

Jack Cox Foster (1915-2009)

By Jerry Long
c.2026



Jack Cox Foster



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 26 January 2009, p.2B, and
Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, Thursday, 5 February 2009, p.3:**



Jack Cox Foster

Jack Cox Foster, 93, recently of Owensboro, KY and 30 year resident of Lewisport, died Saturday, January 24, 2009. He is survived by his wife of 40 years, Mildred (Emmick) Goodman Foster of Lewisport; daughter, Marsha Foster Weaver (Charles) of Muncie, IN; sons, Bob Foster of Durango, CO and Steve Foster of Los Angeles, CA, Millie's son, Neil Goodman (Judy) of Lewisport; sister, Agness Robertson of Dallas; brother, Bill Foster of Denver; 9 grandchildren; and 15 great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his first wife of 25 years, Bonnie Delle (McBride) Foster; infant daughter, Mary Delle Foster; brothers, T.J. Foster and Alf Foster; and Millie's daughter, Leta (Goodman) Benest.

He was born August 28, 1915, the son of Annie Velma (Bolin) Foster and Tate Ross Foster in Canton, Texas where his family ran the Foster Dairy. He was the Canton Eagles quarterback and class of '33 valedictorian. He received degrees in journalism and history from the University of Texas in 1939 and ran a swimming pool in Wink, TX during summers. After WWII Navy service, he resided in Downers Grove, IL 1948-1977 where he was active in the Methodist Church, School board, D.G. Pool Assn., and Boy Scouts. He owned Triton Company, a distributor in the industrial market in Chicago, IL.

He and Millie retired to Lewisport, KY in 1977 where he wrote a weekly historical column "So It's Been Told" for 22 years; the columns have been bound into two books and received a Kentucky Historical Society "Community Service Award" in 1993. He was a member of the Methodist Church, Lions, Hancock County Historical Society and a founder of the Hancock County Museum and did newspaper and poster publicity for numerous organizations. He was founder of the Hancock County High School Young Historians and instrumental in the Historian of the Year dinner and award, courthouse time capsule, and historical markers. He received several awards including Hancock County Citizen of the Year, Hancock County Historian of the Year, and "The Award of Distinction" from the Kentucky Historical Society in 1988 for preserving local history.

He loved hiking "Beech Tree Hill Farm" with grandkids and was known as "Cactus" to them. He was a prolific letter writer and entertained family and friends with his harmonica.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be sent to Hancock County Museum, P.O. Box 605, Hawesville, KY 42348 or Lewisport United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 309, Lewisport, KY 42351.

A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. Saturday, February 7, 2009 at the Lewisport United Methodist Church on Fourth Street. Friends may visit with family afterwards in Fellowship Hall. Taylor-Wood Funeral Home in Lewisport is handling the arrangements.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 26 January 2009, p.3B:



Beth Wilberding; Messenger-Inquirer

The man who helped promote Hancock County history and open the Hancock County Museum died Saturday.

Jack Cox Foster was 93.

"He was probably one of the greatest leaders that Hancock County has had," said Donn Wimmer, publisher of the Hancock Clarion. "He came here not knowing anyone. He had the kind of personality that people just loved him."

Foster was born in Canton, Texas, then later worked near Chicago. His wife, Mildred Goodman Foster, is a native of Hancock County, and the couple moved to Lewisport in 1977 after their retirement.

Shortly after moving to Hancock County, Foster approached the Hancock Clarion about writing a history column. For 22 years he wrote "So It's Been Told," starting in 1980.

Though Foster would often recount that some Hancock residents told him there wasn't enough county history to write about, he wrote enough columns to create three books, Wimmer said.

The first of Foster's books is sold out, and there are some copies of his second book still for sale at the Clarion's office, Wimmer said. There is enough material for a third book if funding is found to publish it.

Foster helped engage young people in history by starting the Hancock County High School Young Historians. He approached the school about creating the club in 1988 - something Eddie Price, a teacher at the high school, had been trying to do.

"It just kind of all came together. ... He liked the kids, and he liked everybody he worked with," said Price, who still teaches and is head of the social studies department at the high school.

Foster would take the group on field trips in the county, and he was known to play the harmonica.

"He'd talked about local history," Price said. "He was just consumed with it and got our kids to conduct interviews and write essays."

Students interview county residents for their essays on historical events, and winning essays are recognized at the Historian of the Year dinner, another event that Foster played a role in creating.

Foster was the master of ceremonies when the late Ralph Boling was sworn in as Hancock judge-executive after his election in 1993.

"He was always pleasant, always upbeat, always encouraging and so helpful," said Dortha Boling, Ralph Boling's widow.

Dortha Boling was her husband's executive-assistant when he was judge-executive, and Foster would sometimes drop by the office.

"He would come by and offer words of encouragement ever so often, (and) if times were tough or he thought we had some big issues to deal with, he'd always come by and encourage (us)," Boling said. "He will be missed tremendously by everyone who knew him."

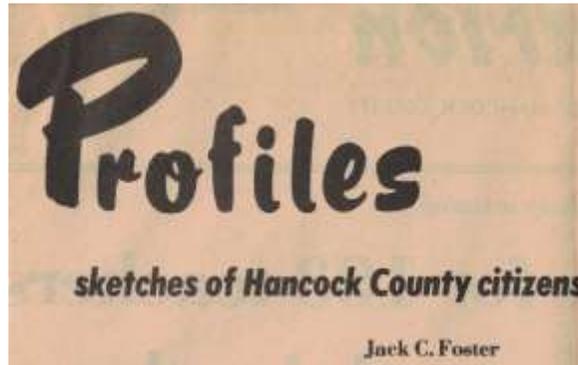
Foster also helped found the Hancock County Museum, which is in the former railroad station on River Street in downtown Hawesville. The Hancock County Historical Society raised the funds and used volunteers to remodel the train station, and the museum opened in 1988, according to Hancock County's Web site.

