

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Foster, Claud, House
Other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 30333 Lake Shore Boulevard not for publication
city or town Willowick vicinity
state Ohio code OH county Lake 085 zip code 44095

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.

- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing and 4 rows: buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Bungalow/Craftsman

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation, roof, walls, other; OTHER: clay tile, STUCCO, WOOD

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- Criteria A-D: Property is associated with events, lives of persons, distinctive characteristics, or yielded information.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- Criteria A-G: owned by a religious institution, removed from location, birthplace, cemetery, reconstructed building, commemorative property, or less than 50 years old.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1916-1933

Significant Dates

1916

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Foster, Claud

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- Criteria for bibliography: preliminary determination, previously listed, designated landmark, recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey, recorded by Historic American Engineering Record.

Primary location of additional data

- Primary location of additional data: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State agency, Federal agency, Local government, University, Other.

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property 2.5**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
1 <u>17 460280 4609600</u>	3 _____
2 _____	4 _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared Byname/title organization Carol Poh Miller/Historical Consultant under contract with ownerdate 1-20-04street & number 17903 Rosecliff Roadtelephone 216-692-0747city or town Cleveland state Ohio zip code 44119**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name LeMarr L. & Patricia J. Frenchstreet & number 30333 Lake Shore Boulevard telephone 440-944-4905city or town Willowick state Ohio zip code 44095

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section number 7 Page 1

**Foster, Claud, House
Willowick, Lake County, Ohio**

Description

Located on Lake Erie in Willowick, a suburb of Cleveland, the Claud Foster House is a substantial (2,700-square-foot) private residence in the Craftsman/Bungalow style. The house occupies a deep, narrow lot within a small cluster of single-family residences. It sits well back from the road on the north side of Lake Shore Boulevard, a wide five-lane thoroughfare (Photo #1). An asphalt driveway leads to the house, passing a former carriage house (since moved and converted to a private residence) reputed to have once belonged to Foster and, closer to the house, a noncontributing two-car garage of concrete block construction (Photo #2). Behind the house, a deep rear yard slopes down to a sand beach.

The one-and-one-half-story house is of classic Bungalow design, with stucco walls, deep eaves with exposed rafters, and a low-pitched gable roof of red clay tile. The house has a high, full basement and is rectangular in plan—approximately 67 by 35 feet in size—with its narrow end facing the street. Spanning the façade is a deep three-bay porch supported by four massive Roman Doric masonry columns. A broad flight of masonry steps leads to the central entrance (Photo #3).

The façade is roughly symmetrical (Photo #4). The front entrance with its 12-light, paneled oak door is placed slightly off-center. To its left is a large picture window; to its right is a pair of French doors. In the half-story, front and rear, are similar pairs of hipped-roof dormers, each with a pair of small square casement windows with 9 lights. The dormers in the façade flank a low shed-roof dormer with a narrow band of smaller casement windows.

A one-story flat-roofed breakfast room with roof deck, 14 by 13 feet in size, projects from the east elevation (Photo #6). A covered walkway, 14 by 10 feet in size, projects from the west elevation (Photo #7). It features massive masonry columns (the same as those found on the front porch), a beamed ceiling with bracketed eaves, and a gable roof of clay tile. Accessed by a side door in the solarium, the walkway originally led to a large garage. In 1950, the property on which it stood was sold and the garage became the nucleus of a ranch house; the onetime garage, barely discernable today, is well screened from the Foster House by large evergreens.

The gable roof is pierced by a large outside chimney in the west elevation (Photo #5) and by two smaller inside chimneys in the east elevation. The house has double-hung windows with 6/1 lights, grouped in pairs or in threes, and casement windows of varying sizes. The original casement windows in the basement (these have a single muntin) are intact.

Inside, the original plan, finishes, and mechanical equipment of the three-bedroom, two-and-one-half-bath house are substantially intact. The front door opens to a small vestibule. To the left is a large combined living room and dining room. This room features crown moldings, some natural woodwork, built-ins, and a wood-burning fireplace (Photo #8). Opposite the fireplace, a handsome open-string straight-stair is framed by four

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columns (two are square and engaged; two are round and freestanding). The stair has simple round balusters; the handrail curves to meet the newel. Beyond the dining room is a solarium, with large windows overlooking Lake Erie. The solarium has a handsome green tile ceramic floor laid in a geometric pattern; from this room, a door opens to the covered walkway that formerly led to the garage. To the right of the entrance vestibule is a small library/office with a fireplace flanked by low bookcases. A full bath, kitchen, breakfast room (with a handsome brown and black ceramic tile floor), and another small room with sink (which possibly once served as a chauffeur's room) complete the first-floor plan.

