

## PIONEER WOMEN OF OLMSTED, CUYAHOGA COUNTY.

1814—1840.

Among the many pretty townships of the Western Reserve is found Olmsted, situated fourteen miles to the southwest of the centennial city of '96. A Big Four train stops at West View that you may be within the township, and via the Lake Shore route you may stop at Olmsted Falls, and if you chance to be aboard a Cleveland-Elyria electric car you may visit North Olmsted.

Originally the town was named Kingston, afterward Lenox.

In 1829 Mr. Charles H. Olmstead, who had become owner of the north part of the town, as heir of Aaron Olm-

sted, deceased, offered to make the people the present of a library if they would change the name of Lenox to Olmsted. The offer was accepted, and the library duly presented. The first election under the name of Olmsted was held in 1830.

In 1814 the only marks of civilization were an underbrushed road running through the township from north to south, and a "blazed" one along the line of Butternut Ridge, which now is a road fourteen miles in length, shaded by magnificent maples.

In the spring of 1815 the Widow Par-



ker came with her husband, James Geer, from the adjoining township of Columbia, a home having been prepared for them in the place now known as Turkey Foot Grove. The home of Mrs. Geer's youth was Connecticut, and two children by a previous marriage came to Ohio with her.

The marriage of one Eunice Parker to Harvey Hartson was the first to be solemnized in Olmsted. It occurred at the home of Mrs. Geer in 1817. As there was neither minister nor justice of the peace in the town they sent to Columbia for a competent person to perform the ceremony.

At the home of Mrs. Geer occurred also the first birth—that of her daughter, Julia. The child died when two years old, the first death in the township.

In 1816 Mrs. Bunnet became a resident here, living in a plank house in the north of the township. She brought the

#### FIRST PLANTAIN SEED

that she might raise it for greens.

In 1818 Mrs. Scales came to live at the east end of the ridge near Rocky River. As her husband was obliged to work in Columbia, her experience was a most lonely one. Often she was obliged to rise in the night, and with a broom drive the wildcats from the house. One day she saw a bear hugging a dog to death in the front yard, and taking down the old musket from over the fireplace, thought to put an end to bruin's existence; but after a short inspection of the firearm, concluded it to be more dangerous than the bear, which finally left for the woods. The dog was apparently dead, but eventually revived.

In 1819 Polly Barnum, of Ridgeville, married David Johnston Stearns, who was the earliest settler in the township.

Would my readers like to compare her wedding tour with one of to-day?

Mr. Stearns took leave of his wife the evening after the wedding, which occurred one Sunday in February. Necessity compelled him to be at home Monday to attend the "butchering," but he was to return for his wife on Tuesday.

The next morning Polly decided that as she would eventually have to cook that meat and use the lard, she would go thither and superintend the care of it, and so set forth upon her wedding trip alone. A light snow had fallen the previous day, and she was able to follow her husband's tracks through the dense woods a distance of six miles. Though a hollow tree here and there served as hermitage for the bear during

those winter days, they left her "monarch of all she surveyed," and she made her way unmolested to her future home, where the meat was cared for to her entire satisfaction.

A little later in 1819 Chloe Tyler, wife of Major Lemuel Hoadley, became a near neighbor of Mrs. Scales. The family at first occupied a log house, but immediately began the erection of a frame one. After the timber was cut, hewed, and framed, and ready to raise, Maria and Eunice Hoadley, two robust and resolute girls, who possibly desired to create a favorable impression during a day's absence of their parents, proceeded with the erection of their new house. They put the timber, piece by piece, into place, under the supervision of the carpenter, and with the aid of Mrs. Scales, raised the building and had nearly completed the work when their parents arrived and expressed their astonishment, the father pronouncing the work well down. Thus, to women must be given the credit of raising the first house in Olmsted. With the assistance of the daughters, the house was soon completed, and at Christmas they gave a "house warming"—a frolic and dance, to which all the lads and lassies in the neighborhood were invited. This was soon followed by the wedding and happy settlement in life of the two fair architects, Maria becoming Mrs. John Adams, and Eunice the wife of Rev. Julius Bronson, and some time after his death was a second time led to the altar by John Barnum.

