

Charles H. Newman

Charles Henry Newman was born in Croton, Michigan, one of eight children. His father moved the family to Kansas when Charles was a toddler. When he was five, the family started moving again, following the North Platte river west to Colorado and California before finding their way to Montana, and the mining town of Bannack. From there they moved on to Bozeman, until his father finally settled the family in the Yellowstone valley in 1878 to a property on the future site of Billings. There on their ranch, the first schoolhouse in the area was built. The Newmans and later settlers paid for a teacher's services and provided board.

The family thrived in this area, and the boys loved fishing and hunting. The *Billings Post* noted in 1883 that Newman and his brother Ed had been on a hunting expedition where they had bagged 97 deer and elk. Obviously, this was before the days of licenses and limits. The article complimented them by calling them "nimrods", which today would be an insult, but then was high praise for a skilled hunter.

As a young man, Newman served as a deputy sheriff for four years in the 1890s. Newman then returned to raising stock and farming at the family ranch. While with the Sheriff's office, Newman married Cinderella Walk in January 1898. They had one daughter, Doris, who died a few months after her birth in 1903.

In 1906, Newman was elected a county commissioner for the first time, and re-elected through 1914. He was later appointed to fill a vacancy in 1917. Altogether, he served in that capacity for nearly 14 years, often as the commission chair. When first elected, Yellowstone County then included portions of what are now Big Horn, Musselshell and Stillwater Counties. He developed a reputation for expertise in the matter of developing and improving county roads and bridges, thousands of miles of which were being constructed for the first time.

Newman had bought the ranch from his family. In 1915, he was negotiating with the county to sell the 143 acres to become the fairgrounds. The wrinkle was that the county didn't want an additional 70 acres along the river. He made the first sale contingent on selling the rest to the city for a proposed park, and the city agreed. The site is now the city's wastewater treatment plant.

Newman's life ended in 1926 at the age of 69. The Newmans had a cabin at East Rosebud, and had been spending much of the summer there. In August, they were returning to Billings. Just east of Columbus, Newman hit some loose gravel on a steep hill, and possibly overcorrected. Their car broke through a guard rail and plunged some 250 feet down an embankment. Mrs. Newman was thrown clear and



suffered severe bruises and a broken arm, but recovered. Mr. Newman dislocated several vertebrae and injured his spinal cord. He died several days later, and is buried in Mountview Cemetery.

Sources:

- *Billings Gazette*, "As It Was in Billings 45 Years Ago Today", January 10, 1928
- *Billings Gazette*, "Charles H. Newman, Republican Candidate for County Commissioner", October 25, 1914
- *Billings Gazette*, "Death Claims Chas. Newman, Due Car Plunge", August 13, 1926
- *Billings Gazette*, "Local Couple Hurt in Crash", August 4, 1926
- *Billings Gazette*, "To Buy Newman Ranch for Park", March 23, 1915
- "Biographical Facts of Charles H. Newman", March 7, 1925, Collection of Billings Public Library

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