The straight-stair divides the second floor nearly in half. To the right of the stairhead are a master bedroom with full bath and small adjoining dressing room; to the left are two smaller bedrooms, one with a half-bath. All of the bedrooms have built-in chests of drawers. From the master bedroom, a door opens onto the deck atop the breakfast room. Natural ventilation is accomplished by the unusual arrangement, in succession, of three identical pairs of casement windows: one pair opens from the stair well into the master dressing room; a second pair opens from the dressing room into the half-bath; and a third opens from the half-bath to the outdoors. Bathrooms throughout the house have their original ceramic tile floors and porcelain tile wainscoting; some have their original porcelain fixtures. The original hot-water heating system, including the original furnace, is still in use.

Exterior alterations:

Large fixed single panes have replaced several pairs of casement windows in the breakfast room. The balustrade that graced the roof of the breakfast room was removed owing to rot, but the property owners have contracted to replace it with a new railing to match the original. The original door and stair leading from the kitchen to the backyard have been replaced, as have the original bulkhead cellar doors.

Interior alterations:

The fireplace in the living room has been remodeled. A pair of built-in china cabinets in the dining room has been altered; their doors have been removed, glass shelves and mirrors installed. A pair of doors that originally divided the dining room from the solarium has been removed. (The doors remain on the premises.) A wall in the library/office that originally divided that space into two rooms (the one adjoining the bathroom probably accommodated a maid) was removed, and the kitchen has been thoroughly modernized. Some of the woodwork has been painted.

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**Foster, Claud, House
Willowick, Lake County, Ohio**

Statement of Significance

The Claud Foster House is significant under Criterion B for its association with a prominent Cleveland inventor, industrialist, and philanthropist. Claud Hanscomb Foster (1872-1965) invented automobile parts, including a musical horn and the first practical shock absorber. The devices, which he manufactured in Cleveland and sold worldwide, made him a wealthy man. Following his retirement from business he chose to live modestly, and toward the end of his life he gave away most of his fortune to Cleveland charitable and educational institutions. Foster built this Bungalow/Craftsman-style house in 1916 and occupied it as his principal residence for seventeen years, a period during which he was at the height of his career as an industrialist. With its stucco walls, deep bracketed eaves, and clay-tile roof, the house displays a high degree of craftsmanship, while its deep setback and lakefront setting preserve its historic ambience.

Historical Background

Claud Hanscomb Foster (December 23, 1872-June 21, 1965) was born in Brooklyn Village (now part of the city of Cleveland), the second of four sons of George H. and Julia Williams Foster. He left school at eleven to work on his father's farm. At fourteen, he found employment with the Bolton Machine Company, where he learned the machinist's trade. In 1891, Foster rented a shop on Erie (East 9th) Street. Using money earned by playing the trombone in the Euclid Avenue Opera House orchestra, he gradually bought lathes, drill presses, punch presses, and other machinery to engage in experimental work. The shop was destroyed by fire in 1896. Continuing to play the trombone, Foster became an agent for Cleveland-built General and Peerless automobiles. He also made money buying and repairing automobiles. "This talent for fixing things," his biographer, Wayman Thomasson wrote, "led to his invention of a horn that was to make his first fortune."¹

In 1904, Foster invented a musical horn for automobiles that operated from the exhaust of the motor. The horn—Foster dubbed it the "Gabriel" horn, after the angel—was hailed as a great improvement over bulb-type horns, which were not always reliable. Foster rented a small shop on Superior Avenue and, with one employee, built the first twenty-five Gabriel horns. They were an immediate success. In 1907, he moved the Gabriel Horn Manufacturing Company into larger quarters, at 1407 East 40th Street, hired additional workers, and added the Gabriel windshield cleaner to his line. In 1909, Foster reportedly manufactured and sold 16,000 Gabriel horns. Cleveland Mayor Tom Johnson, himself an inventor, had a Gabriel horn installed on his imported Roche-Snyder and is said to have stopped often to visit Foster at his shop.

¹ *Claud Foster: A Biography* (Cleveland, O.: Fenn College, 1949), 22. This account of Claud Foster's life is based principally on Thomasson's biography and an extensive clipping file maintained by the History Department of the Cleveland Public Library.

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**Foster, Claud, House
Willowick, Lake County, Ohio**

Following the success of the Gabriel horn, Claud Foster turned his attention to something else the motoring public desired: the elimination of violent jerks and bounces. There was as yet no successful shock absorber on the market. While standing on the deck of a Detroit & Cleveland passenger steamer as it was being docked, Foster watched as a deckhand wound a rope around two steel posts and, with the loops of the rope forming a figure eight, easily controlled the surge of the vessel. Thus inspired, Foster sketched his idea for the Gabriel “Snubber,” deriving the name from the verb *snub*, a nautical term meaning to secure a vessel by turning a rope quickly about a post or cleat. The Snubber patent was capitalized in 1914 for \$1 million, and by 1920 the privately held Gabriel Company was selling approximately 75 percent of all shock absorbers marketed in the world and earning profits of more than \$1 million annually. A 1918 profile of Claud Foster stated: “The manufacture of snubbers has grown to 100,000 sets annually. Mr. Foster employs eighty people in his factory and about 200 others indirectly, and ships his product all over the world. He is sole owner of the company, and takes a justifiable pride in the fact that he has never worked on borrowed capital.”² In 1924, Claud Foster caused a sensation when local newspapers reported that he had paid \$821,313.13 in income taxes for the prior year—more than any other Ohio taxpayer.³

