mayors and city council members from Columbus and Cincinnati and other politicians, as well as business leaders. The train reached Cleveland at dusk, so it must have passed through West View late in the afternoon. After two days filled with ceremonies in Cleveland, the train returned to Columbus on February 24. The Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati Railroad did not have to build track to Cincinnati because it connected at Columbus with the Columbus and Xenia Railroad, which connected with the Little Miami Railroad.

On February 19, 1851, as Cleveland waited to celebrate the first train from Columbus, the *Cleveland Herald* wrote:

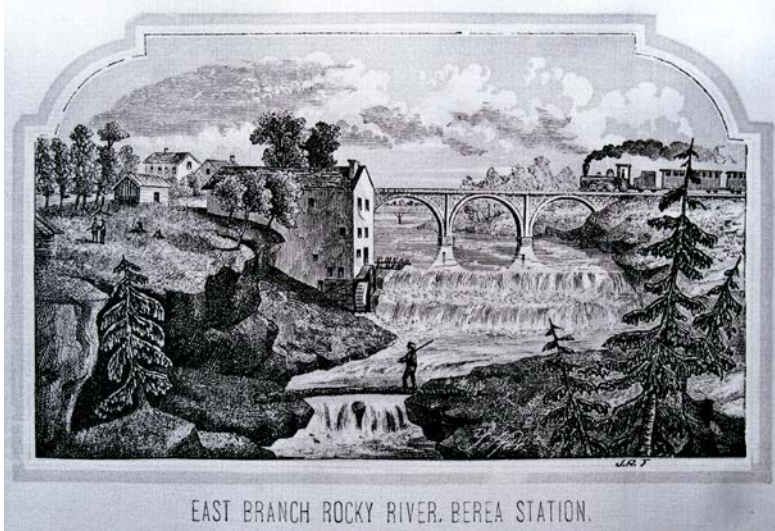
*It is a strange coincidence that though the credit of carrying through the Canal and the railroad is due in part to so many, yet to one man more particularly is Cleveland indebted for the beneficial results the one has, and the other must produce. When each of these great improvements languished for the want of proper superintendence and care, the indomitable energy, clearness of calculation and inflexibility of purpose of Alfred Kelley were enlisted in their aid and the result was speedy and successful completion.*

In the first three months after service began between Cleveland and Columbus, 31,679 passengers rode the rails. By 1853, the railroad's business was so good that it

began laying a second set of tracks along its right-of-way. It completed 25 miles of the double-tracking from Cleveland through West View to Grafton by the end of that year.

At the time the CC&C Railroad was built through Olmsted Township, West View had only a handful of homes. Back then, West View was an unincorporated community with no defined borders that straddled the line between Cuyahoga County and Lorain County. Thus, a few of those homes were on the south side of the border in Columbia Township, where a gristmill (at the current site of Gibbs Butcher Block) built by the Hoadley family had been operating since 1809.

The arrival of the railroad had a big effect on the development of West View. As Holzworth put it in his 1966 Olmsted history book, “For a time it seemed West View was destined to become the most important place in the Township.” Likewise, in *Men of Grit and Greatness*, Holzworth wrote that the railroad helped turn Berea from “a little backwoods hamlet into a thriving village.” The railroad certainly gave residents in those communities more convenient connections to the rest of Ohio.



*This illustration from The Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland and Erie Railroad Guide, Illustrated, shows the CC&C Railroad's bridge over Rocky River at Berea.*

One insight into how those connections worked can be found in an advertisement in the January 17, 1862, edition of the *Cleveland Daily Leader*. It said the first CC&C train each day was scheduled to leave Cleveland at 8:00 a.m. and arrive at Crestline at 10:50 a.m., Columbus at 1:30 p.m., Dayton at 5:00 p.m., Cincinnati at 6:15 p.m., Indianapolis at 9:00 p.m., Louisville at 2:30 a.m. and St. Louis at 10:45 a.m.

However, the train would not stop at eight stations to drop off or take on passengers unless signaled. Among those stations were Olmsted (West View) and Columbia. In other words, the train always stopped at certain stations, such as Berea, but someone who wanted to get on or off at West View would have to ask for it to stop there.

On April 29, 1865, the funeral train for the late President Abraham Lincoln passed through West View shortly before one o'clock in the morning on its way from Cleveland to Columbus. (For more on that, see Issue 24 of *Olmsted 200* from May 2015.)

