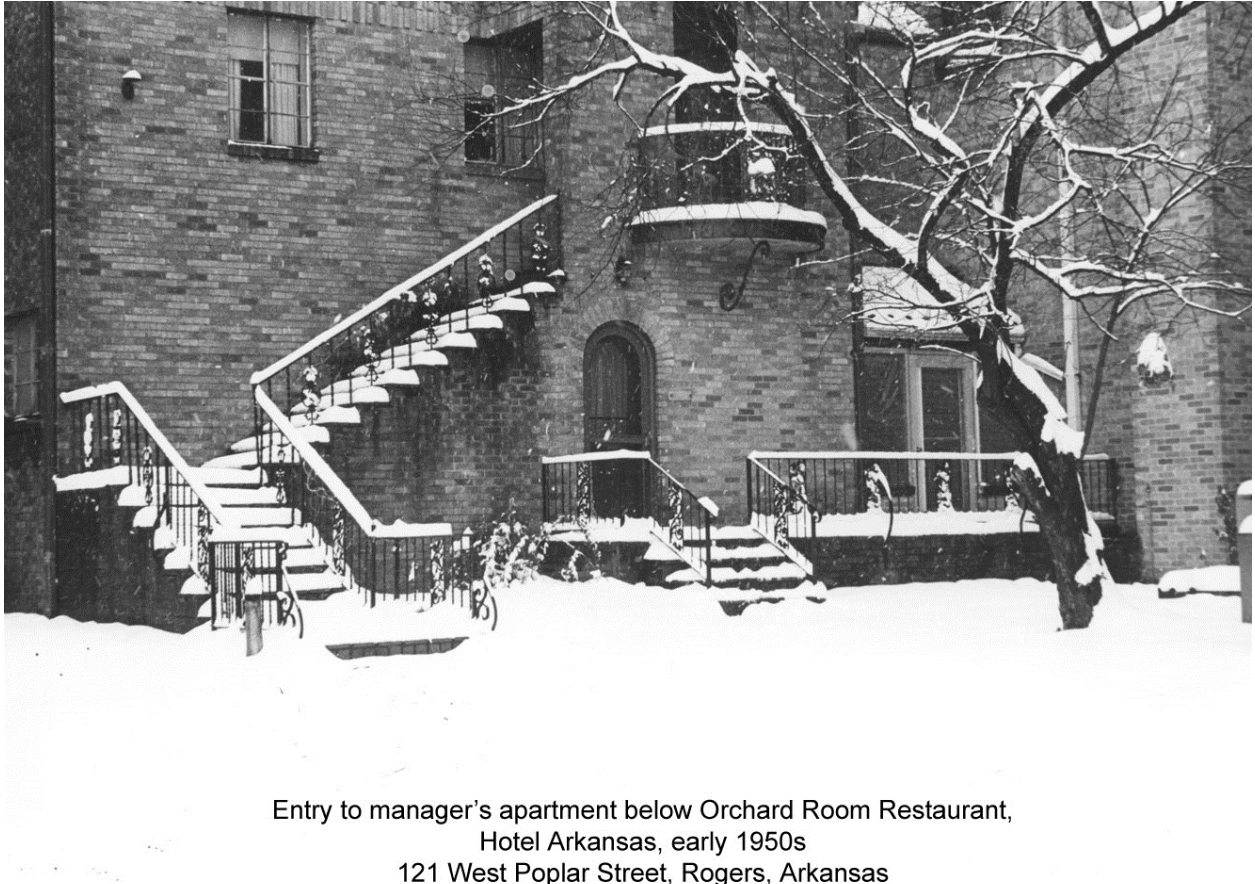


Photo of the Month

Palace of the Ozarks



Entry to manager's apartment below Orchard Room Restaurant,
Hotel Arkansas, early 1950s
121 West Poplar Street, Rogers, Arkansas
Photo courtesy of Kay Calvin Sanford



The Calvin Family
Forrest, Louise, and daughter, Kay
Late 1940s, Harris Hotel, Rogers, Arkansas
Photo courtesy of Kay Calvin Sanford

Much has been written about the historic Lane Hotel. Many people are familiar with its distinctive architectural features and its former place as a center of community activity. This wonderful building continues to be an important landmark in downtown Rogers as well as in the memories of people who knew it during its heyday.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the Lane Hotel epitomized luxury. Professional service and elegant surroundings were hallmarks of the hotel. Known as the Harris Hotel by the mid-1930s and the Hotel Arkansas by the early 1950s, it was above all thought of as the “Palace of the Ozarks.”

“Make the Harris your vacation headquarters,” said a two-page advertisement in a 1950 issue of the Rogers Daily News. “Whether it is a week, two weeks or a week-end, the Harris offers you traditional hospitality that is your assurance of carefree relaxation. You can drive here in a very short time, leaving your cares behind you.” This fine reputation also extended nationally and, in one case, a late 1940s television game show awarded a honeymoon at the Hotel Arkansas as a prize. It was truly a destination.

But this reputation depended on people. The employees that brought the hotel to life promised to follow “the principles for Better Hotel Keeping” and strived to provide for the “comfort, convenience, and security of its guests and to the development of the community.” In this way, the “Palace of the Ozarks” also became a place for community members to gather. The hotel served the community as a location for wedding receptions, service club meetings, parties, lodging for visiting college sports teams, and business meetings. The Daisy Corporation, for example, often held sales meetings in the ballroom of the hotel.

For nearly half of the Palace’s history, operations were the responsibility of Forrest L. Calvin, who managed the hotel from 1943 to 1958. The Calvin family, pictured at bottom right, came to Rogers from Pawhuska, Oklahoma, where Mr. Calvin had previously managed the Duncan Hotel. His leadership and experience maintained the prestige of the Harris Hotel and made it the destination for businessmen, vacationers, and community members that it was.

As a benefit of his position, the family lived in the manager’s apartment, which was located below the Orchard Room Restaurant at the rear of the hotel. Pictured at top right is the entry to the apartment in the early 1950s. The hotel business, however, changed during the late 1950s as public taste for automobile travel increased. Many people began patronizing modern motels that provided road-side convenience and allowed guests to park cars at the entrance to their rooms. Mr. and Mrs. Calvin briefly left Rogers at that time, but returned to manage the ultra-modern Sands Motel, which was built in 1961 and located at the corner of West Walnut Street and Highway 71. In 1963 the “Palace of the Ozarks” closed. Mr. Calvin retired from the hotel business in 1970.

Kay Calvin Sanford, daughter of Forrest and Louise Calvin, grew up in the hotel during this time. She graciously shared her unique perspective on life in the “Palace of the Ozarks” with the

Rogers History Club at its March 2010 meeting