

HISTORY OF THE JOPLIN CITY HALL HOLIDAY

Newman's Department Store building has a storied history of bringing the spirit of the holiday season to life in Joplin's Downtown, right along its Main Street frontage. The facility opened in 1910 and offered everything from women's finery to household goods.

The building is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is cited for its architecture and place in Joplin's history for commerce. Over the years, the building has been referenced as the Newman Brothers Building or the Newman Building, with the store name just Newman's.

The City of Joplin purchased the five-story Chicago-style building in 2003, and City Hall has been added to its references since 2005.

In 2009, through the leadership of the Joplin City Clerk's office, an effort was made to rekindle the spirit of decorating the "storefront" for the holidays, similarly to the tradition of Newman's Holiday Windows of the 1940s until 1972, when the department store moved out of downtown to Joplin's new development, Northpark Mall, on Range Line Road.

Volunteers helped City employees with grand designs of the season by decorating the first-floor windows that face Main Street. For the first few years, members of the Tri-State Model Railroaders participated with model trains running through picturesque village settings.



A Holiday Window by Robert O. Isaac,
who created displays for Newman's
from 1946 to 1956.

Early displays depicted Christmas through the eyes of a child, while each year, the settings became a bit grander as they were revolutionized with mannequins and animatronics. No matter the theme or technology, the goal was to keep the holiday spirit alive while respecting the building's original tenant, Newman's Department Store.



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In 2021, decorating the windows took a new direction. **Artist Sandra Pemberton** was hired to create a stained glass-like holiday storyline. Each panel of vinyl was framed to fit each window. This format could be more easily stored and reused for several seasons.

2021 — SANTA'S STOP IN JOPLIN ... is a wintery scene in three panels that showcases Joplin's **Grand Falls** with a classic Woody Wagon, some puppy helpers, gifts, nature, and the merry man himself, Santa, pausing before delivering another sack of presents.



2022 — (DRESSED IN HOLIDAY STYLE) DEPARTMENT STORE DISPLAYS OF DAYS GONE BY ... draws from the days when Newman's Department Store would be decked out for holiday shoppers. Depicted in three panels, the left panel shows Men's and Women's fashion for the season and the styles the upper society might wear. The right double panels bring **Toyland** to life with all the excitement of the toys that fill a child's wishes.



2023—HOLIDAY HOME ... is a 19th-century depiction in two panels that brings to life what a family Christmas might have looked like. This year's story unfolds, pulling from the stories from the Post and Picher family homes.

Though the family could be any Joplin family, a few tidbits have been brought to life in this storyboard. **The grand staircase**, "Where all the stockings were hung," is that of the Oliver S. Picher home in the historic Murphysburg neighborhood. Listed on the Murphysburg.org website, The interior of the house is the picture of elegance with high wainscoting, stained glass windows, crystal chandeliers, ten-foot vaulted ceilings, six fireplaces, servant's dumbwaiter, and a grand staircase.

The tree is a remembrance of a delightful tale: Dr. Winfred Post wired together many trees to achieve the grand height of the family tree in the Great Hall of their home on E. 15th Street. He would fashion a hook on the end of a pole to place decorations atop his creation.



2024—MINING CAMP CELEBRATION ... recounts Joplin's mining history as part of the **Tri-state Mining District**. A miner's life was hard and, at times, treacherous. Family and faith were dear to them. In three panels, though the winter weather may have brought snow, ice, and cold conditions to the top side, the climate within the mines stayed consistent year-round. Bringing a little of the season's spirit from their homes, miners enjoyed what merriment they could in their camps and the caverns.



Bonus: Each edition has a special appearance from the mascot of the city's tourism marketing effort, Visit Joplin - **Boomer** the Groundhog. See if you can find him.