Unfortunately for some Olmsted residents a little more than a year later, Thursday, May 31, 1866, was not a good day to ride the train into Cleveland. A

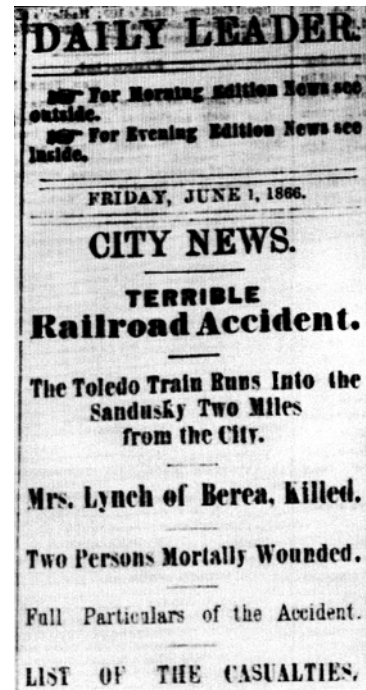
newspaper story about an accident that day provides not only an account of that horrible event but also some insights into train travel in northeastern Ohio just one year after the end of the Civil War. The CC&C shared a section of the line running into Cleveland with the Cleveland and Toledo Railroad. A train coming from Sandusky was due to arrive in Cleveland at nine o'clock that morning, but two miles short of the station, the locomotive's eccentric rod broke, so the crew had to stop for repairs just past "the slaughter house bridge, around the first bend of the road as one approaches the city," according to the June 1 edition of the *Daily Leader*.

The crew sent the brakeman back along the track to stop a train coming from Toledo that was due to arrive in Cleveland 10 minutes after the Sandusky train. The *Daily Leader* reported this was what happened:

*This brakeman, either failed to go back far enough or the engineer of the approaching train failed to observe him, for the Toledo train came around the curve at the usual rate of speed and did not slacken speed until its engineer perceived a train standing still on the track only a few rods in advance. He immediately reversed the engine, put on the brakes, but without avail, and jumped from the engine. The Toledo engine struck the rear car of the Sandusky train with great force and pushed it into the car in front of it. The rear car of the Sandusky train was thus lifted bodily upon the trucks of that in front of it, while the frame of the latter was entirely demolished. The engine of the Toledo train was badly damaged. The baggage and express cars were thrown from the track, but not seriously injured. None of the passenger cars of the Toledo train were damaged.*

The accident killed a Berea woman on the spot and mortally wounded a woman and a child from Castalia. Several Olmsted residents were badly injured. Mrs. E.W. Greenwood of Olmsted Falls had "both legs badly broken," and her child was badly wounded. Mrs. Bridget Daly of Olmsted Township was severely injured. Mrs. Ann Thornton of Olmsted Township had a badly broken leg. Mrs. Elizabeth Wright of Olmsted Township was severely injured. Mrs. George Kent of Olmsted Township was slightly injured. And Robert Matthews of Olmsted Township was badly bruised.

An interesting aspect of the list of injured riders, not only those from Olmsted but also from elsewhere, is that most of the passengers seemed to be women. That could attest to how commonplace train travel had become for those who lived near the tracks. The women from



*These were the headlines in the Daily Leader on June 1, 1866, the day after the big train accident that injured several passengers from Olmsted and other places.*

Olmsted, as well as several listed as being residents of Berea, might have been going shopping in downtown Cleveland, an activity that would have been much more difficult for them before the railroad was built.

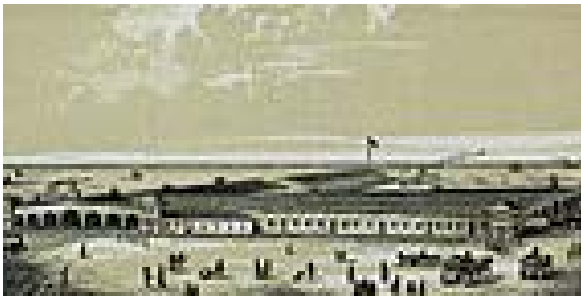
All of the injuries occurred to passengers, but not crew members, of the Sandusky train, except for the engineer who jumped from the Toledo train and was just bruised. Most of the injuries occurred to passengers in the Sandusky train's first car, which was demolished, while those in the rear car were comparatively uninjured. The Sandusky train had included an engine, a baggage car, an express car and two passenger cars.

