



Olmsted 200

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

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Peltz Family Photos Turn Up in Minnesota

A descendant of a once-prominent Olmsted Falls family has found late 19th century photos of a few of his ancestors that might not have been seen in Olmsted for a century or more.

Up until almost 100 years ago, the Peltz name was known well in Olmsted Falls. That's because Joseph Peltz operated stores that sold drugs, hardware and other goods both on his own and in partnership with his brother-in-law, Philip Simmerer, until Peltz moved to California in 1920. Before him, his father, Florian Peltz, who came to Olmsted from Germany in the mid-1800s, operated a wagon wheel shop in the family home, which still stands at 7486 River Road.



This was the Peltz family home and wagon shop in the 1860s.

For the past few years, San Francisco resident Doug Peltz, great-great-great-grandson of Florian and great-great-grandson of Joseph, has been contacting distant relatives and digging up information and photos about his ancestors, which means he has filled in some details about Olmsted history that might have been lost. [See *Olmsted 200* Issues 25 from June 2015, 33 from February 2016, 34 from March 2016, 35 from April 2016, 37 from June 2016, 38 from July 2016, 39 from August 2016 and 44 from January

2017). The latest results of his research are photos of his great-great-grandparents and his great-grandfather that might otherwise have been lost to Olmsted history.

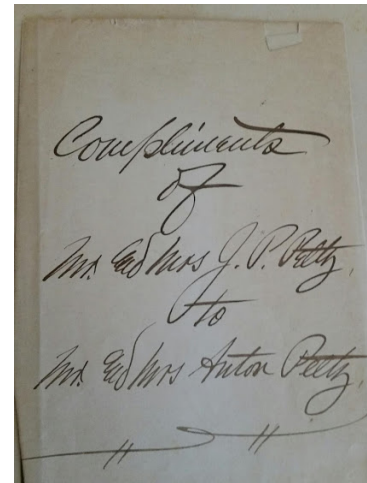
“About two years ago, I found a clue that Florian Peltz might have had an older brother who emigrated a few years later from Prussia with his wife and kids, stayed briefly in Olmsted Township and farmed with Florian, then headed to Minnesota to homestead there,” Doug Peltz wrote recently. “This wound up being confirmed in spades.”

His first step was to get a Peltz in Minnesota to agree to a DNA test. That test showed that the two of them – Doug Peltz in California and the Peltz in Minnesota – share the same Y-chromosome.

“But as if that weren’t enough, his cousin contacted me with photos of an old photo album she had,” he wrote. “It turns out to have been a beautiful velvet photo album sent to Minnesota from Olmsted Falls by my great great grandpa Joseph P. Peltz. It contained photographs of Joseph in his early thirties, his wife Anna Simmerer Peltz, and Julius Peltz as a young boy (my great-grandpa). It was astounding.”



To the left is the velvet cover of the photo album Joseph Peltz of Olmsted Falls had created at a Cleveland studio and sent to relatives in Minnesota. To the right is the page at the front of the album on which Peltz endorsed the album for cousin Anton Peltz and his wife. Photos courtesy of Doug Peltz



Based on the last photograph, Doug Peltz guesses that Julius was at least eight years old when his portrait was made, so that would have been about 1890. The photos and album were made at the Pifer & Becker Photo Palace in the Wilshire Building on Superior Street (now Superior Avenue) in Cleveland. All of the photos were placed neatly in a beautiful album covered with velvet. It includes a dedication signed by Joseph Peltz to his cousin, Anton Peltz.

“So in other words, the album itself was sent by Joseph to Anton!” Doug Peltz wrote. “These portraits were the only ones that clearly featured my Ohio family. Everything else was of the Minnesota family.”

One reason Doug Peltz is so amazed about the photos is that he previously had no photograph of his great-great-grandmother, Anna Simmerer Peltz. She was the sister of Philip Simmerer, who initially worked as an employee of Joseph Peltz and then became a

partner in the hardware store they established in the building now known as the Grand Pacific Hotel. After Joseph Peltz left the partnership to re-establish his drugstore across the street, Philip Simmerer and then three of his sons went on to operate the hardware store for several decades until it closed in 1971.



