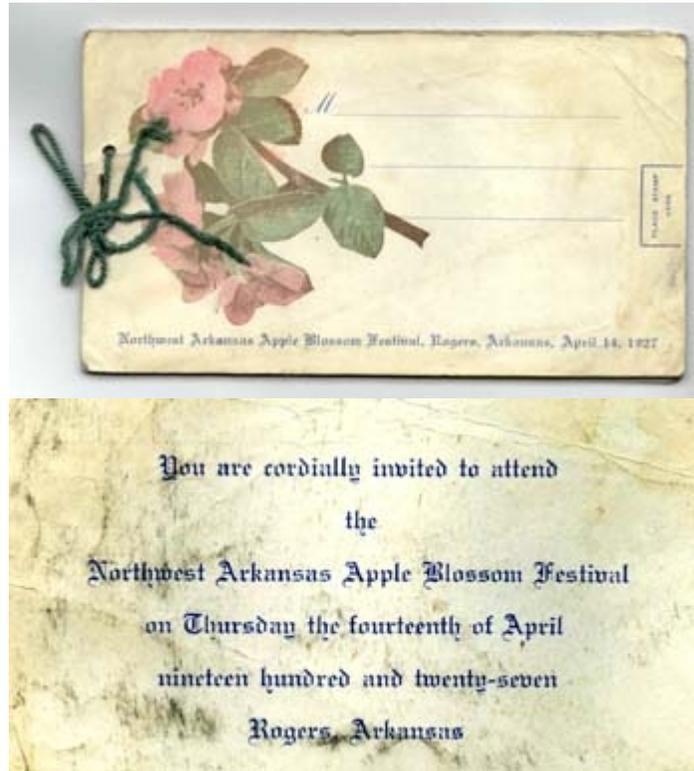


Donation of the Month

Object: Apple Blossom Festival Postcard Booklet, April 1927

Catalog #: 1988.40.4

Donor: John F. Gordon



When you imagine flower-strewn floats, you might think of Pasadena, California, and the Rose Bowl Parade, not Rogers, Arkansas. But for five years, from 1923 to 1927, the city was home to an annual spring spectacle which brought thousands of visitors from the region and sent hundreds of local residents into a frenzy of activity.

It all started with W.R. Cady, a local businessman and orchardist who in 1922 attended a peach festival in Georgia. When he proposed that Rogers hold a similar festival for apples, community leaders were enthusiastic. It was a huge undertaking, requiring months of planning and the "everlasting team work of every bloomin' soul," as stated in the 1927 postcard booklet.

Rogers was a natural for the festival. From the turn of the 20th century the area had been known as the "Land of the Big Red Apple." In 1901 Benton County's crop of two-and-a-half million bushels set a national record for one county. The production of apple cider vinegar was a major industry, and each town had at least one evaporator to dry apples. Thousands of car loads of fresh and dried apples were shipped from Rogers on the Frisco Railroad.

In many ways the Apple Blossom Festival was as much a celebration of spring as of the apple industry. Many of the parade floats had spring themes. Automobile tours through the orchards offered a dazzling scene of apple trees in full bloom. But it was the pageants and coronation of the Queen which were truly rites of spring, borrowed by pageant planners from the traditional May Day celebration of England and its earlier counterparts in Greece and Rome. The Queen's attendants, such as the Sunshine Girls, Ozark Breezes, Trees, and Butterflies, were symbols of nature. Dances had such fanciful names as The Breath

of Spring and The Rainbow Dance.

