

WJON Radio Station Interview about Foley, MN

by Jay Caldwell

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Foley is a town of 2,603 people located where Highways 23 and 25 intersect in Benton County. Mary Ostby is the Executive Director of the Benton County Historical Society. She and Mayor Elect Jack Brosh joined me on WJON to talk about Foley.

The Foley brothers relocated in what is now Foley due to the lumbering business. The four brothers are Michael, Timothy, Thomas and John. The Foleys did their lumbering business in Foley from the 1880s until 1907 when John Foley died. Ostby says the town started as a lumbering town. When Ronneby got bigger John Foley decided they needed to build more in what is now Foley. The Foleys bought 200 more acres of land in addition to what they already had. Ostby says some of the land was bought from the Bettendorf family which their descendants still reside in the Foley area today.

Ostby says Michael Foley did a lot of the international business with Canada and national business in the U.S. Timothy Foley did a lot of business in the St. Cloud area, Thomas Foley did a lot of business with Michael building railroads and bridges all over the country. John Foley stayed and was the base station for the Foley brothers. John and his nephews built an elevator, and got the railroad in town. Michael, who was friends with James J. Hill assisted with bringing the railway through town. Ostby says Timothy Foley built a house in St. Cloud and served in the Minnesota legislature.

Foley wasn't always the county seat of Benton County. Ostby says when John Foley was building the town he decided that Foley was more centrally located in the county than Sauk Rapids. A referendum was voted on and Foley was approved for the county seat but this was controversial at the time. A courthouse building was built by Foley with donations and without Government money. John Foley is also responsible for the building of St. John's Catholic Church in Foley. Upon his death he left \$25,000 to build the church.

The town of Foley is growing and vibrant today. Foley doesn't only have the Benton County Courthouse but a High School with a Fieldhouse, numerous baseball and softball fields and events like Foley Fun Days which brings hundreds of people to the community. Foley also has numerous businesses like Foley Lumber, Murphy Chevrolet, Grand Champion Meats, Coborns, and Mr. Jim's just to name a few.

The newly elected Mayor Jack Brosh indicates it is a transition period for the community with the waste water treatment plan not complete quite yet. He expects growth to the community when that is done. Brosh says the community support is fantastic, the school system is good and athletic programs are thriving.