These are the photos of Joseph Peltz, Anna Simmerer Peltz and their son, Julius, that Joseph sent to relatives in Minnesota. If the photos were taken about 1890, as Doug Peltz believes, Joseph would have been about 34 years old. Anna would have been about 29. Photos courtesy of Doug Peltz.

“When I discovered that there had been a Minnesota branch to the family, that was exciting, but I didn't figure it would turn up many leads about Anna,” Doug Peltz wrote. “Imagine my total astonishment and happiness to find out that Joseph had sent family portraits to his Minnesota cousins, and that the Minnesota Peltzes had carefully saved them all these years!”



The bottom of each of the Peltz family photos in the album includes this identifier for Pifer & Becker, the Cleveland photography studio that took the photos.

Late in 2018, Doug Peltz and his family stopped in Los Angeles to lay flowers on the graves of Joseph Peltz and his second wife, Minnie Caroline Schnierle Stilwell Peltz.

“As you might recall, they married in 1910, four years after my great great grandma Anna Simmerer Peltz died,” he wrote. “Sometime around 1920, they moved to Los Angeles where they lived out the rest of their lives, apparently with other Olmsted residents still in touch and living nearby.”

Peltz's genealogical research previously led him to Minnie's granddaughter, Alice Minnie Stilwell, who was raised by Joseph and Minnie. She recalled attending Joseph's

funeral in 1938 when she was seven years old and recounted many detailed stories about her memories of him.



“I am lucky that she was such a precocious child and that she has such a strong memory to this day,” Peltz wrote. “Joseph and Minnie are interned at Forest Lawn Cemetery, the same site that eventually became a popular resting place for many Hollywood celebrities. For example, the pop singer Michael Jackson is entombed inside a cathedral that is just fifty yards away from their graves.”



On the left, Doug Peltz’s daughters, Josephine, age three, and Miranda, age seven, laid flowers on the grave of Joseph Peltz in Los Angeles late last year. Josephine is named for her great-great-great-grandfather. On the right, a 1948 photo shows Doug’s grandmother, Audrey, with her daughter Linda at the Peltz bench in Chestnut Grove Cemetery in Olmsted Falls, where Joseph Peltz likely would have been buried if he had not moved to California. Photos courtesy of Doug Peltz.

Peltz added, “It is ironic that the lovely granite Peltz bench and headstones at Chestnut Grove [Cemetery in Olmsted Falls] were likely placed there and paid for by Joseph, but that he himself does not rest there, instead being all the way on the other side of the country!”

Neighbors Competed for Township Land in 1950s

Efforts to either incorporate Olmsted Township as a municipality or annex it to Olmsted Falls have come in spurts over the years. They usually have resulted from fear that something bad could happen to the township, such as having something unwanted locate in the township or having it taken apart piece by piece.

To some degree, the latter has occurred, as Olmsted Falls, North Olmsted and Berea all have taken sections of township land at various times since the middle of the 20th century. For example, in 1947, Olmsted Falls annexed two chunks of the township. One was a large section between Columbia Road and Rocky River north of Nobottom Road (but not including homes immediately on the north side of the road). The other was a smaller section along Lewis Road near Water Street.

“The request is the outgrowth of an 18-month controversy which began when residents of the township sought incorporation or annexation so that they could enact zoning laws and protect themselves from a proposed county workhouse,” the *Berea*

Enterprise reported in its July 25, 1947, edition. “The state this spring passed a law enabling townships to set up zoning boards.”

That story refers to the episode in which township residents seriously considered incorporation or wholesale annexation to Olmsted Falls in 1946 after Cleveland reportedly wanted to acquire township land to relocate its workhouse from Warrensville Township. It was the subject of a story last month in Issue 68 of *Olmsted 200*.

Several years later, Cuyahoga County commissioners approved the annexation of another 30 acres bounded by Columbia Road, Nobottom Road and River Street (now River Road) to Olmsted Falls. That annexation, which included seven homes, occurred “despite strenuous opposition by the township,” according to the April 14, 1953, issue of the *Plain Dealer*. Township officials almost always expressed strenuous opposition to annexation attempts over the years.