He received a Community Service Award from the Kentucky Historical Society in 1993. Foster was named Hancock County Citizen of the Year by the county's Chamber of Commerce several years ago.

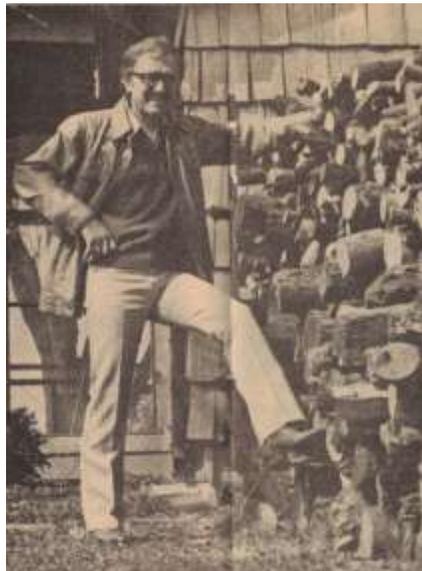
"He was the sweetest guy you ever met in your life," Wimmer said. "Just charismatic. I think that's the best way to put it."



Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, Thursday, 20 March 1980, p.2:



A displaced Texan, who can't go back to the Lone Star State because he can't pass the height requirements, resides on Beech Tree Hill Farm on Route 1, south of Lewisport. That little witticism is apparently among the favorite self-descriptive narratives employed by Jack C. "Cactus" Foster, the hero of this week's piece. "Cactus" is a very entertaining host, with a bent for interesting conversation, displays a nimble imagination, and indulges in the fine art of show-and-tell as he exhibits a premier selection of collector's items he has acquired during his jaunty travels along life's pathways. The nickname came to him courtesy of his grandchildren, who "mightily admire" their association with this son of the old west.



Foster was born in Canton, Texas, 60 miles east of Dallas. His family operated a dairy farm of about 165 acres, almost identical to the farm he lives on now. He attended high school in Canton, quarterbacking the football team, then moved on to the University of Texas at Austin, where he

earned degrees in history and journalism. He appreciates the irony in the fact that he never made use of his college training in his business, at all, but has used both history and journalism as a member of various civic organizations.

Jack served 4 years in the Navy during World War II, and his military experience led him into his life's vocation. He was assigned to a headquarters group, in charge of training all non-flying Naval aviation personnel. As an instructor, he learned all about hardware and small tools. He was discharged with the rank of lieutenant. He moved to Downers Grove, Ill., a Chicago suburb, and established a small business in Chicago, as an industrial hardware distributor. He stayed in the business for 30 years, commuting the 20-mile distance into the city daily, by train. While residing in Downers Grove, he reared three children, helped organize a swim and pool club, was member of an elementary school board, was active in a large Methodist Church, and watched his community grow from 9,000 to 45,000 in a span of 30 years. His volunteer work included participation as a tutor for the young inmates of an experimental prison, for a period of 10 years. The program was aimed at rehabilitation of the youngsters by helping them acquire better reading and spelling skills. He usually devoted an hour or two each week to an individual student. He also took the lead in helping the students publish a newsletter.

Following the death of his wife, in the 1960s, Jack met and married Mildred Emmick Goodman, daughter of James and Zenada Emmick of Lewisport. Mrs. Goodman, who had also been bereaved, was a teacher, an elementary principal, and the mother of two children. He has four grandchildren, she has four. Both obviously glory in their combined total of eight. When the decision to retire was made, the couple agreed they would devote as much time as possible to benefit the community in which they lived; but would definitely leave adequate time for the grandchildren, some travel, and hobbies.

They set about looking for a suitable retirement environment, considering Arkansas, Florida and (of course) Texas. Then they came to the Old Edmund Fisher place, south of Lewisport, which had been in Mrs. Foster's family for years. With the surrounding woods and hills and the view of Lewisport from the front window, it wasn't a difficult decision to stay. "We think there is a lot of beauty all over the county....but this home is special," Foster said. "To me, it was just like coming home. The reason we chose to live here is the beauty of the countryside and the rural flavor. We hope to see all these things preserved for the future generations." The move was made 2 ½ years ago, and a lot of effort, planning and sheer genius has gone into remodeling the home. The Fosters are active in the Lewisport United Methodist Church, he is public relations chairman for the, Lewisport Lions Club, reporter for the Hancock County Historical Society, and is a member of the Hancock County Urban Planning Commission. Recently, Jack took on a new endeavor, doing a history-related column for the Clarion.

Summer is the "busy" season... maybe even the "frantic" season, as Jack does the yard work and does his share in the big family garden. It is the season when goodly numbers of grandchildren gravitate to the farm from Owensboro, Cleveland, Ohio, Muncie, Indiana, the crags of Colorado, and California's golden coast; and stay for up to 3 weeks. These "city" kids, are Jack's "major hobby." They range in ages from 1 to 15, and love to visit the farm. The indulgent grandpaw has meticulously divided the farm into 7 hiking trails, which take from 15 minutes to 2 ½ hours to cover. Accompanied by the dauntless "Mighty, Dog" the kids traverse the adventurous wilds, passing in close proximity to such spectacular attractions as the old coal mines, "Little Bubbly", the "Mighty Buffalo Bones", and "Cow Muffin Hill," which, incidentally, said "muffins" are used to nourish the garden.