Foster liked to attribute his success to the fact that he enabled his employees to share in the profits. According to his biographer, he was one of the first employers to develop the incentive plan of sharing profits with employees. “In this way,” Thomasson wrote, “he avoided the slowdowns and strikes that crippled so many businesses after World War I.”⁴ An affable man, Foster also developed strong personal relationships with the heads of automobile companies, often joining them to play golf, a game at which he excelled. Following one such outing, Walter Chrysler agreed to install Gabriel snubber shock absorbers on one of his cars. Chrysler reportedly was so impressed he gave Foster an order for 40,000 pairs and directed his engineers to consult the Cleveland inventor whenever new models developed riding difficulties. Claud Foster later recalled: “I became the ‘Doctor of Car Riding’ for the motor car manufacturers.”⁵ Sales boomed after the Dodge Company adapted the manufacture of its frames to accommodate installation of Gabriel snubbers. Other important makers, including Cadillac and Packard, followed suit.

By 1925, biographer Thomasson later wrote, “Claud Foster had reached a pinnacle in the business world that few men ever attain.... The 53-year-old inventor who designed, manufactured and sold his own inventions could now sell the company his genius made possible and pocket a personal fortune of \$10,000,000.”⁶ Defying convention, Foster shocked the business world by selling Gabriel to Otis & Company for \$4 million—less than

² “C. H. Foster,” in Elroy McKendree Avery, *A History of Cleveland and Its Environs*, 3 vols. (Chicago and New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1918), 3:303.

³ “Horn Inventor Pays Biggest Tax,” *Cleveland News*, November 12, 1924, 1.

⁴ Thomasson, *Claud Foster*, 27. According to Thomasson, from 1917 until 1925, when Foster sold the Gabriel firm to Otis & Company, employees reportedly were paid more than \$600,000 from profits in addition to their salaries.

⁵ Thomasson, *Claud Foster*, 42.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

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**Foster, Claud, House
Willowick, Lake County, Ohio**

half its estimated worth—with the proviso that his friends and business associates have an opportunity to buy stock at a fair price. The firm was incorporated as the Gabriel Snubber Manufacturing Company (the Gabriel horn had long since been superseded by the push-button electric horn), and Claud Foster remained as chairman of the board until February 24, 1928. In 1927, Gabriel was producing 14,000 snubber units per day. Marking its golden anniversary in 1930, the Cleveland Engineering Society recognized Claud Foster's role in making Cleveland a leader in automotive parts manufacture, citing his "contribution to the [automotive] accessory business with the first snubber type of shock absorbers and other Gabriel products."⁷

In 1916, Claud Foster purchased about eight acres on Lake Road (Lake Shore Boulevard) in Willoughby Township.⁸ Since the late nineteenth-century, western Lake County had attracted "gentlemen farmers"—wealthy Clevelanders who established estates and engaged in fruit or dairy farming, viticulture, or the raising of livestock. In 1898, the Cleveland, Painesville & Eastern Railroad had opened the Shore Line, connecting Cleveland and Willoughby by way of Lake Shore Boulevard and Vine Street, for the purpose of opening up lakefront real estate for development. To boost its business, the CP&E established Willoughbeach Park on Lake Erie, offering swimming, dancing, picnic grounds, baseball fields, concession stands, and, later, a carousel and roller-coaster. The surrounding area was a sparsely settled summer resort when Claud Foster purchased lakefront property a short distance east of the park and opposite the Willowick Country Club. There, he built a handsome and substantial house in the Bungalow/Craftsman style. Foster resided there for seventeen years, during the period of his greatest productivity and success as an industrialist. It was there, too, that Foster first took up golf. According to an article in the *Cleveland News*, he played often at the Willowick Club, but in order to improve his short game he built a putting green in his front yard. "I could go up on a hill about 100 yards back of the house and pitch balls over the house onto the green. Naturally it helped me a lot."⁹ About 1933, Foster moved from Willowick to 1617 Sheridan Road in South Euclid, next door to the Mayfield Country Club.¹⁰

After briefly taking the helm as chairman of Pressure Castings, Inc, a die casting company where he garnered the attention of local press by introducing a profit-sharing plan, Claud Foster permanently retired in 1941. Keeping a small office in the Union Commerce Building in downtown Cleveland, he built a \$3,500 four-room cottage on Sandusky Bay near Vickery, Ohio. There, he spent each summer and fall gardening and duck hunting with friends in the company of his beloved Springer spaniels.¹¹

⁷ *The Golden Anniversary Book of the Cleveland Engineering Society* (Cleveland, O., 1930), 9, 13.

