



# Olmsted 200

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

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## Californian Uncovers Lost History of Olmsted's Peltz Family

*This is the second part of a series about the Peltz and Simmerer families who were prominent in Olmsted Falls for decades during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It includes photos that have not been seen around Olmsted for perhaps almost a century.*

The name Peltz lives on in Olmsted Falls thanks to lettering on the Mill Street side of the Grand Pacific Hotel that recalls when that building was home to a store called Peltz & Simmerer. Many former and current Olmsted residents recall the Simmerer brothers and their father, Philip, who ran the hardware store there for almost eight decades up until 1971. But memories of Simmerer's former partner, Joseph Peltz, have long faded. That's because he left Olmsted Falls for California almost a century ago.

But in just the past year, a descendant of his – who also has ended up in California – has uncovered information about Peltz's life, including photos that apparently have not been seen around Olmsted for many decades. Doug Peltz, Joseph's great-great-grandson,



*Lettering on the side of the Grand Pacific Hotel has restored the names of the building's former owners: Peltz and Simmerer.*



tracked down relatives he had not previously known who have been storing Peltz family photos and other information for many years.

Joseph Peltz was the elder son of Florian and Magdalene Peltz, whose story, as well as that of their house, was featured in Issue 32 of *Olmsted 200*. As was noted last month, the 1860s photo of the Peltz family at their home and wagon shop at what now is 7486 River Road might be the oldest known photo from Olmsted Falls still in existence. In the middle of that photo is Joseph as a boy, standing between his mother and his younger brother, Henry, who died as a teenager. (Their two sisters died as infants.)

*This is how Joseph Peltz looked in the 1860s photo of his family. The whole photo was published last month in Issue 32.*

Although Joseph Peltz, who was born in 1856, grew up to be a prominent businessman in Olmsted Falls for decades, he received only a handful of mentions in histories of the community, such as Walter Holzworth's 1966 book. In one passage about a ladder-climbing contest among volunteer firefighters, Holzworth described Peltz this way: "Joe was quick and small of stature and could shin up the ladder like a monkey." That and a few other mentions might have been the extent of posterity's knowledge of Peltz if his great-great-grandson had not been so curious.

"My family was always remarking to me from a young age that I'm the last boy in the family; if I don't have a boy, the name won't carry on," Doug Peltz wrote. "So when I was about 9 years old, I started taking an interest in genealogy. I sat my grandfather down and asked him to give me the names and relations of everyone he knew, as far back as he could go, so that I could construct a family tree. I'm glad I did, because he died two years later (1992) and I'm certain this knowledge would have been lost."

Doug Peltz's grandfather – also named Doug but nicknamed Buddy – could recall that his grandfather was Joseph Peltz and that his grandmother was Anna Simmerer. He also knew Joseph's father's name, although he wasn't sure whether it was Florin or Florian. (See Issue 32 for an explanation on why it probably was Florian.) And he knew that Florian had married Magdalena Bezner. But Buddy Peltz had no memory of his grandfather because Joseph moved to California when Buddy was only a few years old.

The earliest family photo Doug had was of his great-grandfather, Julius, Joseph's son, from about 1905. He didn't know what had happened to Julius's sister, Verna. When he, as a teenager, visited Olmsted Falls with his family, Doug went to Chestnut Grove Cemetery, where he saw the gravestone for Joseph's first wife, Anna Simmerer Peltz, who died in 1906 at age 45. But he didn't know what had happened to Joseph. However, during that same trip in the 1990s, Doug recalled that he and his family were "completely bowled over" when they saw the restored Peltz and Simmerer lettering on the side of the Grand Pacific Hotel. They are descendants of both the Peltz and Simmerer families.

“Every few years I would check “FindAGrave.com” to see if I could locate Joseph’s tombstone, since it isn’t in Chestnut Grove,” Doug wrote. “Finally we’ve located it: he is buried in Los Angeles. It seems that after Anna Simmerer died, he remarried a woman named Minnie Stilwell and that they left Olmsted Falls in the early 1920s.”

