

Donation of the Month

Autograph Albums



These two books, called autograph albums, date from 1879 and 1880. They belonged to Elizabeth “Lizzie” Miller. Elizabeth Miller married Francis Cunningham Hawkins in 1884 in Larned, Kansas. In 1900, the Hawkins’ family moved to Rogers, to live in what is now known as the Hawkins House, currently part of the Rogers Historical Museum. The earlier album has a black leather cover with an embossed title design across the front. The later album has a dark grey cover with black borders and “Autographs” embossed in the center in gold.

Autograph albums first appeared as a tradition among German students in the fifteenth century. Some of the earliest seen in the United States date around 1820. In the late nineteenth century, young men and women wrote verses or poems, messages of friendship, and signatures in the albums to be kept as sentimental reminders of each other. The albums, sold with a bound cover and blank pages, were especially popular with high school and college students. This is similar to the modern tradition of writing messages and signing names in school yearbooks. Messages included advice, humorous or romantic poetry, popular quotations, and even elaborate calligraphy and drawings. Other entries were just simple signatures. Sometimes, paper cut-outs or pictures were pasted inside. For historians, these albums are a wonderful glimpse into the everyday lives of young people from the past.

Mrs. Hawkins brought these albums with her to Rogers with signatures of friends from Larned. These are just two examples of the messages of friendship Elizabeth brought with her to her new home in Rogers in these autograph albums:

*“With joy encircled round
And love increasing store
Oh happy may your life be
Both now and ever more”*

*“Ours, an eternal friendship must be,
Though mount and hill and prairie intervene
One word, one thought, one hope of thee
Shall ever keep my memory green.”*

CREDITS

"The Duncan Emrich Autograph Album Collection," Library of Congress American Folklife Center, August 1998. Collection Guide; "The Hawkins House Story" Brochure by the Rogers Historical Museum; Object and Donor files; Rogers Historical Museum Research Library.