

1-23-80

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



VOL. II

WARD FOSTER

"Ask Mr. Foster". Now where have I heard that? Well, let's start with the yellow pages in the greater Rochester telephone directory and you will find Ask Mr. Foster Travel Service since 1888 - Airline tickets - Cruises and tours - Independent or Group tours - located in Sibley's downtown. So what does this have to do with anything in Orleans County? Here then is the success story of a local person (the one time owner of an Albion haberdashery) who made good. The place was St. Augustine, Florida in 1888 where Ward G. Foster of Albion had held an executive position in the construction of the Hotel Ponce de Leon. Mr. Foster had gone south to avoid the inclemencies of the northern winter and upon completion of the hotel needed another job. This led to establishing a gift shop under the Spanish name of El Unico meaning unique, different, the only one of its kind. It was in a 12 x 14 foot room in close proximity to several hotels. Tourist frequenters often asked Mr. Foster questions about Florida resorts, hotels and ways to them. They found him to be of pleasing personality and obliging. Soon people started telling others "Ask Mr. Foster. He in turn printed one of the first travel guides and playing on this phrase, found his life interest in world travel. The El Unico gift shop was sold buy Ask Mr. Foster offices started opening up in other parts of Florida and eventually Washington, Philadelphia, New York, Atlantic City, Chicago, San Diego, Cuba, Bermuda, Mexico, Newfoundland, Germany, and so on. In 1936 when this photo of him above was taken, there were 70 offices located all over the world.

Imagine that! And it got its impetus right out of Orleans County.

NO. 4