In the dreary months of winter, Foster turns to his "minor league hobbies." They are legion. He enjoys reading and collecting old books, collecting old songs, feeding the birds at the backyard feeding station (as many as 45 species have been observed partaking of the Foster largesse), hand-making all the greeting cards (except for Christmas), discovering Indian artifacts, adding to his collection of old Protestant Hymnals (one for each decade dating back to 1798), and expanding his holdings of old tools. His specimens include an antique hay hook, a well-bucket retriever, a froe, a hand-made cowbell, old soldering iron, a carpet beater, a wagon wheel hub wrench, a barrel bung-hole cutter, and a genuine International Harvester, 5-shovel walking cultivator wrench.

Summer and winter, his publications in competition with the *Clarion* go on. His products from the "Beech Tree Hill Press and Propaganda Center" are the Beech Tree Leaf, for family and close friends (circulation, about 20; and "The Cactus," for grandchildren only, a limited circulation of 8 desirable copies. These literary gems are chock full of news from the "Beech Tree Hilton," timely bulletins concerning momentous happenings, etc. The Cactus issue of February 4, even contained the results of a more or less long-running contest, with prize awards 'n' everything. Real class.

Once having been a guest in the Jack Foster home, one anticipates retracing his steps to Beech Tree Hill. You can expect a warm reception, even on a raw, cold day. It's something like going home.



So It's Been Told, Jack Foster
(Hancock County, KY: Hancock County Historical Society, 1992):

Preface

In 1978 or so, Donn Wimmer, editor and publisher of the *Hancock Clarion* (Hawesville, Hancock County, Kentucky) suggested that Jack Foster write a column for the weekly paper. "So It's Been Told, Footnotes to Hancock County History" was born March 6, 1980. No one knew if it would last a week, a month or a year. The format was to interview folks about 60 or over and to reflect their memories on subjects of their choice. The response was good. But, when readers were asked to send along photographs and documents the "floodgates opened." Some say the beautiful historic pictures will be of more lasting value than the script.

From the first the Hancock County Historical Society agreed to sponsor the column. It was also in the society minutes that if the columns should ever generate any revenue it would go to the society. In addition Mildred and Jack Foster assumed all the costs of producing the columns and Donn Wimmer printed them in the *Clarion* as a public service.

Readers have asked that the columns be put in book form. A bit of research indicated that to reset the copy and to reproduce the pictures in a conventional way would be too costly for the local society to pursue. But it was found that modern copy technology of both photographs and script would put the cost in the range for consideration. This method means that the columns will reappear just as they appeared in the *Clarion* the last 11 years "warts and all." Pure and simple, the goal was to preserve this information for the generations ahead. These columns reflect the life and times as told by the folks in Hancock County.

The Kentucky Bicentennial Commission then gave the society a grant for \$5,000 that required a like amount to be raised locally. This made the project a reality.

Every effort was made to give credit for all materials used in the columns. No source was intentionally left out.

Mary Emmick, President
Hancock County Historical Society
P.O. Box 605
Hawesville, KY 42348

About Jack Foster

Jack Cox Foster was born on a farm near the county seat town of Canton, Texas in 1915. He said his home town in 1915 probably looked like Hawesville at the same time except that Canton had no river nor railroad. Access to Canton was a twice a day "jitney-bus" on a dirt highway and rural telephone. Both his paternal and maternal grandparents came to Texas by covered wagon, the paternal side in the pre-Civil War era and the maternal in the late 1800's. Early family stories and Civil War letters planted the seed for love of local history in him. His high school history teacher, Herbert Riley, nurtured that seed as did University of Texas professors J. Frank Dobie (Coronado's Children) and Dr. Walter Prescott Webb (The Great Plains).

Foster said that in these eleven years or so of writing the column, the love of local history has drawn hundreds of fellow history lovers "out in the open." Many have become his good friends. He thanks them all for their helpfulness and he bows low to the guest columnists Glenn Hodges, Oswald Jett, Embert Barlow, Dr. William Pell, E. Gregg Swem III and others. He especially singles out Donn Wimmer who encouraged him and helped him with the script and photographs. Without his assistance and patience the book might have stalled in its tracks

Why did the Fosters move to Hancock County?

Mary Emmick, Hancock Historical Society President, suggested a word about how Jack and Mildred Foster ended up in Hancock County. She thought there were some historic overtones there. The Depression caught them both as young adults. The Depression saw many moves by folks seeking economic help, farm to city, city to farm, one part of the country to another. World War II then literally uprooted millions; military service, work in war plants and generally the seeking of greener pastures. Mildred was born in Hancock County Kentucky, She married and moved to Michigan, then ended up in Chicago during World War II. Jack was born in Texas. He married and moved to Louisiana then Chicago where he served four years in the Navy.

The end of World War II saw both families seeking that American dream of a first house in the suburbs. Both families wound up in the Chicago suburb of Downers Grove. In the '60s both Jack and Mildred lost their mates. After a few years they merged their families and the extended family now has five children and nine grandchildren.

In the '70s after over 30 years for both Mildred and Jack in the workplace, she as an elementary teacher and principal and Jack as the owner of an industrial distributorship, they decided to retire. Where? Mildred Emmick's ancestors had been in Hancock County since early 1800. Her roots beckoned. Jack's was a symbolic return to his roots since Hancock County reminded him so much of his home county in Texas.

In 1977, they retired to a farm near Lewisport, Kentucky and have lived happily (and busily) ever afterwards.