Doug even figured out what street Joseph and Minnie lived on in Los Angeles, but he still had many questions. With help from his father, Fred, Doug Peltz found out that Minnie had a child from a previous marriage. They speculated that Minnie might also have had one or more grandchildren, who might have some old photos of Joseph.

“Well, we were spot on!” Doug wrote. Minnie had a granddaughter, Alice Stilwell McPeak, who was 84 years old at the time and happened to live in Penryn, California, about two hours away from his home in the San Francisco Bay area. He contacted her and, as he put it, “We hit the jackpot!”



*This is a photo from the late 1800s of Joseph Peltz’s store before he entered into a partnership with Philip Simmerer and moved the store into what is now the Grand Pacific Hotel across the street. Peltz is leaning in front of the store on the right side.*

McPeak not only had photographs of Joseph but also personal memories of him. “For her, Joseph was a grandfather, even though they were not technically blood relatives,” Doug wrote. “Makes sense: Joseph married Minnie well over a decade before she was even born. In fact, she grew up in the same household as them.”

Among her stories was one about a visit from Joseph's daughter, Verna Greif, as well as one about "some dashing sailor named Buddy Peltz" who visited in 1942 just before shipping off to the Pacific theater during World War II. "That last bit nearly brought me to tears," Doug said, because Buddy, who was born in 1917, was the grandfather for whom he was named Doug.

The photographs McPeak had stored away not only showed Joseph and Minnie Peltz but also Joseph's life in Olmsted Falls. A story in *Olmsted 200* Issue 25 from last June about the Peltz and Simmerer houses that now are part of Grand Pacific Junction included one of those photos, which shows Joseph Peltz standing outside his house more than a century ago.

Other photographs, which are included in this issue, show Peltz's store in downtown Olmsted Falls before he partnered with his brother-in-law and moved his business into the building now called the Grand Pacific Hotel. He was a druggist and also sold a variety of dry goods.

Peltz's store had a wide frontage. Historical references indicated that it was on the eastern side of what was then known as Columbia Street (now Columbia Road). A map of Olmsted Falls from 1892 shows such a wide building just south of the railroad tracks. It was the second building south of the tracks on that side of the road back then. That would put it not quite where the newly constructed Grand Pacific Junction building (home of Pinot's Palette) that opened last year but perhaps right next to it. That 1892 map came out one year before Peltz and Simmerer took over the former hotel for use as their store.

(The 1892 map also lists "Joseph P. Petz" as the owner of land on both sides of Plum Creek between Mill Street and the railroad tracks and west of Railroad Street, which is now Brookside Drive. Assuming the last name was misspelled, that means that Peltz owned part of the property that now contains Grand Pacific Junction. However, the map shows no buildings on that property.)

Another photo of the Peltz store is clearer and shows more details. Some of those details indicate that the photo was taken sometime after Peltz dissolved his partnership with Philip Simmerer in 1912 to resume operating his own store by himself in 1913 and before he moved to California in 1920. One sign identifies the store as "J.P. Peltz & Co. Practical Druggists." Another sign says: "Ice Cream Parlor Lunches." Other signs advertise "5 and 10¢ Novelties," "Monarch Paint," "School Supplies," "Confectionary," "Fresh Bread," "Canfield Gasoline," "Tuxedo" (a brand of tobacco), "Coca-Cola" and some brand of chocolates, but the name on that last sign is blocked by Peltz standing in front of it and gesturing toward the store.

Coca-Cola began in 1886 and use of its well-known logo written in Spencerian script began in 1887, so the photo could not have been taken earlier than the late 1880s. Canfield Gasoline was a product of the Canfield Oil Company of Cleveland. Like Coca-Cola, that company also began in 1886. So again, the photo could not have been taken



before the late 1880s, but the Canfield Gasoline sign actually is a clue that the photo's date is later than that. According to the *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, Canfield "produced grease for lubrication, illuminating oils, petrolatum, used by drug and cosmetic manufacturers as a base for cosmetics, ointments and salves, and, later, gasoline to service the growing automobile industry." That later phrase is important because it indicates that the Canfield Gasoline sign is from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when automobiles were around, rather than the 19<sup>th</sup> century when people still were using horses for transportation.