In the mid-1950s, attempts to annex parts of Olmsted Township emerged from North Olmsted and Berea. Both offered water service and other benefits to woo township residents. Both also coveted township land for industrial development.

North Olmsted went first. In December 1954, Mayor Charles Lewis suggested annexing the northern half of the township, everything north of the railroad tracks then owned by the New York Central. He appointed a committee to study the proposal, but it apparently failed to draw support from the township residents who would have had to approve it.

Late in 1957, Berea expressed interest in the section of the township east of the west branch of Rocky River where about 1,000 people lived at the time. Under Mayor Ernest Quackenbush, Berea suggested it could provide water and sewage service, as well as roads, for industrial development in that area. Township trustees expressed alarm at that prospect. Olmsted Falls officials then said in January 1958 they would be glad to take in the township, although they couldn’t offer water or sewer service.

By early March, a Berea real estate agent, who was not identified in published reports, was said to have sparked a “verbal free-for-all” by promoting Berea’s offer at a meeting of the Olmsted Citizens League, a group that promoted township interests through such efforts as raising funds to buy a police car.

“As a residential community, the more the township increases in population, the more your school taxes will increase,” the real estate man was quoted as saying. “The only way for you to beat that is to attract industry, but this requires having adequate water, sewage facilities and roads available to these potential industries.”

Although the Citizens League did not receive those words well, they turned out in hindsight to be quite prescient. Nevertheless, residents of eastern Olmsted Township showed little interest in what one of them called Berea’s “land grab.” When the chairman of the Berea Chamber of Commerce appeared in April at a meeting of the newly formed

Olmsted Businessmen's Association, the crowd was "obviously antagonistic," according to the *Plain Dealer*.

Some eastern township residents circulated petitions for annexation to Olmsted Falls, which would have doubled the size of the village. William Gilligan, chairman of the township trustees, discouraged that move. He told them their property taxes would go from \$36.40 per \$1,000 of valuation in the township to \$40.20 per \$1,000 in the village.

A couple of weeks later, about 200 members of the Olmsted Businessmen's Association heard from Fred Frey, an assistant prosecutor who served as a legal advisor for the township. He told them the township should again consider incorporating as a village, and it should act soon because a delay of just six months could be too late.

"Things are going to come along much faster here than any of you expect," he said, according to the May 1, 1958, edition of the *Berea News*. "The worst thing that could happen would be to allow the township to be consumed piece by piece by surrounding communities."

Frey said incorporation of the township would be the best way to handle the industrial, residential and commercial development of Olmsted Township.

"Township laws of Ohio are hopelessly inadequate to operate a community of this size," Frey said. "Yet Olmsted Township is possibly the greatest area of potential development in Cuyahoga County."

If the township were developed properly, he said, "You will be sitting on a gold mine." He said he knew personally of a number of large stores that were considering the area. That was at a time when the original Great Northern Shopping Center was being developed in North Olmsted.

Frey also suggested that Olmsted needed to attract industry to avoid depending too much on residential property for tax revenue. He said tax rates could get out of hand. He cited the example of Chagrin Falls, where the tax rate was up to \$45.00 per \$1,000 of valuation. He added that, as a village, the community would receive a greater share of tax revenues from the state and the county. Although he admitted that operating a village would cost more than operating a township, he said, "It will not cost enough more to make you scream! I promise you that."

In June, the business group began circulating a petition calling for a vote of the people on incorporation as a village to be named Olmsted Heights. Because of that, the group seeking annexation of the eastern portion of the township to Olmsted Falls halted its efforts. On June 27, the township trustees accepted the incorporation petition, which included signatures of 403 residents, and scheduled a public hearing on it for July 25.

Shortly before that hearing, Gilligan warned that, if the township would incorporate as a village, it likely, under a new state law, would have to become a city

after the 1960 Census when it was expected to exceed 5,000 in population. That seemed to be a bad outcome in his view. But he didn't have the support of his fellow trustees. One of them, Ben Warner, favored incorporation, while the third trustee, Charles Herrman, favored a merger of the township, Olmsted Falls and West View.

