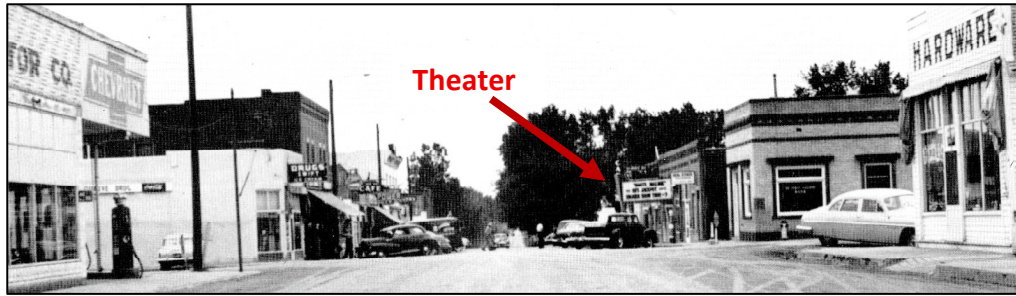


Johnstown's Movie Theater

Billie DeLancey
Parish House Museum Director



Looking south, the large slanted "change letter" marquee sign could be read from both ends of Main St.

Johnstown's mid-20th Century movie theater served the Johnstown, Milliken and Platteville communities for more than 15 years. It operated under three different names over that period and had several successive owners, managers, and building owners.

Residents in 1940 anxiously awaited the opening of this new source of recreation, and downtown business owners welcomed the PIX Theater with congratulatory ads in *The Johnstown Breeze* the day it opened on February 8 at 10 S. Main St. (Parish Ave), now occupied by Thompson Rivers Parks and Recreation. It touted new seating and modern equipment, and the initial owners chose *The Housekeeper's Daughter* – a recent hit film, for the premiere showing as a sample of the high-quality films being scheduled. However, by the end of the year the theater was sold and already had new owners.

Each successive owner(s) over the next decade was compelled to add their personal touches with fresh decorating and the latest equipment as technology continued to advance in screens and lighting systems. Walls were finished with Celotex boards for improved sound, and air conditioning provided comfort on hot summer days, which had become the industry standard. Some of the owners promoted local community events, offering complimentary tickets to that day's showing, or paired the tickets with special events that focused on children's activities such as the big Easter egg hunt in Parish and Letford Parks.

In February 1950, the building reopened as the Lake Theater by its new owner Dave Warnock, who also opened the Movie Inn Restaurant next door at about that same time. It was complete with a paradise theme and a talking parrot named Dodo that spoke Spanish. A large aquarium with tropical fish accompanied the bird to help wow the customers.

In August 1951, Warnock had hoped to bring theater television to the Lake for the televised broadcast of the World Series games, but Johnstown's infrastructure didn't yet support this new technology. In 1952 the Lake was one of two theaters in the nation to secure the world premiere of *The Ring*, a motion picture about the fight game. The other winner was a theater in Denver. Two years later Warnock was able to install the upgraded equipment necessary to offer CinemaScope pictures. The first movie shown was *The Robe*.

The Lake Theater closed in December 1954 owing to waning public interest and support. A last attempt to reopen and boost the theater's attendance occurred in April 1955 after Warnock had left, and Eldon Menagh of Fort Lupton leased the building. He was an experienced theater manager and operated a drive-in theater in Brighton and another theater in Fort Lupton. He reopened the Johnstown theater just before Easter under the new name – the Star Theater. By December, the Star closed its doors and Johnstown's theater faded into history, but it lives on in the hearts of many local residents. The building was sold and the theater was converted into Ed's Supermarket.



The Historic Parish House and Museum

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Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays
9:00 A.M. – Noon, and by appointment