*This photo of Joseph Peltz's store seems to be from the 1913-1920 period, after Peltz left his partnership with Philip Simmerer and before he moved to California. Again, Peltz is on the right side of the photo, gesturing toward the building.*

Two other signs also indicate that the photo was taken sometime in the period from 1913 to 1920. One on the front door on the left side is a sign for Sal-vet, which was a veterinary product made by the S.R. Feil Company of Cleveland. Internet searches turn up many advertisements that describe it as a worm destroyer and livestock conditioner and a "wonder-working medicated salt." The earliest ads seem to be from 1912 and 1913.

Outside the store is a display case for Tuxedo, which was tobacco for pipes and cigarettes made by the R.A. Patterson Tobacco Company, the same company that started Lucky Strike cigarettes. Although the company began in 1871, ads for Tuxedo available on the Internet are all from the early 1900s, and Tuxedo tins offered as collectibles for sale through online sites indicate they are from the early 1900s.

Thus, it seems as though the photo is from the 1913-1920 period when Joseph Peltz operated his own store separate from Philip Simmerer. Because the building in that photo and the one in the earlier photo look so similar, it seems that Peltz returned to the same building where his store was located before he and Simmerer moved into the old hotel in 1893. Until now, it had not been clear that Peltz had returned to the old store location.

Yet another photo that Doug Peltz acquired from McPeak last year shows Philip Simmerer and Joseph Peltz outside the store they operated together in the old hotel building. It shows Peltz with a broom in his hand. Simmerer, with a pencil tucked in his

right ear, looks toward him. (*Olmsted 200* will have more about Simmerer in a future issue.) Writing on the bottom of the photo indicates it was taken about 1900.



*This photo shows Philip Simmerer, on the left, and Joseph Peltz, on the right, in front of their store in the Grand Pacific Hotel building. Writing at the bottom of the photo says it was taken about 1900.*

Doug Peltz said Alice Stilwell McPeak told him that Joseph Peltz was “a very sweet, good-natured man.” He married Minnie Schnierle Stilwell in 1910. She had a son, Graves Stilwell, from her first marriage who moved to California for work in 1913. Thus, Doug Peltz speculated that Joseph and Minnie might have moved to California in 1920 because Minnie wanted to be close to her son.

“Alice didn’t think so, as they hardly saw Graves once they were in California,” Doug wrote. “Graves worked in the Central Valley, and in fact sent Alice and her half-siblings to live with Joseph and Minnie in order to attend grammar school in Los Angeles.”

Joseph never told McPeak explicitly why he and Minnie moved to California, Doug said, but “she had the impression that her grandmother (Minnie) had put a bit of pressure on Joseph to leave, that it wasn’t something he was entirely keen on doing himself. Minnie apparently loved the warm weather. (And to be fair, she said Joseph was

absolutely smitten with his grapefruit and orange trees in his new yard! Those must have been quite exotic to an Ohioan of the time!)”

McPeak also said that Olmsted Falls came up frequently in Joseph and Minnie’s conversations – enough that McPeak was familiar with the town’s name without Doug Peltz having to mention it. “She recalls that Minnie and Joseph both corresponded regularly with their former connections and family once they arrived in Los Angeles,” he wrote.

Apparently, Joseph had not given up on the idea of going back into business as a druggist after the move. Joseph died in 1938. After Minnie died in 1946, her family went through the couple’s belongings. McPeak, who was born in 1931, remembered “her father was cursing because in an attic or storage space, Joseph had this large chest full of his druggists’ supplies which he had apparently brought with him from Olmsted Falls to Los Angeles,” Doug wrote. “It was terrifically heavy, and Alice recalls it so vividly, because her father was exasperated at what he should now have to do with all this stuff; there was so much of it, and some of it was surely toxic, etc. Looking back on it, she says her mind boggles at the thought of Joseph bringing his chest by train from Ohio; it must have cost him a fortune to do so! Our speculation was that on leaving Olmsted Falls for California, Joseph perhaps thought he may open another drug store once he arrived. But he never did. Instead he took up a job for a bank as a courier.”

