

# Photo of the Month

## The Key Wing



Ribbon cutting ceremony of the new Key Wing  
Rogers Historical Museum, June 4, 1988  
Pictured left to right: Jan Harcourt, Museum Director;  
John Sampier, Mayor; Kathleen Dickerson, Commission Chairman;  
Jerry Malone, Friends Board President  
Neg. # N000896



Construction of the Key Wing, 1988  
Rogers Historical Museum  
Neg. # N004533



Construction sign located at Key Wing site,  
adjacent to the Hawkins House,  
322 S. Second St., Rogers, Arkansas  
Neg.# N004532

The Key Wing is the main area of operations, collections, and exhibits of your Museum – the Rogers Historical Museum. It operates as part of a system of facilities which includes the Hawkins House, the Education Annex, and the Exhibit Workshop. To preserve and share our history, the Museum is guided by a mission based in education, preservation of collections, public outreach, and community partnerships. Staff members, volunteers, and Commissioners take these responsibilities seriously and this role requires constant change as collections grow, new technologies develop, and interests and educational goals of the community expand.

As such, even museums of history have histories of their own. And to understand the Museum's place in the community today, it is important to know about its growth and change. For nearly 36 years, the Museum has continued to expand its collections and educational opportunities to visitors through exhibits and programs. The Key Wing of the Museum, as a center of this activity, represents an important aspect of our development and service to the Rogers community.

The history of the Rogers Historical Museum began in 1974 when the Rogers City Council established a Museum Commission as a Bicentennial project to create and operate a museum as a city department. Motivation for this project came from concerns of local citizens, who believed they were losing their history and recognized the important role of a museum as a community educator and steward of our cultural heritage. By 1975 the Museum opened to the public in the old Bank of Rogers building at 114 South First Street, which was then staffed by the Friends of the Museum and directed by the Commission.

Vera Key, a descendant of Sylvanus and Catharine Blackburn and long-time community cultural leader, accepted the post of first Commission Chairperson. Ms. Key served in that capacity until 1982, when she resigned due to poor health. During the 1980s the Museum grew and added professionally trained staff members. The Museum also moved into the Hawkins House in 1982 after the Hawkins Family donated the site to the city for preservation and public use.

Given the small space for Museum operations in the Hawkins House though, exhibits were limited and many collections objects were placed in storage or on display throughout the community. By the mid-1980s planning for a Museum expansion began, which focused on the central importance of the Hawkins House as an interpretive resource. As such, the expansion was designed to be attached to the historic home and eventually provide 5,600 square feet of space for administrative offices, collections storage, work space, and exhibit galleries. Project cost for construction was approximately \$50 per square foot.

Fayetteville architect Newton Hailey, son of well-known Ford dealer Newt Hailey, led the design work with architect Don Spann of Rogers and a building committee appointed by the Commission. As plans moved forward, Vera Key died in 1987 and willed a major gift from her estate to the Museum. This bequest established the Museum's endowment fund, which greatly assisted expansion and continues to support Museum operations today. Because of her service to the community and her generous gift, the new building was named in her honor.

The photo at right captured the ribbon cutting ceremony at the dedication of the Key Wing on June 4, 1988. Included in the image are Museum Director Jan Harcourt, Mayor John Sampier, Commission Chairperson Kathleen Dickerson, and Friends Board President Jerry Malone. Ms. Dickerson, first appointed in 1977, continues to serve on the Commission today. In addition, Mr. Sampier now serves as a Museum Commissioner. The two lower images illustrate construction at the site.

Today we have the opportunity for another major expansion. A new era of growth will allow us to continue developing and caring for our collections and to provide even more enriching experiences in interactive exhibits and expanded educational programs than our facilities will currently support. In 1988, the Key Wing provided a platform for us to progress to this point in our history and it will remain an important part of your Museum's future of service to the community.