⁸ Warranty Deed, E. V. Hale, et. al to Claude H. Foster [sic], July 1, 1916.

⁹ September 12, 1949.

¹⁰ "Since I was 42 year old and began playing golf," Thomasson quotes Claud Foster as saying, "I have always owned a home next door to a golf course in order to have time to play." Thomasson writes: "He lived beside the Willowick Club for 17 years." Thomasson, *Claud Foster*, 74.

¹¹ Claud Foster was thrice married and thrice divorced. He married Emma Schultz on May 2, 1894. They had one son, Earl F. He married Lunetta Kelley on July 7, 1907. They adopted a son, Daniel, who, according to a 1918 profile of Claud Foster (n. 2, above), was then reported to be six years of age; the same profile noted that Earl F. Foster was then in military service. In 1938, Foster married Helen Sandburg, a nurse who had cared for him following a hunting accident. That marriage ended in divorce in 1950.

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**Foster, Claud, House
Willowick, Lake County, Ohio**

Following World War II, Claud Foster began the philanthropic work that would bring him both local and national attention. His first large gift was to Cleveland's Fenn College, the nucleus of what would later become Cleveland State University. Foster admired the Fenn plan of cooperative education, and in 1947 he gave the school \$500,000 for a new engineering building and an additional \$300,000 to equip it. The three-story Claud Foster Engineering Building was dedicated on September 14, 1949. In 1950, Foster gave \$550,000 for a new Brooklyn-Parma branch of the YMCA, in memory of his mother, to serve the area where he had lived as a boy.

Then, on July 21, 1952, without explanation, Foster invited the heads of sixteen charitable and educational institutions to a dinner at the Statler Hotel in downtown Cleveland. In the company of numerous friends, and with businessman Frederick C. Crawford serving as master of ceremonies, Foster dispensed \$3.9 million, in amounts ranging from \$35,000 to \$775,000, to nine Cleveland hospitals, six orphanages, and Western Reserve University. The money represented proceeds from the sale of the Gabriel Company in 1925. "Too many institutions get their money from dead men. I wanted to see them get it," Foster said.¹²

Throughout his life, Claud Foster, a deeply religious man, maintained that his good fortune was the result of his "partnership" with God. Beginning in 1958, the industrialist capped his philanthropy by giving away more than seven hundred spinet-model electric organs to needy churches, mostly in small Ohio communities. He would often follow up by visiting the various congregations to take part in dedication services and to ensure that his gift was being properly used. In April 1959, en route to a church near Milan, he was critically injured in an automobile accident. He spent the rest of his life in Bellevue (Ohio) Community Hospital, where he died on June 21, 1965. He was ninety-two. Both *Time* (July 2, 1965) and *Newsweek* (July 5, 1965) noted the death of the Cleveland inventor who chose to live modestly and gave away most of his fortune. Recalling that Claud Foster "made all his money with his inventive genius, mostly on a horn and shock absorbers for autos," the *Cleveland Press* (June 22, 1965) eulogized him as "a great giver with a common touch."

The Claud Foster House appears today much as it did when the industrialist built it in 1916, although the surrounding area has undergone dramatic change. Willoughbeach Park never reopened in 1926, the same year the CP&E ended rail service owing to financial losses. The suburb of Willowick, which was incorporated in 1924, saw a building boom following World War II, when the village was intensively subdivided with single-family homes. Between 1950 and 1960, Willowick's population grew from 3,677 to 18,749.¹³ The Willowick Country Club was closed in the early 1950s, and Shoregate shopping center opened on the site in 1955. Portions of the former Claud Foster property to the east and the west were sold in 1945 and 1950, respectively, and developed with single-family homes. The present owners purchased the Claud Foster House in 1982. With

¹² Obituary, June 22, 1965, CPL clipping file.

¹³ Lake County Historical Society, *Here Is Lake County* (Cleveland, O.: Howard Allen, 1964), appendix.

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**Foster, Claud, House
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its deep setback, expansive front lawn, and stunning views of Lake Erie, the Claud Foster House maintains a high degree of architectural integrity and still conveys the era of its original builder and occupant.

Bibliography

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Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property consists of the lots identified by Lake County Permanent Parcel Nos. 28A043S000013 and 28A043S000060. It has a frontage of 118 feet.

Boundary Justification

The boundary represents approximately 2.5 acres of the original 8-acre lot on which the Claud Foster House was erected in 1916. The rest of the property has been sold and is now occupied by other private residences.