In the autumn of 1820 a party of four, Priscilla Thompson Stearns and Polly Sherman Stearns, with their husbands Vespasian and Alvah, left their homes in Vermont with an ox team to seek places of abode in a wilderness six hundred miles distant. They sped over the ground at the rate of one hundred miles per week, and in six weeks' time were enjoying the hospitality of Polly Barnum Stearns, who, from this time forward was known as "Polly John," and Polly Sherman Stearns received the cognomen of

#### "POLLY ALVAH."

Logs were soon rolled up for their homes. Priscilla spent that first winter in their hastily constructed log hut. An opening in the roof served as a chimney. A fire was built against logs which served as a fireplace. An opening in one side of the wall formed a window over which was hung a sheet that admitted sufficient light for her to do her work. Another opening covered by a blanket served as door.



When these maidens left their homes in Vermont, they were well supplied with the necessaries of life. A gourd filled with allspice, brought by Priscilla, showed that her mother wished her to have something besides the "spice of life" in the wilderness. Another gourd contained pepper, and they are now preserved by her daughter Hester, in Freeport, Ill. The deer, partridges, and wild turkeys shot by Vespasian was all the fresh meat cooked by Priscilla that winter—and she was also furnished with light by the deer.

Among her guests that first season may be mentioned Mrs. Oliver Terrell, of Ridgeville fame, who sat upon her horse from darkness till dawn, when break of day showed her the home of Priscilla, which she entered to warm her numbed body ere the family were stirring. She was returning from the Columbia mills and had missed her way. No inducement, however, was great enough to persuade her to partake of food ere leaving, as she knew her children would be waiting anxiously for her return.

Priscilla at one time gained the reputation of feeling herself better than her neighbors, because necessity compelled her to wear a silk dress to church. We know, however, that pride was not listed among her characteristics. That she was generous and always ready to help in time of need may be shown by the following: Her husband's purse contained \$5 on their arrival here and she cheerfully sanctioned the giving of one-half that sum to their neighbor, Mrs. Scales, to expend for medicine for her sick husband.

In 1823 Mrs. Thompson, mother of Priscilla, being desirous of seeing her daughter, came alone from her home in Vermont in a one-horse wagon. She was so prepossessed in favor of the country that she came here with her family soon after, and

#### "GRANDMA THOMPSON"

was known, loved, and esteemed for her many deeds of goodness by all the country around.

In 1828, Priscilla, wife of Daniel Thompson, and Lucina Thompson Carpenter, with their husbands added to the population of Butternut Ridge. Aurilla Thompson and husband, Elliot Smith, were already residents.

Hannah Eastman, wife of Hosea Bradford, came here with her husband and family in 1820. Previous to this they were pioneers of Brecksville. Mrs. Bradford was noted for her hospitality, and many a night has fed and housed the Indians, with never a thought of

fear, thus showing her adaptability to the life she had chosen.

In those early days Nellie Cisco, who was of colored descent, became the wife of Joseph Peak. They lived in the northwestern part of the township, on the farm now owned by William Hurd. Mrs. Peak was a devoted Christian, always attending the Methodist church.

Nancy Calkins (Mrs. Amos Briggs) was married in 1819 and lived in Olmsted forty years thereafter. She was taken into the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1828, and in those early days her house was often the home of Christie, Poe, Bigelow, Power, Barkdul, and Disbro. She saw the growth of Methodism in this region from its earliest beginning and was always one of its most zealous and faithful supporters.

Priscilla, wife of Davis Ross, arrived from Canandaigua, N. Y., in 1823. Their daughter Margaret, an extremely amiable and industrious woman, came here with her husband, Sheldon Webster, in 1826.

In 1823 Phoebe McIlrath (Mrs. Elias Frost) became a resident of what has since been known as the Frost place.

About the year 1825, Lavinia Hovey (Mrs. Peter Romp, afterward Mrs. Alvah Stearns) came with her family to Olmsted. She was married at the early age of fifteen, and, owing to the poor health of her husband, the care of the family devolved mostly upon her. Few women are now living who have labored as long and endured as much as she. She was in great demand as a doctor—forded rivers at dead of night, on horseback, carrying her babe, too young to leave at home, in her arms. She went everywhere, denying no one. In addition to all her other good works she was a tailoress, and to the very last would always insist on making the buttonholes, because she "loved to do it." How much more precious than the laurels of fame is the memory of this excellent woman, who did not outlive her usefulness!