Jack Foster
7-29-92

The first of Jack Foster's columns was published in the Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, Thursday, 6 March 1980, under the banner of:



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 13 November 1988, p.2D:

MAKING NEWS

Jack Foster of Lewisport received The Award of Distinction at the recent joint meeting of the Kentucky Historical Society and the Historical Confederation of Kentucky. The award is presented to an individual who has made a significant contribution to state and local history during his or her career.

Foster was honored for his work in supporting the goals of the Hancock County Historical Society. Projects have included the county Time Capsule, the Hancock County Museum, and in particular his preservation of local history through a weekly society-sponsored column, "So It's Been Told," that is published in the Hancock Clarion newspaper.

Foster and his wife, Mildred, represented the Hancock County Historical Society at the annual meeting Nov. 4-5, at which seven organization awards also were presented.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 11 July 1992, pp.1B & 2B:



By Laura Skillman

HAWESVILLE - Jack Foster looks at a new book containing 12 years of his weekly newspaper columns and comments on its weight.

"You might say I wrote 7 pounds of history," he said.

The book, "So It's Been Told, Footnotes to Hancock County History," contains about 600 columns of the same name dating from his first, March 6, 1980, until April 16, 1992. The columns still appear weekly in the Hancock County Clarion and include every aspect of days gone by from one-room schools to hangings to floods.

"I took journalism in school," Foster said of his interest in doing a column. "I don't think anybody that took it doesn't want to do a column sometime. But my career didn't allow it."

The idea of doing the weekly column arose when he was introduced to Clarion publisher Donn Wimmer. But it was about a year later before he began working on the columns, based primarily on discussion with longtime county residents.



Jack Foster displays a copy of his book, "So It's Been Told, Footnotes to Hancock County History," in front of the Hancock County Museum. The book is a collection of his newspaper columns from the last 12 years.

Although not a Hancock County native, Foster jumped with both feet into doing the column with the help of his wife, Mildred, who was born in the county. They moved to the Lewisport area from Chicago in 1977.

"She helped by introducing me to people to interview," he said. "Millie and I thought it would be fun to interview people 60 and older."

After doing about a dozen articles, Foster said he felt as if he was accepted. Foster made some drawings that accompanied the first few columns.

"It never occurred to me to ask for photographs, but when the first came in, it just avalanched," he said.

The most popular subjects are old schools and then floods, he said. For Foster his favorite is the first one about the old Fisher cemetery on their farm.

Putting the columns into a book was discussed when the volume built up, but redoing them into a traditional book form was cost prohibitive, he said.

Because of Kentucky's bicentennial, money was available to fund historical projects. The columns were put together using a copy machine that could reproduce them – even the pictures – from newsprint into clear copies.

Putting the 11-inch by 17-inch book together has been the undertaking of the Hancock County Historical Society with the help of a \$5,000 grant from the Kentucky Bicentennial Commission. Donations were also received from the City of Lewisport, Mary Emmick, Mildred Foster and Oswald Jett.

The books sell for \$21; \$25 if mail ordered. After printing expenses are met, any proceeds will go into the historical society's book fund. The fund has helped publish three books including this one.

The books will be on sale from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday at the Hancock County Museum and Foster will be there to sign them. Copies are available at the Lewisport and Hawesville city halls, the Hancock County Chamber of Commerce or the Clarion office.

Foster, 77, plans to continue writing the columns for as long as he feels like doing them and as long as he thinks people enjoy reading them.

"I think I could have a staff of 20 people and never run out of things to do," he said. "But that's true of any place. Everybody's got a story to tell.

"If there's anything sad about my job, it is that so many people I have interviewed have died."



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 20 November 1993, p.3B:

**Lewisport man
wins award**

Jack Foster of Lewisport has won the 1993 community service award in the Publications/State and Local category presented by the Kentucky Historical Society at the annual meeting of the Historical Confederation of Kentucky Nov. 13 in Bardstown.

The historian was honored for his book, "So It's Been Told: Footnotes to Hancock County History." It is a compilation of Foster's 600 columns detailing the county's history, which appeared weekly in The Clarion newspaper between 1980 and 1992.

Foster also was honored in 1988 with the Award of Distinction from the confederation, which is the educational and outreach arm of the Kentucky Historical Society. This is the fifth state award the Hancock County Historical Society and the Hancock County Museum have received since 1987.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 18 April 1994, pp.1B & 3B:

**Hancock couple
year's historians**



Mildred & Jack Foster
Hancock history buffs

LEWISPORT - When Jack and Mildred Foster moved to Hancock County to retire, they soon found themselves immersed in the county's history.

Through their efforts and others, the county's museum was established, and they have worked to see that everything runs smoothly. For their efforts, the Fosters are being honored tonight by the Hancock County Historical Society as Historians of the Year at a dinner at Hancock County High School.

"Millie and I are not a one-man gang," Jack Foster said.

The award is an honor, but Jack Foster said he did not feel like they needed to be singled out. "Everything's been a group effort."

H.L. Temple, a former president of the historical society said the Fosters were instrumental in the success of the county's museum and are dedicated to the historical society's work.

"Jack's very reluctant to accept any honors, but he deserves it," Temple said. "They were the spark plugs of the thing, especially Jack. Millie got involved with the displays and organizing the exhibits and has done an excellent job."

"They are people with a lot of energy, and from the very beginning they've been interested in historical preservation," said Patsy Young, a charter member of the historical society and treasurer of both the society and the museum board.

"They've given 110 percent to every project," she said. "I don't think we would have had the museum today if it wasn't for them. They do so many things for the museum and aren't afraid to ask if they want anything done."

