

Photo of the Month

**Golden Rule Building (circa 1894)
110-112 West Walnut Street**



The Golden Rule building (center of photo) at 110-112 West Walnut Street in Rogers, between 1908 and 1911. Negative #N000970. Courtesy of Betty Crum.

It's not known exactly when this brick building was erected in downtown Rogers; the best guess is about 1894. The building, which includes two ground-floor entrances (110 and 112 West Walnut) and an entrance to the numerous second-story rooms, has had a lively history of occupancy.

The earliest known use for the building's ground floor was as Rogers' last saloon, the Blue Goose Saloon, which was there prior to 1896. By the late 1890s it was home to the E.E. Musselman Bakery. Early offices for the *Rogers Republican* and the *Free Press* were housed in the west section (112 West Walnut)

between 1901/02 and 1907.

In 1907 or 1908 the building received the name it bears today: the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule was a chain of stores similar to the old five-and-dime stores. James Cash Penney opened his first Golden Rule Store in Wyoming in 1902, in partnership with Guy Johnson and Thomas Callahan. Penney stocked quality merchandise and tagged every item with its price — a custom different from the usual bargaining that went on in stores at the time. When Johnson and Callahan dissolved their partnership in 1907, Penney bought out their two stores and began his own Golden Rule stores; by 1912 there were 34. In 1913 Penney changed the name of the stores to the J.C. Penney Company, under which the stores still do business today.

Rogers Democrat editor Erwin Funk reminisced decades later that the Golden Rule name was painted on the building in 1909, making it perhaps the oldest sign in Rogers. His date may be incorrect, however, as the Famous Clothing Store was established in the west side of the building in 1908 by J.J. Williamson. After several changes of hands and a name change to the Fashion Clothing Company, the store eventually became the Wilson Clothing Company in 1933. In 1943 W.C. Putman bought out the store, changing its name to Putman's Clothing Store, which stayed in business until the late 1950s. At that time it became Brewer's Men's Clothing Company, which went out of business in 1965. In 1965 Tom and Jerry's Shoe Store moved in and was a Walnut Street mainstay until its closure in 2000. Since 2001 Carl and Beth Guest's Showcase Trophy & Awards has found a home there.

The east side of the building (110 W. Walnut) has had more consistent occupancy. The Leader Variety Store, Rogers' first variety store, moved there in 1935. The store lasted 28 years, closing in 1963. In 1964 Opal Beck opened her Mode O'Day dress shop which was in business 44 years (39 years at the Walnut location) until it closed in 2003. Today the building is home to Tom Fairbanks Custom Furniture and Framing.

Long occupancy was not always the case for the upstairs rooms and offices of the Golden Rule. On the east side (110½) the earliest known occupant, from 1899 to 1917 or 18, was the *Rogers Democrat* and the offices of E.M. and son Erwin Funk; during this period Betty Blake, future wife of Will Rogers, worked at the newspaper for a short time prior to their marriage. In 1909 physician and homeopath Dr. George M. Love moved in; his practice was there until 1943. Duty & Duty, attorneys, had offices there (1918-1925; 1944-1954) as did the Mohler Sisters millinery business (1918-mid 1920s) and the Mrs. Pearl Choate Shoppe (1925-late 1920s or early 1930s). For just one year (1947) Hubert Musteen had his photography studio upstairs. James T. McDonald, an attorney, had offices in the building from 1948 through 1965. After a period of vacancy, Sue's School Supplies was on the second floor in 1985 and 1986. The rooms were also home to a bookstore and yoga center for a time. Today, for the first time in its history, the second floor of the east side of the Golden Rule building is the home of first-floor owner Tom Fairbanks.

The upstairs west side (112½) has been home primarily to lawyers, physicians, and dentists. The first known residents were Mr. and Mrs. E.R. Morgan, who lived in the rear of the west side, while Morgan's law offices were in the front rooms. Morgan practiced law from 1889 to 1911 and also served as Rogers mayor (1899-1900) and justice of the peace. The next tenant was none other than Monte Ne founder "Coin" Harvey who had temporary offices here in the front rooms from November 1900 through spring 1901, during the early building stages at Monte Ne.

Funk reported that Dr. J.G. Robison, a physician, was the first to rent the front rooms after Harvey, and that Dr. Rufus Rice was officed here for a short time after that. Sometime in the mid-1910s W.C. Roberts, an attorney, had his office here, and by the late 1910s Dr. A.M. Buckley, the first of many dentists to

occupy these quarters, moved in. When Buckley left in the early 1920s Dr. F.M. Lowrey moved in his dentistry practice. The longest resident in these offices was dentist Dr. Albert W. Marshall, who came here in 1925 and retired in 1953. In 1954 dentist Dr. John R. Bland practiced here for six years. The back rooms on the west side have also been used for a study room for the First Christian Church of Rogers (1925-sometime before 1930) and as offices for lawyer and city attorney Claude M. Williams(1930s-1952). Between 1976 and 2001, the only upstairs tenants were a Tae Kwon Do school and the Rogers junior Chamber of Commerce. When the Guests moved their business into the west side of the Golden Rule, they converted the upstairs offices into their home.

Today the Golden Rule building is perhaps more alive than it's been in its entire history, with tenants in both east and west sides of the building and their homes occupying both sides of the upstairs.

Credits: Erwin Funk and Ruth Muse, "Golden Rule Building Full of History," *Rogers Daily News*, 12 July 1981; Rogers phone books and directories in the Rogers Historical Museum collections; special thanks to Opal Beck and Carl Guest.