



# *postscript.* The Other Boyd House

Tucked away on an obscure semi-circle drive, just a long block north of its more illustrious successor, sits the other Boyd House, the first home built in Norman by the University of Oklahoma's founding president, David Ross Boyd, for his wife, Jennie, and their daughter, Mary Alice.

Having occupied rented rooms in private homes since his arrival in August 1892, Boyd completed his house the following March 1893 on five acres of land along the grandly named University Boulevard, a dirt road bordered by a boardwalk, designed to tie the town to the University's first building, then under construction to the south. In her memoirs, Alice Boyd recalled a front room, which contained her mother's rosewood organ, divided by sliding doors from the larger living room with its Franklin stove. At the back was a "summer" kitchen separated from the house by a wide porch. Dr. Boyd planted pear, apricot and peach trees on his land, had a deep well dug and installed a cistern halfway to the barn, which housed a few cows, a buggy and a strawberry roan named Jock, a veteran of the Land Run of 1889.

Several years later, Boyd built a much grander residence on the corner of University Boulevard and West Boyd Street, which his family occupied in June 1906. When Boyd was fired two years later in the political upheaval of statehood, the Boyd "mansion" was first leased, then permanently acquired by the University as the official home of its presidents (see "Welcome to Boyd House" on Page 11).

A farmer named Charley Gorton, from whose land claim the University's first 40 acres was carved, gained ownership of the Boyds' first home and lived there from 1908 to 1927. According to a local historian, the late Wilma Rodgers, Gorton in 1921 enlisted R. M. Kirkpatrick of OU's maintenance department to help him move the house to the back of the long lot, turning it around to face Park Drive. The University repurchased the house in 1927 for use as a practice house for the Department of Home Economics, then sold it to Kirkpatrick in 1940. Kirkpatrick and his wife, Ruth, lived there until their deaths in 1978. Various members of the Bleakley family owned and occupied the house until 2000.

Against the universal advice of others, Susan and Jeff Greer, who were living next door, bought 431 Park Drive in spite of its deplorable condition, probably saving it from the wrecking ball. The young couple was charmed by the old structure's history and could see its possibilities, and with the birth of daughter Keever, now a first grader, shortly thereafter, the Greers mirrored the family unit that first occupied the house.

Both Susan and Jeff, OU graduates and current OU employees, had grown up in the neighborhood. Jeff's late father, J. Keever Greer, had been head of OU's Stovall Museum, and his

mother, Marjorie, a retired professor of physiology and anatomy at OUHSC, while Susan's mother, Jaquine Hudson was a longtime employee in the Office of Development, where Susan now works.

The Greers lovingly undertook a renovation project that Susan admits probably will never be complete. Except for the roof replacement, they have done the work themselves. They ripped off the asbestos siding and scraped down the exterior to the bare wood—found to be in remarkably good condition—then repainted. They peeled away layers of linoleum and refinished the original wood floors. Using

his expertise as part of the environmental systems division of the OU Physical Plant, Jeff added central heat and air conditioning.

Previous owners had installed indoor plumbing, added closets and made numerous modifications, some mystifying, over the intervening century. The original porch had become a foyer and another porch added. The Greers think the home once had two fireplaces, now gone, although the transoms over some of the doorways still testify to the original design. Beneath multiple coats of paint, painstakingly removed, they found beautiful carved woodwork and detailed metal faceplates and vent covers.

As they work, Jeff and Susan continue to discover little hidden treasures—chief among them newspapers in the debris of the old kitchen—newspapers dated 1893, the year the Boyds took up residence. They are so fragile they cannot be touched, but the relics survive nonetheless as a message from the original owners—a welcome to the other Boyd House. —CJB



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David Ross Boyd built his first Norman home on five acres facing the boardwalk along the unpaved University Boulevard. Next to the house in this photo is the Boyds' horse, Jock, hitched to a buggy.