In the November 4, 1958, election, township voters rejected incorporation by a wide margin with a vote of 924 to 552. Eastern township residents considered resuming their effort to be annexed to Olmsted Falls, but nothing came of it.

However, that was far from the end of efforts to annex all or parts of Olmsted Township to neighboring municipalities. *Olmsted 200* will have more on that next month.

OFHS Gets a New Look for the 21st Century

Any graduate of Olmsted Falls High School who hasn't seen it in recent months would be surprised at the way it looks now.



Jim Lloyd is the superintendent of Olmsted Falls schools.

As Olmsted Falls High School reached the 50th anniversary of its 1968 opening last September, it was in the final stages of major construction work that added about 40,000 square feet of classrooms and other facilities on three sides and renovated about 49,500 square feet of the existing building. A story in Issue 63 of *Olmsted 200* last August recounted the construction of the high school half a century ago and a subsequent story in Issue 64 last September covered the new construction. However, that new construction wasn't finished until late in the fall. Thanks to a tour conducted personally by Superintendent Jim Lloyd, *Olmsted 200* now can share views of the new look of OFHS.



The old rectangular look of the cafeteria has been replaced by curves and open space (left). The curves continue into the media center, which has taken the place of the old library (right).



The scene shop (left) provides a place for the Masquers program to design sets for use in the auditorium. It is located so that sets can be rolled directly over to the stage next door. The band, which now has more than 300 members, has more room to practice in this new room (right).



Years ago, the high school offered industrial arts classes in which students could learn to work with wood, metal and other materials. Now, it offers a FAB Lab (left), which houses the Project Lead the Way engineering program in partnership with the Polaris Career Center. The new arts wing also includes plenty of space for art classes (right), as well as storage for art supplies.



New, larger science classrooms include this one (left) for chemistry that features a fume hood. Locker rooms for athletes, such as this one (right) for girls, provide plenty of space for changing clothes and team meetings.



The open courtyard that was located south of the cafeteria is now enclosed by the addition of new wings (left). An electronic sign (right) at the entrance to the high school on Bagley Road tells passersby about what goes on at the school.

Winter Games Were Daring Half a Century Ago – Part One

By Patrick Carroll

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is another essay from Patrick Carroll about the adventures associated with growing up in Olmsted in the latter half of the 20th century. His first essay for Olmsted 200 appeared in Issue 66 from November 2018.

The fall of 1968 was an exciting time in the Olmsted Falls Local School District, especially for those lucky enough to be students at the new high school. As a member of



Patrick Carroll, then a freshman, is the second student from the right in a study carrel in this photo from the program for the dedication of Olmsted Falls High School in November 1968.

the Class of 1972, I was a freshman that year and played a minor role in the dedication of the school. I was in the band, which performed at the dedication ceremony that November. Also, I found my pensive mug featured in a photograph taken at the new school library in the center of the seventh page of the dedication program.

In this case, a picture did not say a thousand words because I was hardly engaged in any serious academic study or homework. Rather, if I recall correctly, I was perusing a book about cars, especially cars with rear-mounted engines and drivetrains, such as Volkswagen Beetles and Chevrolet Corvairs – not quite rocket science. I looked forward to getting my driver's license in a couple of years.

The excitement about being in a new school soon gave way to the celebration of Thanksgiving and then to Christmas break. My brother Tim was fixated on the coming of Christmas. Grandma Edna explained to him the importance of Christ's miraculous birth.

As the youngest, he knew that, but with a glassy look in his eyes, his only retort was: “Presents! Presents! Don’t forget about the presents!”

I was interested in a different type of present: the current time with the gift of freedom offered by winter vacation. When it came, it brought snow – a heavy snowfall on the second day of vacation blanketed the area. It reminded me of the battered old porcelain sign with the Sherwin Williams “cover the earth” logo inside P. Simmerer & Sons’ Hardware.



That was just a few years before Simmerer’s closed. I often talked with one of the elderly Simmerer brothers when my father would send for hardware staples, including staples themselves, and other items unavailable in more modern hardware stores. He would regale me with his stories of winters of yore, such as when a heavy snowfall closed the whole town.