The *Daily Leader* story said the railroad made provisions for the wounded:

*A train was sent out to bring in the injured, and all the physicians who could be procured were sent to the scene of the accident as soon as the news reached the city. On the arrival of the relief train the wounded were transferred to carriages and taken to the various hotels, where there will be no lack of care or surgical aid.*

*As soon as the news of the accident reached the city large numbers of men and even women flocked in dense crowds to the horrible scene. The relief train, even to the platforms, was closely packed with the passengers of the wrecked cars, and the road was lined with excited men, women and children. At the foot of Superior street, where the wounded were taken from the cars, the crowd was so great that it required all the efforts of the police to make way for the carriages.*

The newspaper said the track had been cleared from the accident to allow other trains to run as scheduled on the routes to Columbus and Toledo. The paper also noted that another mishap occurred in the same location a decade earlier when an engine had exploded, killing one man and injuring several more.



*This is a drawing of the train station the CC&C Railroad built in Cleveland in 1851.*

In 1868, the CC&C Railroad merged with the Bellefontaine Railway and became the Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati and Indianapolis Railway. Two decades later, the CCC&I merged with two other railroads – the Cincinnati, Indianapolis, St. Louis and Chicago Railway and the Indianapolis and St. Louis Railway. It took the name Cleveland Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis Railway

but was commonly known as the Big Four Railroad.

In 1877, another serious train wreck might have occurred along the section of track near the Olmsted Township-Columbia Township border if not for a citizen who chanced upon an apparent act of sabotage one night. As the *Cuyahoga Republican and*

*Advertiser* (as the Berea paper was then called) reported in a West View column written on September 3, the event occurred on Sunday evening, September 2. The columnist wrote that a Mr. Dalton of Olmsted Falls was returning from Columbia Township between eight and nine o'clock walking along the CCC&I track and was within a mile from West View when "he discovered ten or twelve men at work upon the track."

As Dalton got close to them, one man exclaimed, "Shoot him!" One shot was fired at him, but he was fortunate it did not hit him. The columnist wrote further:

*As soon as they fired he jumped back three or four feet and turning ran as fast as he could back to Columbia, where he got Mr. McGee and a few others, and returning found no men there. Mr. Dalton came down here [West View] and found the section hands and going back they found a wrench which they had used to unscrew the bolts which bolted the splices together. No doubt it was the intention of the tramps (for tramps we suppose they were) to throw the express off the track. The express was nearly due.*

A few weeks later, a West View column filed on September 25, 1877, included this item about another train mishap: "The express due here at 7 P.M., broke the flange off the wheel of the truck of the last car, and jumped the track about half a mile from this place, but as it was to stop here, no further damage was done than to delay the train about an hour."

Two years later, another accident occurred at West View. The local columnist wrote on November 18, 1879: "Last Monday evening a freight train, while passing here, going south, caused considerable damage. The train was loaded with T rails, which became displaced, and projecting on both sides of the car, broke the tops off both switches, overturned the mail crane and damaged a milk cart, which was standing near the depot. A number of the rails was left scattered along the track."



*This photo shows a train arriving at the West View depot of what then was the Big Four Railroad in the late 1800s.*

At the end of that year, the columnist wrote an item on December 29 that indicated what the railroad meant to West View while commenting about the "monotonous humdrum" of the community: "The only variety being the occasional whistle of the locomotive and halting trains to take or leave passengers. The convenience of which (the train) we can all vouch for, and by the way some of our West Viewers now and then avail themselves of the opportunity to visit the Opera House in Cleveland, a pleasure which fifty years ago was not even dreamed of."



The railroad's stop at West View was initially known as Olmsted Station (or Olmstead Station, as it was sometimes misspelled). But at some point, it began to be called West View, perhaps to distinguish it from the Olmsted Falls stop on the other railroad that was built through Olmsted Township.



*The arrow on this 1874 map points to an unmarked building that is apparently the West View train depot.*

lived near there several decades ago have confirmed the depot was in that location. After the construction of the Columbia Road underpass several years ago, the path of Bronson Avenue was altered so that, instead of going straight to meet Columbia Road, it now curves and meets Columbia a bit north of the previous intersection. Where the curved section joins the straight section of Bronson is about the location where the depot once stood.