In 1828 her daughter Amy married Harry Barnum and became a resident of the farm on which George Barnum now lives, where she passed a long and useful life, her death occurring only a few months ago.

In 1822 Mary Usher (Mrs. William Jordan) and husband left Brookfield, N. Y., for a home in the West and located here. Mrs. Jordan lost her father and two brothers the winter following. The woods were very thick and little or no sunlight could penetrate them to dissipate the dampness which caused the malaria that was prevalent at the time.



Betsey Usher, daughter of Charles Lee Usher, became Mrs. Horace Adams. Margaret Keeler came from Vermont to visit a sister here and taught school in Rockport, boarding around. Soon afterward she became Mrs. Elias Usher.

Wealthy Morgan (Mrs. Watrous Usher) lived in the first brick house in Olmsted after a residence of some years in one part frame and part logs.

Rebecca Webster (Mrs. Thaddeus Fitch), who afterward became Mrs. John Walker, started for Olmsted from East Windsor, Conn., in November, 1831. She was in company with Anna Loomis, wife of her son Chauncey, and family. The vessel on which they took passage from Buffalo was driven by stress of weather into the harbor of Dunkirk. Here Anna was taken ill with a fever and died at the home of her husband's uncle, in Pomfret, near Fredonia, N. Y. Mrs. Thaddeus Fitch, however, accompanied her son and family here, where they arrived December 25 after a

#### PROLONGED SLEIGHRIDE.

In the fall of 1833 Mr. Fitch returned to Windsor, bringing back with him a second wife, Clarissa Loomis, sister of the deceased. Through persevering industry and economy they acquired a fair property here.

Jerusha Loomis (Mrs. Daniel Fitch) came from Cattaraugus county, N. Y., in 1839, but her residence here was short. In 1840 she left with her husband to settle in Huron county.

Betsey Edmonds (Mrs. Chester Fitch) was an adopted daughter of Mrs. Daniel Elmer, North Bolton, Conn. She came here with her husband and family in 1831 and resided in the northern part of the township. She was of French extraction, witty and jolly, fond of company, and had excellent command of language.

In the same year, Sabra Cadey (Mrs. Eli Fitch) came also from East Windsor, and with her husband settled upon the bank of Rocky River. She is still living to tell the story of her pioneer life, which she does not consider worthy of mention. It contains no stories of thrilling adventures with wolves or bears, though they were plentiful at that time. She was always a very busy woman and now, in her ninety-third year, is never idle. Her willing hands did much for neighbors and friends in pioneer times. As a tailoress she caused many a man to rejoice over a perfect fitting "swallow-tailed" coat. Her knowledge of this work was acquired after her marriage, and at spinning and weaving she had few equals.

Can "Aunt Sabra's" friends of to-day

fancy her en route for church behind a yoke of oxen? During her husband's absence, in the year '39, she might have been seen on horseback with her son Miles, going to Harry Sheldon's mill, in Berea, for flour, which at the time was worth \$10 a barrel. To-day we find her enjoying excellent health, and there is no place where one can enjoy a pleasanter visit than with "Aunt Sabra." Her loss would be deeply regretted by the whole community. Everyone loves her.

Clarissa White (Mrs. Sanford Fitch) came to Olmsted with her husband in 1832. Her home was in Chautauqua, N. Y. She was a very enterprising woman in a business way.

Harriet Loomis (Mrs. Horace Fitch) became a resident here in 1831. The same year Mary Ann Alcott (Mrs. Elisha Fitch) and husband came. She had no family, but has acted as mother to four children, and is still living in Olmsted Falls, having the respect of a large circle of relatives and friends.

In November, 1833, Mrs. John Loomis and Mrs. Joseph Olmsted Loomis, with their husbands and children, and Joseph Loomis, father of John and Joseph, came from East Windsor, Hartford county, Connecticut, from which place we have already brought many families. They traveled overland with teams to Albany, N. Y., thence by Erie Canal to Buffalo, thence by boat to Cleveland, and settled on the bank of Rocky River, on land now owned by Lester Bradford. Two small log houses were erected and they made themselves as comfortable as possible.