Doug Peltz’s research into his family’s genealogy has turned up more information about the Peltz and Simmerer families, including more photos, which will be seen in future issues of *Olmsted 200*. For more about the Peltz and Simmerer houses that are now part of Grand Pacific Junction, see Issue 25 of *Olmsted 200* from June 2015. That issue also includes a photo of Doug Peltz and Alice Stilwell McPeak.

*Thanks to Doug Peltz for sharing the photos and other information he found about his family and Olmsted Falls.*

## **Olmsted Family Descended from Mayflower Pilgrims**

When the 1860s photo of Florian Peltz and his family at their home and wagon shop along River Road appeared in Issue 32 of *Olmsted 200* and also on Facebook, it prompted one reader, Jeff Sigsworth, to make this comment: “Still 50 years after my family settled there... wonder what it looked like when the Bradfords arrived around 1815 -- mostly trees, no doubt.” Unfortunately, no 19<sup>th</sup> century photos are known to exist of the Bradford family home in that neighborhood, but Sigsworth has done some research into his ancestors and has shared it with *Olmsted 200*.

The family’s Olmsted history goes back to 1820, when Hosea Bradford moved into what then was called Lenox Township (later renamed Olmsted Township) from Brecksville, where he had initially settled in 1812. Bradford brought with him a notable pedigree. He was the great-great-grandson of Gov. William Bradford of the Plymouth

Colony in Massachusetts and great-great-great-grandson of Elder William Brewster of that colony. Both of them came to America in 1620 on the voyage of the Mayflower.

Sigsworth is a direct descendant of Hosea Bradford's sister, Lucia Bradford McRoberts, who settled in 1845 in Pittsfield Township in Lorain County.

Hosea Bradford was born to Simeon and Phebe Whiting Bradford on July 25, 1773, in Springfield, Vermont. He married his first wife, Parthenia Smith, on October 5, 1794. She died before 1806. In 1806, Bradford married Hannah Eastman. They had 10 children: Philo (1807), Lester (1809), Cynthia (1811), Sally (1812), Fanny (1814), Eastman (1816), Laura (1818), Orin (1820), Hiram (1821) and Myron (1824).

Hosea died on December 28, 1863, in Olmsted Falls. Hannah Eastman Bradford, who was born on January 7, 1784, died on June 14, 1869, in Brecksville.

During the 1800s, River Road was known as Bradford Road before it became River Street and eventually River Road. Two houses from the Bradford family still exist there. The Philo Bradford house, which was built in 1851, is at 7435 River Road. The Freeman Bradford house, which was built in 1870, is at 7542 River Road. Freeman was the son of Lester Bradford, who operated an inn at the junction of Nobottom Road and Bradford Road. Lester and his brother, Eastman, also had a brick factory nearby. Freeman ran a dairy farm until 1888, when he moved to Cleveland and went into the grocery business.

Sigsworth said he learned about his Bradford ancestry about 45 years ago and the family's connection to the Pilgrims shortly after that. He said he and his wife drive over to the old Chestnut Grove Cemetery to visit the graves of Hosea and other Bradfords once every year or two. The older part of the cemetery was located on property the Bradfords had owned. Many people still call the cemetery by its very old name, Turkeyfoot. As Sigsworth noted, "the turkeys used to roost in the trees there – people walking through would look up and see... turkey feet." That story about the origin of the Turkeyfoot name is from Walter Holzworth's 1966 history of Olmsted.

