

About Us

.....Mount Oliver Borough HistoryMount Oliver celebrated its centennial in 1992. With over 100 years of history as a municipality, Mount Oliver has maintained many of the values that were key to its founding in 1892. These values actually began as far back as 1769 when John Ormsby, an officer under the command of General Forbes, was granted 249 acres in an area located in the south hills along the banks of the Monongahela River. John Ormsby's family can be traced back to 1040 where his ancestors served in the court of Queen Elizabeth of England. The Ormsby family became known as the most famous of all pioneering families, and is documented as the oldest family of distinguished lineage in all of Pittsburgh. Captain John Ormsby was in charge of provisions for all of the forces under General Forbes as they made their way to Fort Duquesne. When the troops arrived in Pittsburgh in November of 1758 there was little in the way of shelter or provisions and Captain Ormsby's task was extremely difficult. General Forbes became very ill that winter and at this time John Ormsby met a young new colonel who was sent to Fort Duquesne to assist General Forbes. During several weeks of preparing to take the bedridden General Forbes to Philadelphia, Captain Ormsby and his new friend Colonel George Washington would sit and talk and look across the river and dream of their futures. It was at this time that John Ormsby began to make his plans to settle on the banks across the river and establish a trading post. Captain Ormsby was left in charge of the Fort during that winter and he and his men began to scout the surrounding hills for food. It was at this time that he first set foot in the area which is now Mount Oliver. He loved the mountaintop located today at the intersection of 18th Street and Brownsville Road where he could peacefully gaze down at the river below. In the summer of 1759, John Ormsby was given his discharge from military service and in exchange for his service was granted much of the river bank now known as Southside. In 1764, a 44 year old John Ormsby married 17 year old Jane McAllister at Fort Pitt. After a brief move to Bedford, the Ormsby's moved back to Pittsburgh with their two sons, John Jr. and Oliver (who nearly died at the age of two months, and who was named after John's father) and their daughter Jane. During this time, John continued to buy land along the Monongahela River. He heard of the many immigrants coming to the area in search of a peaceful life away from oppression in their homelands and thought the mountain top would be a perfect place for them to settle. He purchased this land and offered the immigrants low cost plots for lease. This land was very special to him and would eventually have something that none of his other vast landholdings would have, his family name. Later when asked by a reporter why he had named his land what he did he gave the answer, "I gave the name of my dear Father, who taught well the lesson of pride in family past, and the name of my young son, who in infancy taught well the lesson of faith and hope for the future. May the good Lord bless this land and all those who find their way there in generations to come. May the families find solace and prosper. Perhaps it will be my good fortune that this name will be remembered after I am long in my grave." Through the 1800's, this land was partitioned and sold and the population grew rapidly. This growth continued through the century to the point in 1892, when the Township of Lower St. Clair, which Mount Oliver was a part of, could no longer meet the community's needs. The citizens of the area developed and circulated petitions to incorporate the area into a borough. The area described was bounded to the north by Arlington Avenue to St. Peter's Cemetery and the southern boundary reached Ottillia and Wade Streets to the intersection of Margaret Street and Brownsville Road. After the petition reached over 140 signatures, the proposal was passed by the Quarter Courts and Mount Oliver officially became a borough by the end of 1892.