It's not clear whether West View had a depot or just a boarding platform in the early years after the CC&C Railroad was built through that section of Olmsted Township. But the West View column of Berea's *Grindstone City Advertiser* for July 29, 1870, indicated that whatever was there was being upgraded. A small item in that column said: "THE railroad company is putting up a new depot building at this station – they have already put in some large scales for weighing stone." Of course, scales for weighing stone were needed to haul away the sandstone blocks and grindstones that were starting to come out of local quarries at the time.

The depot seems to have been located along a section of Bronson Avenue just northeast of Herb Street, between Herb Street and Columbia Road, as it is now known. An 1874 map, which was published just a few years after the depot was built, shows an unidentified building at that spot, and people who



*This postcard photo shows the West View depot about 1920.*

West View apparently came close to losing its depot to fire on October 31, 1902. Although the *Berea Advertiser* did not seem to have a direct story on the incident when it happened, the newspaper's West View column in the November 14, 1902, edition included this small item: "The railroad station house, which came near being destroyed



*This mid-1960s photo shows the West View depot not long before it was torn down.*

by fire Halloween night, has been under repair the past week.” Subsequent editions made no further mention of it.

The depot lasted for several more decades, but its use declined after the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as fewer and fewer Americans traveled by train and the railroads had less need to stop at places like West View. The local quarry, which made heavy use of the railroad for decades, ceased operating in the early 1900s, and the spur into the quarry was

abandoned. Another abandoned spur can be found in the woods near Bronson Avenue. It served the former Westview Lumber Company. The depot was removed sometime in the late 1960s or early 1970.



*On the left, the markings on this steel plate from the spur that served Westview Lumber indicates it was made by Wheeling Steel in northern West Virginia or eastern Ohio. On the right, old wooden ties show where the spur once ran. These remaining items from the spur are in the woods near Bronson Avenue, not far from the Columbia Road underpass. The photos were taken on December 7, 2019.*

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include a story about Olmsted’s second railroad, which was built east-west right through the middle of Olmsted Township a few years before Olmsted Falls incorporated as a village.

*Thanks go to David Kennedy for help in researching this story. Jim Boddy also provided some assistance.*

## **OFHS Teacher Uses *Olmsted 200* in Geology Lesson**

*Olmsted 200* attempts to bring together the best information available about Olmsted history. It turns out it also is contributing to science education. In mid-May,

Carla Wible, a science teacher, wrote to say she enjoys *Olmsted 200* and makes use of it in her work:

*I teach geology at Olmsted Falls High School and I do my best to get students more interested in the history of the abandoned quarries in our area. This week my lesson is on the geology of David Fortier River Park. Usually we all go together on a bus, but this year it will be a virtual field trip. I am giving my students a link to your "Olmsted 200" website in the hopes that they will continue to do more research on their own. Thank you for providing such an excellent resource.*



It's good to know *Olmsted 200* might help some young scholars.

*Sandstone blocks like these in David Fortier River Park are evidence of both history and science in Olmsted.*

## **June Stories Evoke Reader's Memories**

Stories in the June issue of *Olmsted 200* about David Fortier River Park and the Olmsted Falls High School yearbook from 1950 stirred reader David Shirer to share a few of his recollections:

*Thanks for again publishing an edition that brought back many good memories. As a boy in the late 40's and early 50's I spent many hours in the park, climbing among the quarry rocks and in the river. Initial rock was supposed to be off-limits due to the possibility of parts of it crumbling into the creek but of course that was a challenge to all of us. Further to the south on the river (500 feet or so) was a spot we called the big hole because it was deeper and it was a spot where many of the boys went skinny dipping. I was also a member of Troop 201 and used the cabin often.*

*Also thanks for the story about the 1950 Senorio of which I have a treasured copy. As a sophomore I was one of those pictured. Not all of us graduated in 1952 and not many of us are left, unfortunately. The reason the class was so small was that the year of our birth (1934) produced the lowest birth rate during the Depression.*

That last point clears up why the sophomore class in 1950 was much smaller than those before and after it at a time when Olmsted's classes were steadily growing from year to year.

## Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include the next story in the series about Olmsted's railroads and one about a notable anniversary for a prominent Olmsted Falls landmark.

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. 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](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 Angelina's Pizza in Olmsted Falls and the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.

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