When the Fosters retired to Mildred's hometown in 1977, they really didn't have any idea what they planned to do.

"I've always had an abiding interest in history since I was a young person," Jack Foster said. "I took it in school and took it on as a hobby." For four years Mildred Foster recruited, trained and scheduled volunteers to work in the museum. She's given up that task to Mary Buck but still schedules special group visits.

Every Sunday afternoon for three years the Fosters were at the museum to give tours. They've been weaning themselves away from that by reducing their Sundays to once a month, unless they're needed. The museum's regular hours are Sundays from 2 to 4 p.m. from the spring through fall.

"We're trying to step back and involve more people, so it can continue when we can't," Mildred Foster said. The museum is not their only interest. Jack has written a historical column for the weekly newspaper since 1980, and Mildred was involved in the retired teachers group and the Green River Area Development District's aging committee for 12 years before retiring this year.

They also helped with the historical society's time capsule that was installed in the county courthouse in 1986.

The Fosters' said they really have enjoyed the work they've done since moving to Hancock County and have met many wonderful people and had some great experiences.

"It's been a challenge and taken a lot of time, but time's relative when you're retired," he said.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 21 April 2000, p.3C:

Jack and Mildred Foster of Lewisport have received the Kentucky Historical Society's Distinguished Service Award.

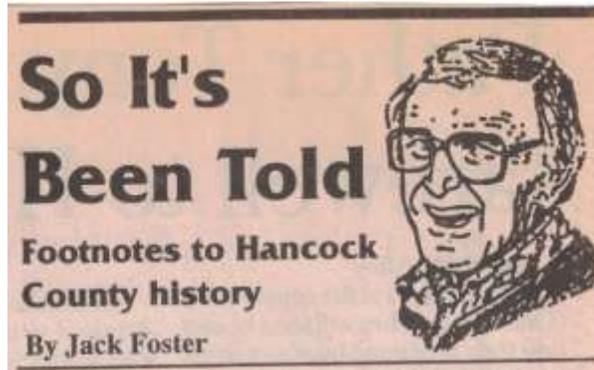
The award, which is presented every 10 years, was given to the Fosters in recognition of their devotion to the Kentucky Historical Society and the state of Kentucky, "exemplified by their lifelong devotion to preserving Kentucky and Hancock County history," according to the citation.

Jack Foster has written a history column for 20 years for the Hancock Clarion while Mildred Foster served 12 years as exhibits chairman for the Hancock County Museum. Both were leaders in the founding of the county museum and have been involved in every historic preservation project undertaken by the Hancock County Historical Society over the last 20 years.

The award was presented to the Fosters by Kevin Graffagnino, executive director of the Kentucky Historical Society.



Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, Thursday, 6 December 2001:



A real community servant

We are very sorry that our friend Jack Foster will no longer be able to write his popular column, "So It's Been Told." As many of Jack's friends know, he is suffering from Macular Degeneration, an eye disease that leaves its victims with very limited vision.

We will continue to carry "The Best of So It's Been Told" but encourage our readers to send in their stories and photos for future use.

Jack stopped by the Clarion 21 years ago . . . introduced himself as a newcomer to Hancock County and offered his services to write an historical column for the Clarion every week. We were delighted for Jack to do this and can say he has never missed a week sending in his column.

Jack has been a great asset to Hancock County with the many civic services he has been involved in. Jack Foster is one of those instrumental in creating the Hancock County Museum and with his wife, Millie, has worked tirelessly over the years in that endeavor. The Hancock County Chamber of Commerce honored Jack as its "Citizen of the Year" in 1993. It's my personal opinion, but to me Jack Foster is one of the most deserving individuals to be honored by the Chamber.

To Jack and his wonderful wife, Millie, we offer our sincerest gratitude and very best wishes.

— Donn Wimmer

A Message from Jack Foster

There are no words adequate to say thank you to the many readers and contributors and those interviewed over the years since the column began Nov. 4, 1980. Leave it to the statisticians to compute the number of words, and pictures used over these years. Editor Donn Wimmer and the staff of the Hancock Clarion deserve a low bow too for their patience and cooperations in these two decades plus. Since "So It's Been Told" was born.

For a while columns from the past will be run at random or at readers' request. The first twelve years of the column are in book form and in the local library and branches. A scrapbook of columns since that publication date is kept as well. So, let us hear from you, the reader, you are the "boss." Write the "Clarion" P.O. Box 39, Hawesville, KY 42348 or call 927-6945. Again, the column is sponsored by the Hancock County Historical Society and time, material all volunteered happily and hopefully productively.



Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, Thursday, 1 September 2005, p.2:

Foster turns 90,
looks back on life

By Kara Episcopo

The county simply reminds him of his roots.

Jack Foster, who came to the county as a stranger in 1977, is now considered one of Hancock County's most beloved citizens.

The man who spent 22 years telling the stories of hundreds of county residents in his weekly column "So It's Been Told," now has 90 years of stories to tell himself.

Foster just celebrated his 90th birthday at a party held in his honor on Sunday. Along with preserving county history in his column he was also very influential in the creation of the county museum and was very active in the community.

Opening a museum

One of Foster's greatest accomplishments since moving to the county is his involvement in creating the Hancock County Museum.

"Having a museum was an off shoot of my interest in history," Foster said. "I don't remember what started the flame burning."

Foster remembers the county planning to tear down the old train depot and thinking it was a "sin to tear it down, with so many memories people had of catching the train there."

Soon Foster and several other Hancock Countians began a drive to save the train depot. They were successful and the county museum got its start.

