

The History of Arkalalah

by Foss Farrar and Terry Naden

Introduction

Seventeen-year-old Dorothy Moore ran downstairs to answer the doorbell at her North Second Street home in Arkansas City one September evening. Her parents and their guests were in another room playing bridge.

It was 1928 and Moore was a freshman at Arkansas City Junior College.

She recognized the three men at the door as prominent businessmen whom she didn't know very well.

R.H. "Dusty" Rhoads, secretary of the Arkansas City Chamber of Commerce, and two of the three founders of the Arkalalah festival, Pat Somerfield and John Floyd, called at the Moore family home that night, recalled the late Dorothy (Moore) Harbaugh during a 2003 interview for an Arkansas City Traveler article (Traveler's Arkalalah supplement, October 17, 2003).

Somerfield, Floyd, and Clyde Boggs had dreamed up the idea of a fall festival as they sat around a table at the downtown Petroleum Club. It was to cheer up the town's residents in bleak economic times and keep kids out of mischief around Halloween.

That night, the three businessmen who called at the Moore home came to tell Dorothy that she had been selected to be the first Arkalalah queen. She was to be crowned in a ceremony that would take place in another several weeks.

"I really hadn't paid any attention about the celebration, so I said 'thank you, let me call my mother.' She came to the door and greeted them and was mighty excited," Harbaugh recalled during another interview for a Traveler article in 2006 (Traveler's Arkalalah supplement, October 20, 2006).

Dorothy was crowned Queen Alalah I on October 30, 1928.

After a year at the local junior college, Dorothy transferred to the University of Kansas where she majored in piano and public school music. She graduated from college when she was just 20 years old. She spent the next nine years teaching music to elementary school children in Wichita before she was married and moved to Oklahoma.

But Harbaugh, who had played the piano from an early age, said that being crowned Queen Alalah I was her proudest achievement. (Traveler, June 11, 2011).

