

Written by Darci Tomky



- From store shelves, meat lockers and bakery goods to printing presses, office supplies and computers, the building at 130 N. Interocean Ave. has sure come a long way since 1935.
- “This building has seen a lot,” said Brenda Brandt, current publisher of *The Holyoke Enterprise* which now occupies the building. Located just north of the stoplight on the west side of the street, it is a structure that has witnessed much of Holyoke’s history for the past eight decades.

Grocery store built

- On June 12, 1935, brothers-in-law Merle O. (Sam) Powell and Otto Brethouwer purchased land from Ed



Hethcote at lot 5, block 11 in the original town of Holyoke for the expansion of their Holyoke Market. According to the Holyoke centennial history book, they made plans to move their IGA (Independent Grocers Alliance) store across the street to its new home at 130 N. Interocean Ave.

- With groundbreaking on July 1, 1935, the July 4 edition of the *Enterprise* reported brick laying for the new building would begin Friday, July 5 after the pouring of concrete for the basement and the laying of the subfloor the previous week. Construction continued through July and August, 1935.
- White stones with the IGA emblem were placed on both sides of the front of the building and a date stone reading “July 1935” was placed at the top center. They were crafted by Arthur Bim, the man in charge of the city’s dump ground, who was reported to have many years of experience at the stone cutting trade.
- By the July 25, 1935 issue of the *Enterprise*, a skylight had arrived, a roof put on and the structure was ready for celotex lathing and plastering. In addition to the skylight, the building also boasted of having large windows in the front which would provide plenty of light as well as white walls and “an air of spaciousness.”
- The *Enterprise* said, “The building is 25 by 80 feet, and has a wall of tile within the outer brick wall, making it one of the best business buildings in the town.”
- With the big move on Aug. 19, 1935, a multitude of customers exclaimed “It seems as though we’re in a big city,” according to the Aug. 22 *Enterprise*.
- Improvements for the new store included a modern meat display case and a vapor cooling system for fruits and vegetables. Refrigerators and cases were painted white to harmonize with the rest of the store while an unbroken line of shelving lined the north wall, part of the west side and a generous section to the south.
- Powell and Brethouwer also introduced a new “serve yourself” system of trade in the center of the store where customers could help themselves instead of being waited on by clerks.
- A full-page advertisement in the Sept. 5, 1935 *Enterprise* announced the two-day grand opening sale complete with a three-piece Hawaiian orchestra and free iced tea, coffee and cold meat sandwiches. Sales included Hershey’s chocolate bars, three for 11¢; Holyoke bread, three large loaves for 25¢; Camay Soap, four bars for 19¢; and Van Camp’s Pork and Beans, three medium-sized cans for 19¢.
- The ad also reminded customers to tune into KOA every morning for the IGA Musical Menu.
- Holyoke Market had a meat market in conjunction with a slaughter house located on the west edge of Holyoke near the Frenchman Creek bed. Jacob Jensen coordinated the buying as he

Written by Darci Tomky

selected the farmers' animals for trade-ins for their groceries.

□ In the 1930s, Holyoke had two big shopping days: Tuesday and Saturday. Tuesday was sale day at the Hoover Sale Pavillion while on Saturday nights, almost everyone came to town, left their orders with the store clerks and picked up the goods around midnight after the show or dance at the Legion Hall.



Grocery store tradition continues

□ Over the next three decades, the grocery store would see many new owners and changes.

□ Early employees at the Holyoke Market included Wilbur Burchett, Cody (D.D.) Patrick and Erwin Weber who jointly managed the store beginning in Sept., 1943 when Powell and Brethouwer semi-retired.

□ In 1945, the lot to the north (present day La Mexicanita) was purchased from Fred G. Fiedler, and a frozen food locker plant, bakery and coffee shop were added. Earl Isham and his wife came to Holyoke to run the bakery.

□ Newspaper advertisements from 1945 reported the bakery had just received an up-to-date high-speed mixer making it “one of the best equipped bakeries of any in a city of this size.” And don't forget that “About 9 a.m. is a good time to hook a hot doughnut.” Chocolate cakes were sold on Thursdays while the bakery promoted their white cakes on Fridays.

□ Burchett went on to buy the Amherst Grocery Store in 1952 which he operated until 1979.

□ The Hofmeister brothers—Willard, Dale and Melvin—bought the store in December, 1955, and the name changed to the Holyoke Red and White Store. Many years later, Dale bought the Holyoke Furniture Company building at 123 S. Interocean Ave. (present day J's Home Furnishings) where he established a grocery store in 1971.

□ An account in the Holyoke centennial history book noted the community had five grocery stores in 1957 including the IGA store, Safeway, Kelly's, Church's and Wayne's Grocery.

□ Still a grocery store, the Hofmeisters sold 130 N. Interocean to J. Wesley Gurney of South Dakota, and Leo and Cecile Upoff, Fred and Vivian Thietje and Lyle McCormick were all employees.

□ Jack and Jill would be the next store name when it sold in March, 1962. Advertisements listed goods such as Del Monte Catsup, 17¢; Karo Syrup, 39¢; and Wisk laundry detergent, 75¢.

□

130 N. Interocean Ave.: A look at hometown history from grocery store to newspaper

Written by Darci Tomky

