

# ***Henderson House* a novel by Caren Simpson McVicker**

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Genres: Historical Fiction/General, Romance/Historical Fiction/American, Fiction/Family Life/Siblings  
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**Logline:** An enchanting boardinghouse tale of sisters, secrets, and later-in-life romance, *Henderson House* invites you to pull up a rocking chair and lose yourself in the heartaches and hopes of 1940s Oklahoma.

## **Praise for *Henderson House*:**

"Like a love song to my Oklahoma roots, *Henderson House* offers a sweet window into a past when lives and loves moved to the gentle rhythm of small-town cafes, front porch swings, and old two-lane highways." —LISA WINGATE, bestselling author of *Before We Were Yours*

"In *Henderson House*, McVicker has created a world that is both cozy and yet brimming with dark secrets, the possibility of new love, and conflicting plans for the future. The very walls of the building buzz with the hopes and dreams of its variety of inhabitants, from sweet Bessie, to scheming Florence, to the mysterious new boarder, Frank Davis. Alive with small-town, 1940s details, readers will be charmed by this sweet story." —JULIETTE FAY, bestselling author of *Catch Us When We Fall* and *The Half of It*

"One of those rare novels that just makes you smile, [with] plenty of betrayals and secrets to keep you turning pages." —ADDISON ARMSTRONG, author of *The Light of Luna Park* and *The War Librarian*

"A charming novel about real people, flawed but lovable. Promises, heartbreaks, and betrayals are tenderly rendered, always with a dash of humor." —KATHRYN HOLZMAN, author of *The Cost of Electricity* and *Real Estate: A Novel*

"A heart-warming tale of lost love and seemingly never found family, faith, and the deep dark secrets we all keep. McVicker's *Henderson House* is far more than it seems, as she bursts into the Romance world with her innovative debut novel. McVicker's writing breathes life into the story, much like the *Henderson House* itself. A story virtually decades in the making, McVicker's ability to paint a picture with words proves that some things are worth waiting for." —M.B. LEWIS, author of the Award-Winning novel *The Pilate Scroll*

**Short Summary (125 words):** In May 1941, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, hums with talk of spring flowers, fishing derbies, and the growing war in Europe. And for the residents of a quiet neighborhood boarding house, the winds of change are blowing.

Self-proclaimed spinster, Bessie Blackwell, is the reluctant owner of a new pair of glasses. The landlady, Mrs. Henderson, senses that new tenant, Frank Davis, could throw Bessie's spinster status into question with his gentle eyes and ready smile. But the scar on his forehead and rumors of divorce speak of a troubled past.

Bessie's sister, Florence, knows all about troubled pasts. In a desperate attempt to undermine Bessie's budding romance, Florence exposes the sisters' darkest secret. A secret that will change their lives, and the lives of those they love, forever.

**Long Summary (275 words):** In May 1941, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, hums with talk of spring flowers, fishing derbies, and the growing war in Europe. And for the Blackwell sisters, who reside in a quiet neighborhood boarding house, the winds of change are blowing.

Bessie Blackwell, copy room manager at Phillips Petroleum and faithful churchgoer, is the reluctant owner of a new pair of glasses. The young women in the office swear by Bessie's romantic advice, despite the fact that she's a self-proclaimed spinster. Frank Davis, Henderson House's newest tenant, throws that status into question with his gentle eyes and ready smile. But the scar on his forehead and rumors of divorce speak of a troubled past.

Bessie's sister, Florence, a sales assistant at the men's clothing store downtown, knows all about troubled pasts. Her husband is dead, and it's only with her sister's help that she's able to raise Johnny. Life at Henderson House is luxurious compared to growing up in Cherokee Indian Territory, but Florence wants more for her boy than a rented room. When the flagship store in Tulsa offers her a management position, Florence sets her sights on the future and keeping the family together. And neither future nor family includes Frank Davis.

Mrs. Henderson, the landlady, cook, and adopted matriarch of the Blackwell clan, possesses an uncanny intuition about all her borders. She knows true love when she sees it. But soon even her vision becomes clouded as Florence schemes to undermine her sister's budding romance. In a desperate attempt to keep Bessie by her side, Florence exposes the sisters' darkest secret. A secret that will change their lives, and the lives of those they love, forever.

**About the author:** Born in Oklahoma, Caren lives in Vermont with her hubby, a rescue pup, and a barn cat turned happy house kitty. Caren is also a mom to two incredible humans and is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation. *Henderson House* is her first novel.

**Welcome to Act Three:** My husband and I often talk about life having three acts. Act One opened at birth and ran into our early careers. Act Two opened not so much when we got married, but when we had children. Now, the curtain is rising on my Act Three. At fifty-seven, I am a debut novelist. And it started when my father was dying.

I traveled from Vermont to Florida as often as I could while my dad was ill. During a November 2017 visit, we reminisced about our Memorial Day trips to Oklahoma. We would fly to Tulsa, pick up my grandma, drive to Bartlesville, pick up my Great Aunt Boo Boo, and head to the cemetery in Claremore. As a teenager, I was fascinated by these tiny, ancient sisters tottering around the headstones, arguing about what color plastic flowers to place on each grave. Both were born in Indian Territory in the late 1890s. One lost her husband early. The other was an old maid in her forties, living in a boarding house when she fell in love. They were as close and as different as only sisters can be. Reliving these visits with my father reawakened the inner voice of teenage me saying, “You should write about them.”

On my way home that November, I got stuck at the Atlanta Airport. Settling in for a three-hour delay, I took out my laptop and began writing what would become the breakfast scene in Henderson House. I hadn’t written fiction since college. I gave up my dream of being a novelist when I was nineteen, taking the safe, steady-paycheck route, and changing my major to Public Relations. But that’s the beauty of Act Three; you don’t have to choose the well-lit path anymore. Act Three frees you to do something scary and unexpected, like writing a novel set in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Now, I have the honor of sharing this story with you and the privilege of writing the next story and the next. The curtain is up. My Act Three is underway. What will you do with yours?

**Professional Experience:** Caren’s career spans more than three decades as a communications professional with experience in public relations, technical writing, and social media consulting. Caren’s past clients include Goldman Sachs, Merrill Lynch, Frito-Lay, and Nabisco. Since moving to Vermont in 2014, she has consulted for The Artist Book Foundation, Southern Vermont Arts Center, and The Vermont Association of Realtors. Caren is an active member of her local community theater, The Dorset Players, with recent roles including Aunt Eller in *Oklahoma* and Ethel Banks in *Barefoot in the Park*. She is a member of The Dorset Church choir and serves as Vice Chair of Southwestern Vermont Health Care’s Foundation Board. When she is not writing, you can find her in the kitchen, in the garden, or out enjoying the beauty of Vermont with her rescue dog, June Bug.