

History of the Village of Forest View

JOSEPH W. NOSEK

Attorney at Law

Farmer Captain Hdgrs. Co.

33rd Division

Founder of the Village
of Forest View

The Village of Forest View was founded and incorporated in memory of those who joined and participated in the Country's cause during the World's War of 1917-1918.

It is the only known Village in the United States of America originally governed exclusively by ex-servicemen.

The officials to whom we owe gratitude for their kindly assistance in the promotion of the Village of Forest View are, to wit.

E. K. Jarecki, County Judge

Robt. Sweetzer, County Clerk

Anton J. Cermak, Pres. County Board

P. J. Carr, County Treasurer

**Village of Forest View
Dedicated to the cause
of the
Ex-Servicemen**

These painstakingly handwritten minutes, the first ever taken in the Village of Forest View are still excellently preserved fifty years later as the Village prepares to celebrate its Golden Anniversary.

Attorney Joseph Nosek called all the ex-servicemen residing within the limits of what is now Forest View to a meeting on September 5, 1924 to discuss the incorporation of the territory. On December 10, 1924 an election was held for the incorporation of the village with the final tally being 46 in favor of incorporation and none against.

All the original village officials were ex-servicemen of World War I. Village President Joseph Nosek, Village Clerk Thomas Logan, and Trustees Alvert Charvat, Harry Fisher, William Kadlec, James Matuska, James Rychly and Stanley Wadulak were elected unanimously on January 6, 1925.

The name of Forest View was chosen for the little village because of the lovely view of the beautiful flowering bushes and prairie flowers in the forest preserve just west of the newly incorporated territory.

Despite the residents concern for the village, Forest View did not develop as fast as was anticipated by the founders. Only 57 voters resided within the village and the num-

ber did not begin to grow substantially until after World War II.

During the prohibition era Al Capone was known to conduct some of his illegal business ventures in the village. The people lived in fear until the imprisonment of Capone and the exit of forced suppression. Before Forest View could begin to recover, the depression struck, halting the village's development. Its citizens were unable to pay taxes or special assessments. The village officials worked without compensation and policemen received their pay from whatever fines they could collect. Even the street lights were shut off for a long period of time to relieve the village of further expense.

The depression brought with it some good things, too. The Stickney/Forest View Library was born in the middle of the depression as part of the Works Progress Administration. The library was transferred from building to building until it found its permanent home on November 14, 1954 when the Stickney/Forest View Library District was formed with voter approval.

World War II brought an end to the depression and employment rose sharply. Women went to work in the defense plants, and almost every house had a star in the window as husbands, fathers, and sons went off to war. All empty land supported Victory Gardens including the land that Standard Oil now occupies. Everyone helped each other and the village not only survived the turmoil but finally started to prosper.

In 1949 Commonwealth Edison began constructing their generating plant on Ridgeland Avenue. The greatest portion of the plant lies in Forest View and because of the property taxes it pays, Commonwealth Edison is often referred to as Forest View's godfather. When the village annexed the industrial area south of Forest View at 51st Street in 1953, the extra financial independence gave Forest View its nickname the "Cinderella Village" and Forest View was finally able to improve and begin to grow.

The village grew from approximately 50 houses before the war to its present capacity of 250 homes. In 1974 only a few vacant lots remain in the residential section of Forest View.

The first business establishment in Forest View was a road house located at 4506 South Harlem operated by James Rychly, a village trustee who became mayor in 1925 and remained in that post until 1933. When Rychly's road house first opened, Harlem Avenue was

only a dirt road which ended at the Santa Fe Railroad. It wasn't until late 1932 that the state received permission to pave Harlem Avenue.

A small grocery store was built at 4507 South Home Avenue and was operated by the Kimont family. The store began as a little one room building serving the needs of the village people but the Garska family later bought the store, improving and enlarging it. Today the store is gone and an apartment house stands in its place.

The Susmilch family operated a coal yard on the 4600 block of Grove Avenue at the railroad tracks. The house is still standing and one of the sons, Elmer Susmilch, served as mayor of Forest View from 1941-43.

Forest View is indeed a village of service. The present Village Hall, built in 1951, houses the clerk's office, Board room, kitchen and a barroom and hall where the villagers may hold private parties. St. Pius X Catholic Church conducted Sunday services in the Forest View Village Hall until the church moved to its present location on 43rd Street. The first meeting of the Home School PTA was held March 14, 1956 in the Village Hall.

The Village Hall also housed the Police Department until the Police and Fire Department Building was constructed in 1955. A well-equipped fire and police department now protects the villagers. A full-time staff of firemen and paid volunteers stand by ready to battle any blaze and the police department is staffed by both paid auxiliary police and full-time policemen keeping a watchful eye on the community.

Just south of 46th Street across from the Village Hall is a beautiful playground and park for Forest View residents and visitors. The park is situated on a block and a half by one block piece of land which was set aside by former Village President Frank Luznicky who had the foresight to know that the children of Forest View would need a place to play.

The park started development in 1956 after village residents approved a \$25,000 bond issue. In 1960 former Village President John K. Witzeman dedicated it as the Forest View Village Park. The park was fully developed by 1964 at a total cost to the village taxpayers of approximately \$250,000.

The Forest View Village Park is equipped with tennis courts which can be flooded in winter for ice skating and a baseball diamond where the little leaguers play many of their games.

One of the most active organizations in the village is the Forest View Women's Club. The Women's Club donated the first playground equipment for the Forest View Village Park and donates much time and money to scouting

programs for the boys and girls of the village, Little League and other projects for civic improvement.

The residents of Forest View enjoy many benefits not received in other towns, small or large. Since 1949 garbage has been picked up at no extra cost to the villagers. During the winter, streets and sidewalks are also plowed free of charge. The West Town Bus Company's Oak Park line starts in the Village Municipal Parking Lot giving everyone in Forest View transportation within one or two blocks of their home compared to the five blocks people had to walk previously.

Forest View and its neighbor, the Village of Stickney, share three modern public elementary schools and St. Pius X Parochial School.

Haley School first opened its doors in September 1923, a year before Forest View was incorporated. As both villages continued to grow, Haley became overcrowded, so the Home School was built opening March 3, 1952. But even the Haley and Home Schools were not sufficient to serve the booming communities so Edison School was opened on February 20, 1956. The children in these schools will be the future leaders of Forest View and they will have a fine tradition to live up to.

George Fargo, a former trustee, is the current President of Forest View, a post he has held since 1961. His fourteen years as president is the longest anyone has served in that office in the history of Forest View. The citizens of the village have good reason to keep re-electing him year after year. A hard-working dedicated individual, Fargo has done much to improve and make Forest View a town to be proud of.

He instituted the posting of the minutes of all the village board meetings so that the voters could be kept informed of the actions of their elected officials. An unusual practice among most town governments, this openness may account in part for the high voter turn-outs in village elections. At a time when cynicism, mistrust and apathy are turning most people away from the polls, 85% of the registered voters in Forest View turn out for every village election.

Over the years Forest View has grown in population through the hearts, wills and hard work of its residents into a village of well over a thousand. From a place of road houses, small grocery stores, and a coal yard, Forest View has become a modern town with all the conveniences of a big city close by, yet all the beauty and friendliness of a small town.

The people who have lived and grown up in Forest View and many others who have moved away feel proud to have taken part in helping make Forest View a dream come true for the founders.