

Rogers is Blessed with Three Museums in Historic Downtown

by James Hales

Most people know that Rogers is blessed with two great museums in the historical section, the Rogers Historical Museum and the Daisy Airgun Museum. The Rogers Historical Museum is one of the finest city-owned museums in the state, and the Daisy Airgun Museum features the largest selection of non-powder guns in the world.

However, almost no one is aware of the third fine museum downtown, which has a great collection of interesting and unique artifacts and pictures from Rogers' past.

The Rogers Fire Department Museum located in Fire Station No. 1 at 301 N. First Street is filled with Rogers' history and offers free tours of their fine facility. The most prominent item in the museum is "Old Hulda," the original fire truck purchased by Rogers in 1919. The American La France Pump truck was the first mechanized pump truck purchased by the Rogers Fire Department, and it could pump 350 gallons of water per minute, a vast contrast to the previous hand pumper. It has been restored to its original glory with the help of donations from Rogers' citizens. The truck is bright and clean with two kerosene lamps hanging from hooks on the back that were used for lighting to fight fires before modern battery lights were available. In 1889, the 16-man Rogers fire department (called the Rogers Hose Company) was also an excellent drill team, and in a state competition won its first real piece of fire fighting equipment, a hand drawn hose cart. This hose cart was dragged to the fires and used until "Old Hulda" was acquired in 1919. Today this hose cart can be seen in the museum.



This picture of First Street about 1890 shows the city hall and fire station in use until the "new" city hall was built on Elm Street in 1929. The bell from the tower is on display in the Fire Museum at 301 N. First Street. (Photo courtesy of the Rogers Historical Museum)

In the early days of Rogers, a large brass bell was located in the bell tower atop city hall, and a fire was announced by ringing the fire bell. The location of the fire was determined by the number of rings, different for each ward of the city. This brass bell is also featured in the museum. The brass fire pole from the firehouse in the old 1929 city hall on Elm Street is mounted and still available for children to climb. Numerous other fire related items are featured, including pictures of past devastating fires, and fire fighting items from the past. Pictures of all of the fire chiefs, from the time the Rogers Fire Department was officially organized in 1922 until the present, are mounted on the wall. A large board lists the names of every fireman that has served the people of Rogers.

The fire department welcomes anyone to take a free tour of the museum, especially

children. The youngsters can climb on the old fire engine, try to climb the old brass fire pole, touch the large brass bell that has announced so many fires in the past, and look at all of the amazing paraphernalia. These tours not only are very educational and interesting, but also offer an excellent opportunity for the firemen to teach fire safety to the children and adults alike. (Info provided by the Rogers Fire Department and various newspaper articles from the Rogers Daily News)



Rogers firemen, Justin Humes (left) and Tyler Steele stand in the Fire Museum at Fire Station No. 1 at 301 N. First Street. (Photo by James Hales, Feb. 2009)

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