Three Simmerer brothers succeeded their father in operating the family store until it closed in 1971.

Heading west down Mill Street from the hardware store past the last building was a modest hill perfect for sledding. The Mill Street Bridge was old and decaying. It was closed except for foot traffic. The banks of Plum Creek offered a long, gentle slope behind the building to a small valley leading up to the stream.

The Simmerer brother was enthusiastic that kids still enjoyed that slope. I had learned about it from my friend, Scott Swaisgood (also in the Class of 1972, but he moved with his family to Berea after our freshman year). His family lived with his grandmother in the stately Victorian house next to Kucklick’s furniture store. The grandmother also remembered sledding on the hill behind Simmerer’s. His grandfather had operated a blueprint shop, the Acme Blue Company, there in the barn. It still had turn-of-the-20th-century drafting tables, equipment, presses and other antique tools of the trade. Scott’s father had tried to run the business, but it folded in the mid-1960s.

Scott and I, as well as the rest of our gang, met at the Mill Street hill soon after the snowfall. Paul Christensen and Brian Fenderbosch and a couple of kids I don’t remember were already there at the base of the sloping hill warming their hands and rear ends by a fire.

I had found an old sled in the rubbish and painted it with “day-glo” colors. Using an Easy Letter Stencil Company cardboard template I had bought at Scott’s Drugstore, I put “The Psychedelic Sled” on it. That seemed appropriate because the evening I stenciled it, my brother Tim and I had watched *Rowan and Martin’s Laugh In* on TV and I heard the word “psychedelic” for the first time. I also liked the crazy and colorful graphics on the show.

Other kids without sleds used old pieces of cardboard or other improvised items to join in the fun. After I made two runs down the hill, I rested by the fire as a small sleet storm broke out. As my dad used to say, it was typical northeast Ohio weather, changing its mind like a fickle old crone.



Undaunted, we sailed forth. The sleet was intermittent and the air cooled, making the slope even more slippery. I decided to impress my friends with my skill in handling my customized sled by going on a solo run. Leaping up, I ran to the top of the hill. Then I ran as hard as I could and launched myself with what I imagined was the force of an antiballistic submarine missile. My belly flat on my sled, I sailed down the hill and past the fire. As my friends watched with mouths agape, I felt intensely satisfied.

This hill near the Mill Street Bridge over Plum Creek was a prime location for sledding in Olmsted Falls for Patrick Carroll and others long before Clint Williams built the Grand Pacific Wedding Gardens, as seen in this photo from March 30, 2014.

This heightened my sense of bravado. Showing off, I lifted my hands and clasped them in the air. The sled struck a hidden log under the snow, abruptly twisted wildly to the left and broke apart. It threw me like a boulder from a trebuchet into the icy water of Plum Creek. The pitifully exploded remnants of the psychedelic sled came to rest around the impact site. Wandering out of the stream soaked and frozen, I looked like the Creature from the Black Lagoon. My friends cheered and laughed.

Not wanting to be embarrassed, I gathered the pieces of the sled stoically and silently. I threw them into the fire while warming myself.

“Hey, are you OK?” Brian asked.

“Yeah, I’m just really cold and mad that my psychedelic sled is destroyed,” I said. “I really liked that sled. But it sure was one helluva trip.”

We laughed about it as we walked home. But days later, when my father took my siblings and me sled riding at a hill at the old Columbia Hills Golf Course near West View, I was less enthusiastic. And later that week, when my sisters Marjorie and Maureen, 1968 graduates of Olmsted Falls High School, and I went behind Ritter’s Farm along Columbia Road, the slopes were milder but I was no more eager.

“Aww, c’mon, Pat,” one of them said. “That bum sled ride you had was a week ago. This should be fun.”

It wasn't. But that didn't stop me from participating in an even more dangerous activity that winter. I will tell you about that in the next issue of *Olmsted 200*.

Patrick Carroll is a 1972 graduate of Olmsted Falls High School who now lives in Wooster.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include stories about how Olmsted Township again became a target for annexation in the 1960s and the difference a border made for one former resident, as well as more from Patrick Carroll about winter games in 1968.

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, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Florida, 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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