

History Of Newport Is Revealed

By WPA Coding Of City Records

BY BENJAMIN GRIFFITH.

On a summer day only 20 years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, there met in the home of Jacob Fowler six residents of the Village of Newport. They formed the first Board* of Trustees of the Northern Kentucky community.

Faced with no intricate problems of city finance or law, the village fathers met infrequently and adopted only a few ordinances governing taxes, market days, and elementary zoning problems.

Beginning with these old records, and working through the history of the city until the present, Works Progress Administration clerks have codified Newport ordinances and regulations, many of them buried in old volumes stored in vaults in the courthouse.

With most of the city's official history now put in indexed form, and all laws filed in a systematic fashion, Newport has gained not only from the overhauling itself, but also through the resurrection of old, little known facts in the community's development.

At the first meeting of city fathers

in 1796, Thomas Kennedy, being oldest, was chosen Chairman. James Taylor was named Clerk of the Board.

Early history of legislation for the town is found in Record Book No. 1, covering a period from 1796 to 1830. Trustee meetings were held at irregular intervals, as much as three months elapsing between meetings.

Although planning and zoning virtually were unknown as such in those times, ordinances passed in the early days of the town stipulated that business houses should be constructed on the street property line and residences 20 feet back from the street property line.

The tax levy was in the nature of a poll tax, being \$1 for each inhabitant. Hence fathers of large families paid the most tax. Tuesdays and Fridays were designated as market days.

"The Public Square," a tract extending from York Street to Columbia Street, between Court Place and Fourth Street, was donated to the town by General James Taylor.

General Taylor donated also a large lot for school purposes on the north side of Fourth Street, between York and Monmouth Streets, where the first school was erected more than a century ago. The old building was razed four years ago

for the site of the new Junior High School.

Following donation of the Public Square by General Taylor, the trustees gave notice to an owner of a building on the tract to remove it so the town could erect its own building. Culverts crossing ravines in the city had to be constructed of logs and covered with earth.

In 1819 an ordinance was passed providing for the grading of streets and in 1820 a public landing was established at the foot of Monmouth Street at a cost of \$170. A market house was built at a cost of \$12 for labor and material.

F. T. Helm was elected first Mayor in 1834, when the Councilmanic form of government succeeded the trusteeship. Sixty years later in 1894, the city government was changed to the Federal system—Aldermanic and Councilmanic bodies—and in 1912 the commissioner form was adopted. The present City manager form was adopted in 1934.

In 1840 Newport was designated as the county seat of Campbell County, but the Circuit Court was to hold sessions in Alexandria and in Newport. In later years the courthouse was built on the city's public square, with the understand-

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