

# Photo of the Month

## Rogers Hardware Company



Rogers Hardware Co., 113 W. Walnut, c.1927-1929  
Neg. # N002722

“The fellow that owns his own house is always just coming out of a hardware store.” Humorist Kin Hubbard, a contemporary of Will Rogers, once made this observation. But beyond this amusing image, a hardware store was valuable in serving a growing community and often offered “a little bit of everything” before today’s “big box” outlets. Rogers has been home to many local hardware companies, which included Beaulieu Hardware, T.J. Keller Hardware, and A.J. Burnham Hardware. Another hardware business was the Rogers Hardware Company, which is pictured at right. This image, taken by photographer Howard Fowler in approximately 1929, illustrates the business at its 113 West Walnut Street location.

In 1896 J. Wythe Walker and Cal Walker of Lowell bought the Rogers Hardware Company early in the firms’ history from D.A. Oakley. Mr. Oakley had been a community leader and was well-established in the grocery and hardware business in Rogers, but retired due to ill health and died in 1900. In continuing the successful business, the Walkers advertised the company in 1907 as “the only wholesale hardware and implement house between Springfield, Missouri and Ft. Smith, Arkansas.”

The store operated at 120 South First Street for several years in the Burnham Block and was neighbors with A.J. Burnham Hardware, W.R. Cady Grocery, and Meeks Grocery. By 1909 Benton County Hardware acquired the Rogers Hardware Company from the Walker brothers and their business partner J.W. Kimmons. Morgan McMichael operated the business on behalf of Benton County Hardware during this time period. Rogers Hardware Company left this address shortly before 1920 and the location became occupied by Linkway Hardware and Furniture. The storefront at 120 South First Street was eventually lost to fire in 1960 and today the location is a vacant lot between The Crumpet Tea Room in the Vinson Square building and Poor Richard's Art Gallery in the J.E. Applegate building.

According to the listing in the 1918-1919 Rogers City Directory, the Rogers Hardware Company had relocated to 224 West Walnut Street. The advertisement in this directory listed merchandise which included charter oak and round oak stoves, DeLavel Cream Separators, heavy hardware, builders hardware, and shelf hardware. Another advertisement from a 1917 issue of the Rogers Democrat stated the availability of John Deere buggies during the Christmas season of that year.

In June 1929 the Rogers Hardware Company moved to its well-known location at 113 West Walnut Street and "thrived there for over half a century" with the Rogers Telephone Company operating upstairs from 1928 until approximately 1960. Please note the Telephone Company sign hanging above the store's sign in the photograph. This location had a long history associated with hardware and grocery interests. The building was constructed in approximately 1898 and was first home to T.J. Keller Hardware, C.A. Aufder Heide Furniture, and A.J. Duckworth Groceries, Four, and Feed before Rogers Hardware began conducting business there.

A 1962 newspaper advertisement stated "you will find it at Rogers Hardware," which illustrates the variety of merchandise carried by the store. Dick Bean and his wife operated Rogers Hardware in the 1960s until it was purchased by Charles and Bunny McCrory in 1974. The McCrorys operated the store until 1985 when the Curiosity Book Shop was opened by Margaret Luffman at the location. Ms. Luffman restored the building to its appearance in 1921 and the store has been home to several other businesses over the years, but continues to be an important connection to the history and life of downtown Rogers