

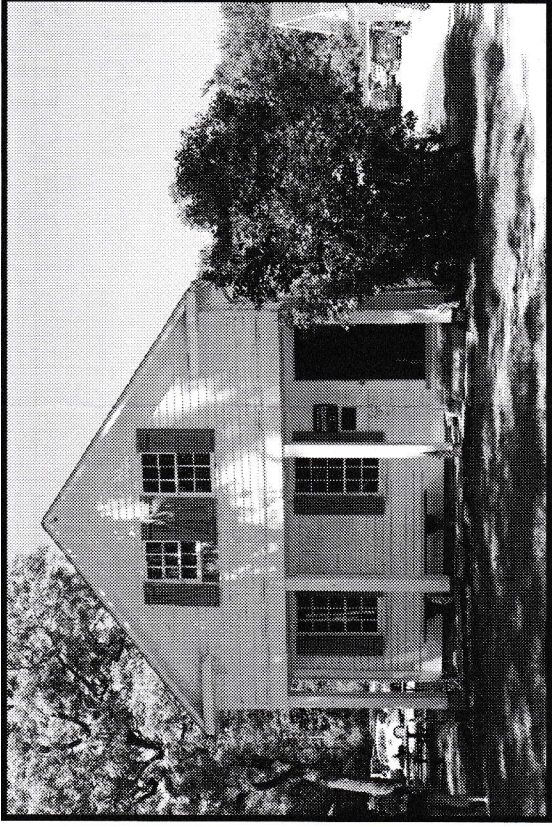
Briggs House

c. 1836

The Western Reserve was sparsely populated until the War of 1812. Word reached America in January of 1815 that the Treaty of Ghent had ended hostilities with England and Lake Erie was no longer a war zone. In June 1815, David Stearns of Vermont became the first permanent white settler in what is today North Olmsted. (The site of his farm is marked with a plaque on the north side of Lorain Road just west of Stearns Road.) Traveling for the first time through the region known as Butternut Ridge, Stearns saw "one vast field of wild flowers in full bloom, and so high that we could just see over them nicely when on our horses." Stearns' closest neighbor was James Geer who lived in the southwestern corner of the township. They spent the Fourth of July in 1816 clearing a two-mile trail from the Stearns farm to River Road (Columbia Road) on the western edge of Rocky River Valley. This crude path in the wilderness was the origin of Butternut Ridge Road which eventually extended into Lorain County.

A year later, Thomas Briggs arrived from Guilford, Vermont, with four sons. Abiah and the rest of the children came in 1825. Thomas and Abiah Briggs settled on land East of the Stearns homestead. Briggs would serve with Stearns as an officer in Lennox Township which became Olmsted Township in 1830. Treasurer in 1828, Briggs and Postmaster Elias Frost in 1831 were Overseers for the Poor. In 1836 and 1843 Amos Briggs, a Son, held the same position in the township and donated the land for the Church at Barton and Lorain Rds. (Now the Frostville Village Church) and housed the early Pastors at that time. Son Otis lived West of Amos and was a cooper. The family were active members of the church and some are buried in the Butternut Ridge Cemetery.

A carpenter from Troy, New York, John Ames, came to Olmsted in 1834. Two years later, Thomas Briggs hired him to build a new home to replace his



cabin. Ames used the Greek Revival style which was popular in the nation during the early 19th Century. (Americans saw the style as symbolic of the ancient Athenian roots of their democracy.) Characteristics of the Greek Revival in the Briggs House include a symmetrical design, low-pitched gabled roof and front porch with columns. Typically, in northern Ohio, the houses' front was the gabled end with a roof line which formed a classical pediment. Ames built another Greek Revival house that survives today on Butternut Ridge Road. Variations of the style can be seen in two other structures which Ames helped to build: the Universalist Church on Porter Road in North Olmsted and the Barton Road Church which was called the Briggs Church when first built. It was called this because Amos Briggs, son of Thomas Briggs, donated the land for the church to be built on.

The Briggs Home remained in the family for over 130 years until being donated to the Society and moved to Frostville in 1969. Members of the Olmsted Historical Society who are descendants of Thomas and Abiah Briggs will greet and tell you the history of their family. Robert Crider, Briggs descendant, has made generous donations to restore the Frostville Village Church and to maintain the Briggs' home. After the Briggs Home was moved to Frostville, the society used it as their meeting house. It has also been used as Haunted House and a Military Museum.

In 2009, the Society turned the interior into a family home setting again. Furnishings include many Briggs originals and other donations dating from 1700's to 1920. There are many items of clothing from children's to adults including Helen Briggs Elliott's wedding dress, shoes and gloves. There is a boy's and a girl's bedroom displaying antique toys, many found and provided by Robert Lamb. In the upstairs hallway, you will find antique sewing machines, Briggs' original flax wheel, a large spinning wheel, quilts, and clothing of the period are displayed.

In 2016 and 2017, the home is going through renovations. The Quester David R Bain Chapter 1491 received a Questers International Grant to redo the flooring in the home. The carpeting is being taken up and the flooring is being restored or replaced. The same Questers' chapter received a Questers Ohio State Grant to upholster and restore the original Briggs' settee which you will see in the parlor. The plan is to also paint the interior of the home before reopening it up to the public in 2017.