*Thanks to Jeff Sigsworth for sharing his family's history, and a part of Olmsted's history.*

## **Former Saloon Becomes a Wine Shop**

*This is the latest in a series of stories about the histories of the buildings of Grand Pacific Junction.*

A building with one of the most colorful histories of those in Grand Pacific Junction is the one at 7990 and 7994 Columbia Road, where Master Cleaners and the Olde Wine Cellar are located. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, it was home to Herman Fenderbosch's saloon and pool hall. The part with the Olde Wine Cellar is where the saloon was, and the part with Master Cleaners is where the pool hall was. Fenderbosch's





*The left side of this building once was the pool hall and the right side was the saloon operated by Herman Fenderbosch in the late 1800s and early 1900s.*

was the most prominent of several saloons in and around Olmsted Falls that were the subject of much community and political turmoil when they were in operation.

The history of those saloons was told in the “Saloon Wars” chapter of *The Olmsted Story: A Brief History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township*, as well as in a series of stories in *Olmsted 200* in February, March, April, June, July and August 2014 (Issues 9, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 15). Because that history has been told extensively already, this story

will focus on what developer Clint Williams has done with the former saloon and pool hall since he acquired the building about two decades ago and made it part of Grand Pacific Junction.

The dry cleaning firm already was in the former pool hall side at that time, but Williams said the former saloon side was being used as two apartments, one upstairs and one on the ground floor.

“The Master Cleaners’ floor was all falling out,” he said. “We had to take the whole floor out, put a new floor joist and everything in there, put a new heating system in, air conditioning, all new. That was just standard with every building.”



*This is what the building looked like as a pool hall and saloon run by Herman Fenderbosch.*

The condition of the saloon side was “not too bad,” Williams said. “It had a wood floor, which we were able to save and salvage it,” he said. “It had wooden walls in there to some degree. It had some wooden walls – a lot of wood walls in the old buildings. I



I didn't have to do anything with the ceiling. It's wood. I left it. Then upstairs, that was set up to divide into two units. I had a set of stairs in the front, a set of stairs in the back, so I divided it. Like one side of the stairway went one way and one was already *Clint* there.”

*Williams put the back porch on the building.*

Williams rented one side of the upstairs space to a man who has operated his business out of there ever since.

“When we went in, we put all new bathrooms in,” he said. “We actually put two bathrooms in. If you have a liquor license, you have to have a urinal in the men's room. You just can't have two bathrooms. So we had to do that.”

Williams said he put the front porch and a big, covered back porch on the building.



*The former saloon is still in the alcohol business as the Olde Wine Cellar, part of Grand Pacific Junction.*

## **Old Mapleway Neighborhood Photos Are Sought**

Seeing old photos from Olmsted's history has prompted one *Olmsted 200* reader to wonder if photos of that person's neighborhood are available. That neighborhood is the one around Mapleway Drive and Elmer Street, particularly the 8300 block of Mapleway.

So if any readers have such photos and would like to share them, please contact *Olmsted 200* at: [wallacestar@hotmail.com](mailto:wallacestar@hotmail.com).

That inquiry has led to another question: Does anyone know when the name of Division Street was changed to Mapleway Drive? It was sometime in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but research so far has not revealed when it occurred. If you know, please respond to that same email address.

## Editor's Note

In Issue 32 of *Olmsted 200*, there was a regrettable error in the third story, "Falls Fluid Once Occupied Mill Street Building." Thanks to Toby Nichols for pointing it out. Most readers received an updated version of Issue 32 that corrected the error on pages 12 and 13. Anyone who missed the corrected version can find it online at Olmsted Township's website at: <http://www.egovlink.com/olmsted/docs/menu/home.asp>. Click on "Olmsted 200" and then on Issue 32a. The editor apologizes for the error. *Olmsted 200* tries to get stories right. Anyone who finds an error in any edition is invited to notify *Olmsted 200* at [wallacestar@hotmail.com](mailto:wallacestar@hotmail.com).

## Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include the next story in the series about the Peltz and Simmerer families with more long-lost photos, as well as the next installment in the series about Grand Pacific Junction buildings.

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, Colorado, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, West Virginia, Florida, Massachusetts and Maine, as well as overseas in Mongolia and Japan.