Jerusha Loomis, wife of Joseph Loomis, became a resident here in 1834, her husband having returned to East Windsor for her and their three children, Newton P., Gilbert M., and Julia A. The latter, Mrs. Peck, remained here several years, and then went to Springfield, Mass.

The country around Olmsted Falls at this time was still wild and rough, heavily timbered, and sparsely settled, with the exception of the families on Butternut Ridge. In 1836 Amy Eliza Mead, daughter of Azel Mead, of Geneva, O., became the wife of Newton P. Loomis, and she is still living, in good health, surrounded by friends and neighbors, whose respect and confidence she has always enjoyed. It was their pleasure to assemble at her home on May 16, this year, to congratulate herself and husband on a continuous married life of

#### SIXTY YEARS.

Sarah Smith Cousins, of Vergennes, Vt., came here in 1832. She had no



need of guests to fill her home, as she made and mended garments for a family of fifteen. Could one woman be asked to do more?

The same year Betsey Jones (Mrs. Moses McCallips) became a resident. The families of these women became closely united. Nancy, Lizzie, and Sally Ann, daughters of Betsey and Moses McCallips, became the wives of Moses, William, and Jacob, sons of Sally Ann and Abram Cousins.

Laura Kellogg (Mrs. Samuel Spafford) came in '32, with her husband and family, from Vergennes, Vt. Her daughter, Polly Ann, was one of the teachers on Butternut Ridge, who taught six days each week for seventy-five cents, and boarded around. She became Mrs. Dibble and now finds the millinery business in Elyria more profitable.

In 1834 Eliza M. Payson (Mrs. Caleb Cook) and husband left Manchester, Conn., for a home in Olmsted. They settled at first in the western part of the township, but afterward became residents of the Cook road.

Sally Webster (Mrs. Hiram Kellogg) came from Vergennes, Vt., with her husband and one child in 1834.

Naturally of a very nervous temperament, she was not particularly well adapted to pioneer life. If she were to go out of sight of the house and turn around three times, she would have no idea in what direction from her the log house was; of so industrious a disposition that the time, while riding even, would be wasted if she chanced to forget her knitting, which she seldom did. A great deal of her time was devoted to spinning and weaving and to-day there are overcoats being worn, the cloth of which she made and had fulled at the woolen factory. With the proceeds of her labor in this work she at one time purchased a phaeton for the sum of \$225. As the vehicle is still in existence, though in a very dilapidated condition, we fancy it was "handled with care" while she lived. Her wed-

ding dress, an empire gown of lilac silk, is in the possession of her daughter, Elsie (Mrs. J. S. Hendrickson), of Olmsted. It is seventy years old and is in a perfect state of preservation.

Maria Gage, whose maiden name was Reublin, came in 1832 from Vermont, and endured many hardships, as did also Charlotte Reublin Sheldon, who came about the same time. They both made homes on the bank of Rocky River. The first school house was the regulation log one, with slab desks and seats, built in 1821, near where Snell's store now stands. Rude though it was it furnished a place for the sons and daughters (which were many) of those pioneer women to acquire a common school education.

The first church organized was the Universalist, in 1834. In 1835 the First Congregational Church was organized in Olmsted Falls, and the list of its members numbered sixteen, of which eleven were women: Mary Ann Fitch, Jerusha Loomis, Cynthia House, Catherine Nelson, Mary Ann Wood, Rachel Walt, Emeline Spencer, Lydia Cune, Anna S. How, Harriet Dryden, and Esther E. Kennedy.

"Religion is indeed woman's panoply; no one who wishes her happiness would divest her of it."

There were many, many others that space forbids mention, whose lot it was to make sacrifices, bear privations, and exercise patience and kindness to a degree that the world may never know, and if it did, would scarcely believe.

"The sweetest lives are those to duty wed,

Whose deeds, both great and small,  
Are close knit strands of one unbroken thread,

Where love ennobles all."

ELLA M. HENDRICKSON,

Historian.

Olmsted committee—Mrs. Amella Ames, Mrs. Emma Perry, Miss Delight Bradford.



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