

Caren Simpson McVicker



About the Author—Born in Oklahoma, Caren is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation and now lives in a very old house in Vermont with her husband, a rescue pup, and a hand-me-down cat. She’s a proud theater geek, a soprano, and a free-wheeling gardener who appreciates a little chaos in the landscape.

Caren is the author of the *Henderson House* historical fiction series, a co-founder of the Southern Vermont Writers’ Conference, and a producer and scriptwriter of the documentary, *An Arrow Shot Through Time*, which explores an extraordinary act of generosity between the Choctaw Nation and the Irish during the Great Hunger of 1847. When she’s not writing, singing, or digging in the dirt, she’s usually thinking about heartwarming stories that connect people across time, place, and culture.

Author’s Note—My great-aunt, Beulah Taylor Allen, was the inspiration for *Henderson House*. Aunt “Boo Boo” was born in Cherokee Indian Territory in 1896, she worked at Phillips Petroleum in Bartlesville for most of her life, and she was an old maid living in a boarding house when a divorced man moved in and they fell in love. She was a member of First Baptist Church and never missed a Wednesday Night Supper. One member of the congregation I spoke to said, “Anytime the doors were unlocked, Beulah was in that church.” Aunt Boo Boo continued to teach Sunday School even after she went blind—quoting Scripture from memory. She lived to be ninety-nine years old.

Aunt Boo Boo was the inspiration for *Henderson House*, but the novel is a work of fiction. I created a boarding house, filled it with characters from my imagination, and let those characters play out the story they wanted to tell. Mrs. Henderson, in particular, was a driving force in the completion of this novel. Mrs. H woke me up in the middle of the night. She demanded a larger role in the narrative. She told me how she wanted the novel to end. I have heard writers talk about their characters taking over the reins, but this was the first time I experienced it for myself. It was truly exhilarating.