Donation of the Month

Menu from the Orchard Room
2009.84.1-2
Donor: Wallace Dressler

Fine dining is something most of us do only on special occasions. It is a luxury that one saves up for and dresses for in their best, and then hits the town for a fabulous meal. How many of us would pick the restaurant behind the local hotel as the place to go? When it was built, the Orchard Room behind the Harris Hotel was the pinnacle of fine dining.

Originally built as the Lane Hotel in 1929 the hotel went bankrupt and was purchased by Earl Harris, owner of the Harris Baking Company. In 1940 the Orchard Room opened to much fanfare. The Rogers Democrat wrote it was one of the most "elaborately equipped and beautifully appointed restaurants in the Ozarks region or the state." The Orchard Room boasted an unpolished ceiling, copper chandeliers, 15 tables, and a small bar area. The dishes featured an apple blossom pattern.

For fine dining one could choose from several prepared styles of potatoes, relishes, cocktails and appetizers to go with a meal of White River Cat Fish, Oysters, Steak or a sandwich. Most items ranged from 20 to 75 cents with the exception being the steaks which could run up to $1.25. Wouldn't you love to go out for dinner and only spend 45 cents on a half dozen fried oysters! However, you have to remember it was 1940 and 45 cents was quite a bit of money.

If you wanted to go out for a less formal meal, the restaurant also served breakfast which included everything from fruit to waffles. You could pick and choose from five different meal packages. For example, No. 2 was a choice of fruit or juice or cereal, one egg (prepared any style), two strips of bacon, toast or roll, coffee, tea or milk, all for 35 cents.

The Orchard Room was open even as the hotel continued to change hands. Today, the restaurant sits vacant along with the majestic hotel. However, inside it still retains its beautiful wood ceiling, light

fixtures, and tables. One day, the Orchard Room may once again be the place for fine dining in downtown Rogers.