

Photo of the Month

Thanksgiving in 1904



Corner Walnut and First Streets, Rogers, Arkansas, c.1904
Neg. # 008547

This article is about Thanksgiving in Rogers, but it isn't about remembering customs or traditions. At the turn of the twentieth century the Rogers Democrat published a look back at the progress in the community and those things to be thankful for during the year. Pictured at right is an image of downtown at the corner of Walnut and First Streets in approximately 1904. "In taking this opportunity to present a partial list of the improvements that have been made in Rogers the past year, we do so with the idea that every improvement is a benefit to the entire community and that we may well return thanks for the prosperous condition of our little city." It is hoped that all who read this article will consider the community we live in today and reflect on the common hopes people expressed over time.

By the end of 1904 Rogers had completed construction of over fifty blocks of sidewalks and approximately forty cement alleys and street crossings. These improvements accounted for about three and one-half miles of paving. Considering that our streets had yet to be paved and livestock were a common sight in town, concrete sidewalks must have seemed like the peak of community improvement for pedestrians.

Rogers was also going through a business and home building boom in 1904. Three new brick buildings were erected on Walnut Street and many home improvements and new residential construction was cited. Many of the homes were reported to have cost \$2,000 or more to construct, which would amount to over \$150,000 in today's money. Notable among these, H.L. Stroud built a brick cottage and L.G. Sager erected a 2 story frame house. B.F. Sikes remodeled three single story residences on North Fourth Street, "all good buildings," and W.A. McNeil raised the roof on his home to accommodate the addition of new rooms.

The Rogers Democrat noted that fruit crops were poor during 1904 however. According to the article, a late frost burned the strawberry crop and the mild weather of the previous winter had caused the peaches to bloom too early in the spring "and the frost did the rest." The frost also killed most of the cherry crop and the blackberries were only fair. Apple growers produced just one-third of the expected yield and only shipped 115 car loads to market. Gardens, however, produced well and truck crops were readily available from the local farmers.

Nevertheless, the town's infrastructure continued to develop, property values continued to rise, businesses did well downtown, and hundreds of workers found employment in construction. The people of Rogers had much to be thankful for in 1904. "That there is now a good steel bridge over White River. That the cows are up for a time at least. That the new piano is now really in the opera house. That there will be no more elections for at least two years. That the Frisco trains don't come in quite as fast now. That eggs are not more than 25 cents a dozen. That the Rogers Democrat is only \$1 a year. That we don't live in Missouri. That the law don't forbid killing rabbits. That we have so far escaped the storms of other sections. That we live in the best town in the best county in Arkansas."