

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

County to Absorb Little Town of Foster

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By

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County to Absorb Little Town of Foster:

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Feb. 22, 1999, By Mary Ann Kearns

Foster -- The tiny town of Foster sits on almost 50 acres of land tucked between Bracken County hills and the Ohio River.

Forty-three people call Foster home, according to Doris Reinheimer, who has operated the general store on Grace Street for 31 years. Most of the residents are retired, she said, although "there are a few young people."

The town was first incorporated in 1849 as Foster's Landing and, for the most part, it hasn't changed a great deal the past 150 years.

Along with Reinheimer's General Merchandise, the town also boasts a post office and a carpet store, plus two lodges and a church. All are just a stones throw from the front door of the general store. "There used to be a bank here and an elementary school. It was a pretty busy town."

The town also used to have a mayor and a town council. The council usually met in the Odd Fellows Lodge, above Ms. Reinheimers store. "Sometimes, if it was too cold, they would meet in somebody's house."

But for at least the past 10 years no one has run for the city offices, meaning there was no one to collect taxes, pay the city's bills, or arrange for street repairs

"And while the city's streets have gone to pot," said County Attorney Ed Rudd, "there was nobody who could authorize anything."

Rudd said over the past several years he has received numerous calls from Foster residents asking if the county could take over the streets. That was impossible since state law prohibits the county from going into an incorporated area to make street repairs or even remove snow, he said. The city was also accumulating funds, mostly from utility franchise fees, which were about to be absorbed by the state.

The only solution was to have the town dissolved by court order, a procedure that requires a city resident to petition the court for just such an order. Once that process was completed, streets would become part of the

county road system, entitled to the same repairs and maintenance given other county roads, he said.

"I guess no one wanted the responsibility," Rudd said until Claude Johnson and Dennie Padgett agreed to be named as petitioners.

When Johnson and family moved to Foster from Campbell County in 1988, he doesn't recall the city having any working government, or street repairs. Since that time, he said "the streets are getting to the point where they need repairs." Street lights, are paid for by groups of neighbors who share the costs and snow removal is accomplished by "a lot of muscle and a shovel. Last year when it was waist high it took a lot of shoveling."

Rudd said he has yet to receive the first comment objecting to the town's demise although the pending court action has been advertised in the local weekly newspaper for the past three weeks. "I've had absolutely no response," he said.

So on February 26, 1999, a court order is expected to decree that the town of Foster no longer exist, at least on paper.

But Ms Reinheimer doesn't expect the action to make much difference in the day-to-day comings and goings in the hamlet just off KY 9 (AA Highway). She'll still open the store most days, staying at home on her farm about 1.2 mile up the road if the weather is too bad, as she has for the past three decades. Her regular customers will come in for a loaf of bread or a pack of cigarettes and an occasional visitor will turn off the AA Highway and wander into town, looking for antiques.

From the Falmouth Outlook, March 24, 1950; Foster, Kentucky celebrated its 100th birthday on January 30, 1950, having been founded on January 30, 1850. The act to incorporate the town was signed by John J. Crittenden, Governor of Kentucky. Seven sections were included in the incorporation papers. Among them was the election of seven trustees for the town. The first election was held at the home of Samuel McGill. The trustees were given the power to open streets, and make wharfs and landings on the Ohio River. The people of this good community are justly proud of having celebrated their 100th birthday. Foster is a real landmark to Kentucky. It has a glorious past, one that will never be forgotten.
