

# History of the Museum

## 1975

The Rogers Historical Museum was created in 1974 by local citizens who were concerned about the loss of their heritage. At the suggestion of councilwoman Opal Beck, the Rogers City Council chose the creation of a museum as Rogers' Bicentennial project. A 9-member commission was charged with developing the museum, with Vera Key as the first chair.

An auxiliary organization, the Friends of the Museum, was also created to support the commissioners in their task of creating and staffing the facility. On October 25, 1975, the Rogers Historical Museum opened in a 1905 former bank building with a major public event. In those early days the museum was largely a volunteer project, with a part-time clerk as the only paid staff member.



**The 1905 Former Bank building that was the first site of the Museum.**

## 1982

In 1982, the museum moved from its rented space to the Hawkins House, which became the property of the City of Rogers through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Hawkins and family, who partially donated the home. The first director, Marianne Woods, was hired that same year.

Much of the collection had to be put in storage after the move to the Hawkins House, which at 1,000 square feet was much smaller than the museum's original location. In 1985, the Friends began a successful campaign for funds for a new 5,600-square-foot addition, which was named in honor of Vera Key. Groundbreaking began in December 1986, and the museum reopened on December 5, 1987.

## New Addition Opening

The opening of the new addition began a period of continued expansion. The size of the staff grew, as did the collections and the number of exhibits and programs. In 1995 the museum expanded into the old public library building at the corner of Second Street and Poplar Street, which houses the museum's education offices and classroom as well as collections and general storage. That same year the museum reopened the Hawkins House after a restoration project which received a commendation from the Victorian Society in America.

## Exhibits, Publications, & Programs

Throughout its history the museum has been repeatedly recognized for the excellence of its exhibits, publications, and programs. But the most meaningful recognition of all was the awarding of accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums in 1999. One of only seven accredited museums in the State of Arkansas, the museum achieved reaccreditation in 2010.

## 2006 to Present Day

In 2006, the museum began planning for an eventual expansion. By early in 2010 architectural plans, an interpretive plan, and a feasibility study had all been completed. An IMLS grant allowed us to hire a Curator of Exhibits and design all the galleries for the new facility. A capital campaign is currently underway, and exciting things are to come for the Museum!.