"We got support from some people who were interested in saving the history of the county, which turned out to be a rich history," Foster said.

For his efforts in starting the museum and for helping start the Young Historian's club at the high school, Foster was named Historian of the year.

In 1986, he and his wife were jointly named Citizen of the Year for their contributions to the county.

From the beginning

Foster was born in the small town of Canton TX in August 1915. He was raised on a dairy farm by a single mom, after his father passed away when he was very young.

Foster worked on the farm and soon graduated high school at the very top of his class. After high school, he moved away from his home state for the summer and travelled to Saratoga, Wyoming, where he attended the Civilian Conservation Corps. The program was designed by the government to get "city boys off the streets," Foster said.

"They got a country boy out of the farm in my case," Foster said.

In the fall of 1933, after hitching his way back to Texas, Foster continued his education at the University of Texas. After six years there, he graduated with a Bachelor of Journalism and a Bachelor of Arts degree in History.

"It was interesting that I could use those two bits of training in the column years later," Foster said.

At the end of his college years, when Foster was gearing up for a career in journalism, his dreams were interrupted by a call to serve his country.

Foster was soon drafted into the Navy at the start of World War II.

Because of his college degrees, Foster was brought into the service as a commissioned officer and was immediately sent to Harvard for his indoctrination.

Foster said he considered his time at Harvard and later on in Chicago, where he was stationed for the remainder of his time in the Navy, a "treat" because he had never really been out of Texas.

After his indoctrination and scouring the north eastern states for all the historical places the history buff could find, Foster was then moved to Chicago where he worked four years at the Board of Trade Building.

The training Foster received in the Navy was a turning point in Foster's life. Instead of working as a journalist like he had anticipated, Foster's career soon changed to the industrial supply industry.

"As the war tapered off, my senior officer offered me a job in Chicago," Foster said.

Since he had already made a home with his first wife and their children in Chicago, Foster decided to accept the position and the family lived in Downer's Grove, a suburb of Chicago for the next 20 years.

"I stuck with the company until I retired," Foster said. "I made a good living."

In 1966, Foster's wife, and the mother of their three children, passed away.

Nearly two years later, he met Mildred Emmick, who was originally from Hancock County, at a coffee shop in Downer's Grove. Millie's husband had also passed away.

The couple married in late 1968 and Millie would be the one to bring him to the county just nine years later when they both retired.

Becoming a Hancock Countian

When Foster and his wife retired, they moved to a small farm Millie owned in Lewisport.

Instead of having a quiet, relaxing retirement, Foster became involved in publicity.

He began making signs for local groups such as the Lion's Club, local churches and the county fair.

"His whole life he has been active in doing publicity for groups," Foster's daughter Marsha Weaver said. "He's always been doing newsletters all his life."

Even while in Chicago, Foster had worked on newsletters and promotional items for the Navy and for his church.

Foster was no stranger to advertising however. Directly out of high school, before entering the CCC for the summer, Foster's first job was at the Shreveport Louisiana Times where he solicited ads.

"I would probably still be there, but I was ripe for the draft," Foster said.

Even though Foster's career hadn't revolved around journalism, he hoped during his retirement he could somehow get back to the profession he had given up years ago.

Just a few years after the family moved to the county, Foster was given the chance to pick up his journalism career where he left off close to 40 years earlier.

"When I retired, I ran into Donn Wimmer and he heard I had some journalism training and asked me to do a column," Foster said. "Doing the column for The Clarion was the nicest thing that ever happened to me."

At first, he didn't know what to write about because he was fairly new to the county and didn't know very many people. Then Foster decided, the only way he could write the column as a stranger, was to ask questions.

Foster said several people told him he would run out of people to interview for interesting columns.

Twenty-two years later, Foster was still writing. He would still be writing today, but poor eyesight has robbed him of his column.

"I found out that every person has a story, if you just dig a little," Foster said. "I never saw an interview I didn't like.

"I got acquainted with hundreds of people I never would have otherwise."

For the entire 22 years, Foster volunteered his time to tell the stories of the people of Hancock County.

"I never felt it was work or drudgery, but I always felt it was productive in preserving the history of the county," Foster said. "Every man should have as much fun in retirement.

"Not often can you retire and do something you are trained to do and that you love."

Foster believes the people are what makes the county so great.

"The people—that's what made my column go," Foster said.



Lewisport resident Jack Foster (right) talks of years gone by with his good friend Bob Gregory during his 90th Birthday Celebration on Sunday. Foster

is best known for his weekly column "So It's Been Told" that appeared in The Clarion for 22 years.



Jack Foster stands around his birthday cake with his wife Millie and immediate family. Foster celebrated his 90th Birthday on Sunday.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 12 April 2006, p.4D:



Horace (Sonny) Temple, left, of One Park Place celebrated his 90th birthday on March 23 with Bob Gregory, center, of Lewisport and Jack Foster of Fern Terrace. Gregory and

Foster have already reached the age of 90. All three were founding members of the Hancock County Historical Society.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 7 March 2008, p.1C:

Precious Memories

Hancock County Museum founder shares history

By Suzi Bartholomy, Messenger-Inquirer

In 1976, Jack Foster moved to Lewisport from Chicago with his wife, Mildred.

He was a retired businessman and historian who quickly became interested in the history of Hancock County and set about establishing a museum at the Hawesville train depot. Foster, 92, is a native of East Texas, and his wife was born in Lewisport.

"Old-timers thought we were out of our gourds to start a museum at the train station," Jack Foster said.