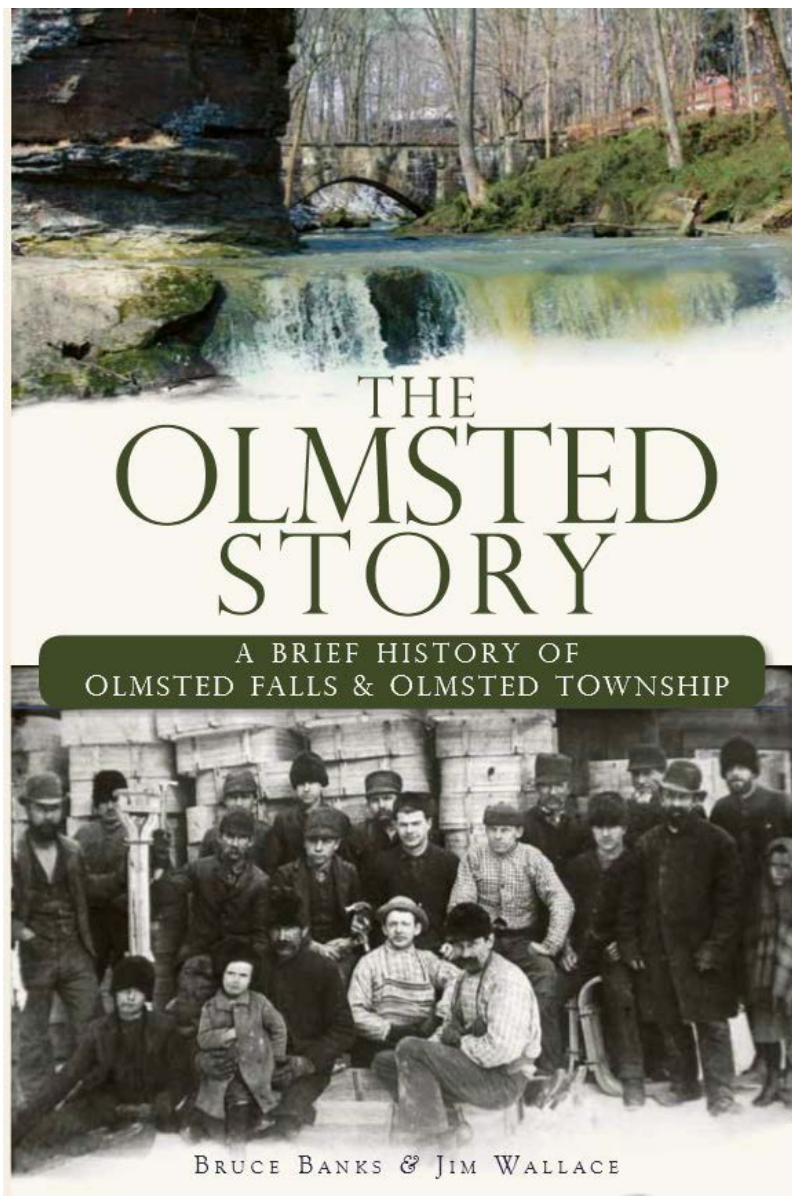
Your questions and comments about *Olmsted 200* are welcome. Perhaps there is something about Olmsted's history that you would like to have pulled out of *Olmsted 200*'s extensive archives. Or perhaps you have information or photos about the community's history that you would like to share.

If you have missed any of the past issues of *Olmsted 200* or want to share them with someone else, all of them can be found on Olmsted Township's website. Go to <http://www.egovlink.com/olmsted/docs/menu/home.asp> and click on "Olmsted 200."

Except where otherwise noted, all articles in *Olmsted 200* are written by Jim Wallace. Written contributions and photos, as well as comments and questions about items in this newsletter, will be considered for publication. Send any correspondence by email to: [wallacestar@hotmail.com](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 Clementine's Victorian Restaurant at Grand Pacific Junction, the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.



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