

## Caren Simpson McVicker



**About the Author**—Born in Oklahoma, Caren lives in Vermont with her husband, 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. Winner of the Inkshares 2020 All-Genre Contest, *Henderson House* is Caren's first novel.

**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.

**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.