The first thing Foster and his cohorts outlawed when they took possession of the train station in the mid-'80s was spitting. The depot was the home of the checker club, Foster said. "When they played checkers, they would spit on the floor."

After spending days cleaning the depot, Foster invited the "old men" to stay but told them they would have to abide by some new rules.

The no-spitting regulations are posted in one of the rooms of the Hancock County Museum, where there's still a table set up for the board game.

On Monday afternoon, Foster gave his neighbors at Fern Terra residential home in Owensboro a guided tour of the former train depot.

The museum had a simple beginning. Foster said he and Horace "Sonny" Temple, who is another founding father of the museum, had some old tools and thought a museum would be a good place for them. Then area residents began bringing them more tools, household items and furniture from their barns and smokehouses, Foster said.

"Ninety percent is from Hancock County," Foster said.

"We came across some things that were just too precious to let go," Herb Young said of the museum's artifacts.

On Monday, Young was "acting curator" of the museum. His wife, Patsy, is the keeper of the keys, he said. The couple have volunteered at the museum since it opened. "She's the boss," Young said. "She sent me here, so you know she's the boss or I wouldn't be here," he joked.

Foster's friends from Fern Terra were impressed with the hundreds of exhibits, and that Foster had hand-printed the labels describing each object.

Mary Warren especially liked a quilt made with 1/4-inch squares of material. It must have been difficult to make, she said.

The trip to the museum in Hawesville was part of the entertainment program at Fern Terra, Maurine Grant said. Besides their weekly shopping trips, the group has at least one field trip a month, Imogene Parker said.

"We're just one big family," Warren said.

The museum's regular hours are from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday beginning April 6 through October, excluding May 11, June 15 and July 6; an appointment may be made by calling Patsy Young at 927-8721.



Fern Terra residents Jack Foster, right, and Willard Tucker, left, discuss the old Hawesville checkers club as Hawesville resident Herbert "Tobe" Young listens inside the Hancock County Museum on Monday during a field trip. Foster, a Texas native who spent most of his life living and working in the Chicago area, eventually married Millie Emmick of Lewisport and upon retirement, moved to Hancock County, where he was active in helping create the museum.



Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, Thursday, 5 February 2009, p.10:

Jack Foster leaves behind a legacy

By Malena DeJarnette

Hancock County's famed historian Jack Foster passed away January, 24 at the age of 93. But he didn't leave without a smile ... or song, rather. According to daughter Marsha Weaver, her father was sitting in the lobby of Fern Terrace, his current home, singing, just before he collapsed.

The image is not so surprising to those that knew him.

Foster was often characterized as "sweet" and "charismatic."

His kind personality shaped him into a friend of many and a leader to all.

Foster retired to Hancock County from Chicago, Ill. in 1977 after over 30 years in the workplace for both he and his wife Millie. Millie (Emmick) Foster was a native of Lewisport, and she owned a farm there.

The family settled in, but Foster yearned for knowledge of his new hometown.

That's when his journalism and history degrees, earned over 40 years prior, would come into play. In 1980, Foster became a weekly hit in the Clarion, with his historical column "So It's Been Told."

In a 2005 interview by the Clarion, Foster was quoted, "Doing the column for The Clarion was the nicest thing that ever happened to me."

Foster went from being a total stranger to being considered one of Hancock County's most beloved citizens.

"He came here not knowing anyone," said Donn Wimmer, publisher of the Clarion. "He had the kind of personality that people just loved him."

Dortha Boling, Director of the Hancock County Historical Society, said Foster was always active in the community and history of Hancock County, ever since he made home here.

"In my book he was just a great person, just astounding" she said. "He always got along well with people. He loved people and they loved him. He will be missed by everyone that knew him."

Foster's articles asked for reader input of stories, letters, memories and pictures of the past. He may have just had a hope and purpose of learning himself, but he was preserving Hancock County history for generations to come.

"I found that every person has a story, if you just dig a little," said Foster in his 2005 interview.

Wimmer said Foster remembered local citizens initially telling him that he would never have enough material to write about. He certainly proved them wrong.

For 22 years Foster's headlines graced the newspaper. He would have continued had poor eyesight not robbed him of his love.

Foster's columns disappeared from the Clarion pages in 2002, but his pieces have since been bound together to form two books, with a third potentially on the way.

It took someone who was not a native of our county to appreciate and show us the richness of our heritage. Foster saw the need to preserve our history and his columns were a lasting gift to his adopted state, county and generations of the future.

Foster's books received a Kentucky Historical Society "Community Service Award." But the community service never stopped there.

Foster wanted to instill his love for history and writing in the local youth. As a result, he founded the Young Historians Club at Hancock County High. The club tours historical landmarks, and is best known for its annual essays that includes interviews featuring stories of Hancock County in years gone by. This club continues to thrive today.

However, Foster considered one of his greatest accomplishments as his involvement in creating the Hancock County Museum.

When rumors soared that the old train depot could be torn down, Foster and several other Hancock Countians began a drive to save it. And the museum was soon formed.

"Without Jack, Millie and Horace Temple, the museum never would have come about," said Patsy Young, current museum director.

"Jack and Millie were always thinking of things they could do for the museum and they went ahead and did them, without expecting to be repaid."

Young was especially happy to see both Jack and Millie attend the Historical Society's two main events last year, the Historian of the Year Dinner and the annual picnic at the Pate House, despite them not being in the best of health.

"Everyone was thrilled to see them, they signify the Historical Society and the museum," she said.

Young said even though the last few years, Foster was unable to participate, he never lost his love for the museum. Whenever one of his children brought him to town, they made a point to make a stop at the museum.

"He couldn't see, but he knew where everything was," said Young. "He was in a place he loved; it gave him a good feeling."

For his museum efforts and for helping develop the Young Historian's Club, Foster was named Historian of the Year.

As if that title wasn't enough, he and his wife Millie were jointly named Citizen of the Year for their contributions to the county.

The Fosters moved to Fern Terrace, a nursing home in Owensboro, in 2005. Millie was later transferred to a separate home. But together they will always remain Hancock County citizens.

"The whole community admired Jack, for just coming in and being a part of our community," Young said.

About Jack Foster

Jack Cox Foster was born on a farm near the county seat town of Canton, Texas in 1915. He said his home town in 1915 probably looked like Hawesville at the same time, except that Canton had no river nor railroad. Access to Canton was a twice a day "jitney-bus" on a dirt highway And rural telephone. Both his paternal and maternal grandparents came to Texas by covered wagon, the paternal side in the pre-Civil War era and the maternal in the late 1800's. Early family stories and Civil War letters planted the seed for love of local history in him. His high school history teacher and University of Texas professors nurtured that seed.

The seed grew and grew, forming everlasting roots for one of the greatest leaders that Hancock County has ever had.

Memorial service

There will be a memorial service on February, 7 at 1:00 p.m. at Lewisport United Methodist Church.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 29 May 2011, p.5C
and Hancock Clarion, Hawesville, KY, Thursday, 2 June 2011, p.2:**

Mildred Grace Emmick Foster



Mildred Grace Emmick Foster, 96, of Lewisport died Friday, May 27, 2011, at Heartland Villa Care and Rehab Center. She was a Hancock County native, born on Feb. 13, 1915, to the late James Noble and Zenada Dove Buck Emmick, the oldest of seven children. She was extremely family-oriented and generous to a fault. She was her Lewisport High School class valedictorian, and she attended the University of Louisville and Western Kentucky State Teachers College. Her teaching career began in Hancock County, where she taught elementary education for three years. She married Alvin Goodman in 1937, and they moved to Michigan and then to Chicago.

In 1949, they moved to Downers Grove, Ill., where she taught elementary education for 14 years and served as assistant principal for another five years. During this time in her career, she was a pioneer educator in the state of Illinois, where she began applying the concepts of team teaching and individualized education in the classroom. She served as principal for nine years at Washington Elementary School before retiring from the Downers Grove school system.

She finished her undergraduate degree at North Central College in 1964 and earned her master's degree in school administration from Northern Illinois University in 1968. In her proactive approach to life, she became involved in the Delta Kappa Gamma Society and held positions in local, state and national principals and teachers associations. She was a member of the American Association of University Women, the Business and Professional Women's Association and the Honorary Women Educator's Society.

In 1968, she married Jack C. Foster and in 1977 they moved to a farm in Hancock County. Immediately, she began giving back and was given the AARP Award for Outstanding Service to her community. She was voted Hancock County Historian of the Year and was given the Hancock County Museum Historical Preservation Award and also the Distinguished Service Award from the Kentucky Historical Society. She was on the GRADD Legislative Advisory Research Committee on Aging, reporting to the Governor's Committee on Aging, the Hancock County Retired Teachers' Association, the Hancock County School-Community Advisory Council, the Kentucky Historical Society, the Daviess County Historical Society, the Hancock County Historical Society, the Hancock County Museum, chairwoman of exhibits and volunteers; the Hancock County Homemakers, the Hancock County Book Club, the Lewisport Senior Citizens and the Daughters of the American Revolution. Mildred was also inducted into the Iowa State University Plaza of Heroines and was a Kentucky Colonel. She was a member of Lewisport United Methodist Church.

Preceding her in death in 1964 was her first husband of 27 years, Alvin H. Goodman; her daughter, Arleta L. Benest in 1989; three brothers, Dr. Michael Hal Emmick, Col. Lelgia F. Emmick and Norman Emmick; her daughter-in-law, Judy Goodman in 2010; and her second husband of 40 years, Jack C. Foster in 2009.

Survivors include her son, M. Neil Goodman of Owensboro; her stepdaughter, Marsha (Charles) Weaver of Muncie, Ind.; her two stepsons, Bob Foster of Durango, Colo., and Steve Foster of Los Angeles; her three sisters, Jean Emmick Howard and Martha June Emmick, both of Owensboro, and Louise Emmick Reithel of Albuquerque, N.M.; nine grandchildren; and 14 great-grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements are under the direction of Taylor-Wood Funeral Home, 315 Caroline St., Lewisport, KY 42351 (270-295-3312) with a memorial service for Ms. Foster being held Saturday, June 4, at 5 p.m. in the Taylor-Wood Funeral Home Chapel with Bro. Bill Vanderford officiating. The family will greet family and friends after 1 p.m. June 4 at the funeral home.

Expressions of sympathy may be made to The Hancock County Historical Society or the Hancock County Museum. Both may be mailed to P.O. Box 605, Hawesville, KY 42348. Envelopes will be available at the funeral home.



HANCOCK COUNTY MUSEUM

The Hancock County Museum is located in the restored Railroad Depot on Water Street in Hawesville. The depot was built in 1902 of southern pine construction and was 18 feet by 81 and 1/2 feet long. It faces the railroad tracks along the Ohio River bank.

Restoration was completed in 1987, with much of the work being performed by volunteers. The formal opening of the Museum was in 1988.

The Museum contains a collection of artifacts representing all facets of the history of the county including the influence of farming, river traffic, railroads, schools, art and family life. The courtroom scene consists of artifacts from the courtroom in the Old Courthouse.

