

Editor's Note: This is the second in an occasional series on notable historic renovations in the area, and the characters old and new who have brought the old buildings to life.

By ANDREW McLEMORE

It took Sharon Reese some time to realize she wanted her family to live in the 105-year-old house at 304 East University Street.

That is, it took a couple of minutes.

"I walked into the foyer and I said, 'Let's buy it,'" Ms. Reese said. "You could easily tell the potential. It just needed some love and polish."

BUILDING ON THE PAST

Ms. Reese and her husband, Byron Reese, bought the house in 2004 after deciding they wanted to move to Georgetown. Though the two-story home is easily one of the oldest in Georgetown, the Reeses are only the third owners and bought it from descendants of its first owners.

They have made a few changes that required several months of work, but otherwise the Reeses refurbished the home to match its original condition as closely as possible.

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HOUSE

*Colorful, historic home is
'built to last' and be loved*

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"We wanted to keep the feel of the house," Ms. Reese said. "We want people to walk in and feel the age of this place."

The house is named for C.C. Cody, a math professor who taught at Southwestern University for 37 years in the 19th century, eventually becoming the school's first dean. He was known affectionately as the "Grand Old Man of Southwestern" until his death in 1923.

The house was left vacant for a decade before the Reese family moved in January 2005, yet few of the city's many historic homes can match the pristine condition of the Cody house's original elements, Ms. Reese said. The oak banisters, ornate doorknobs and multi-colored tiles of the coal-burning fireplaces look so untarnished by the passage of time that it's easy to imagine they are modern recreations of classic Victorian architecture.

But on one of the many waved-glass windows still intact, one can see a crude, half-finished carving of "C.C. Cody" in the glass. Mr. Reese guessed it was the work of Mr. Cody's son of the same name, who was pulled away by his mother before he could complete the inscription.

"These houses were built to last," he said. "The garage was built in the '70s and it's about to fall in."

The Texas Historical Commission declared the house a landmark in 2005 after Mr. Reese filed paperwork asking for its significance to be recognized. His work paid off. A plaque next to the front door details the house's history. Judge and legislator Thomas P. Hughes gave the land to his daughter, Martha "Mattie" Hughes, after she married Mr. Cody in 1883.

The house sits next to the reconstructed house of his other daughter, Loretta Booty, which burned down last year.

Mr. Reese said he made only a few modifications to the house. The flea-ridden carpet had to go, so he installed hardwood floors throughout the entire house. He used long-leaf pinewood, a species of tree so large that the floorboards run the length of each room.

Repeated mistakes to the shingling of the roof required the Reeses to pay for a new one, and some of the metal door panels and hinges needed to be replaced. Add a new paint job and that sums up the major changes, Mr. Reese said.

He used 28 colors to paint the inside of the house, using three in each room for the ceiling, walls and trim. The many paintings, specially selected by Mr. Reese and depicting major Biblical events from the discovery of Moses in a basket to Jesus' last journey into Jerusalem, are hung Victorian-style with cords nailed high on the wall.

Not everything in the Cody house remains Victorian, however. The kitchen was updated in the 1950s with the fridge, stove and cabinets in Cadillac-green, and the wallpaper, tile and dishes in a Jetsons-esque design of colored stars.

"We decided we'd have a 50s-style kitchen, too," Mr. Reese said.

Mr. and Ms. Reese home-school their four children and the house is filled with books, art supplies, toys and a baby grand

piano with science textbooks sitting on top. It's important that the kids feel like they live in a home and not a museum, Ms. Reese said.

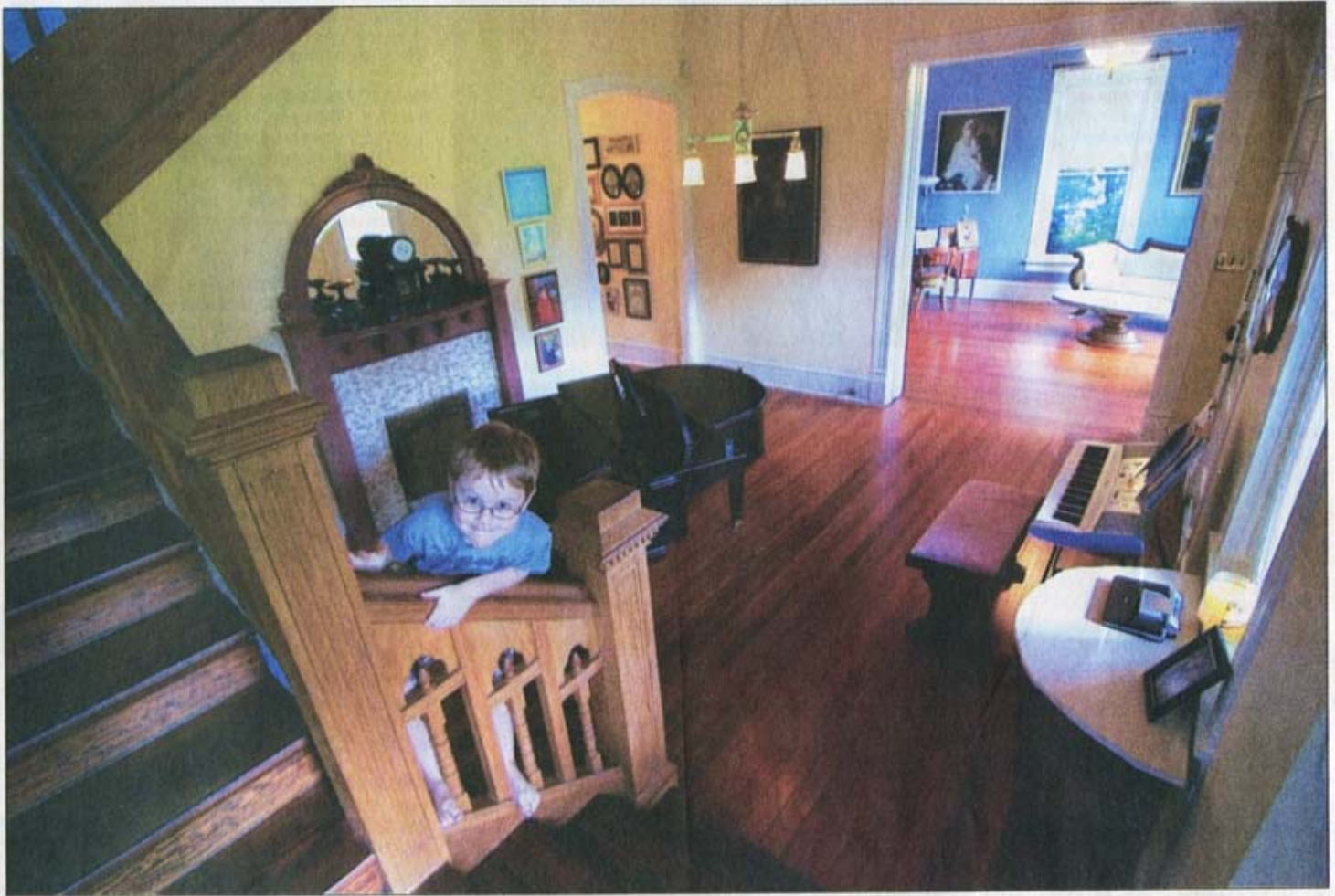
A downstairs room is dedicated to the children's toys and learning, with Legos and DVDs sprawled across the floor. The boys ride their plastic scooters through the hallways and living rooms while laughing at each other.

"I'm sure some people would be horrified that they use their scooters inside," Ms. Reese said, "but...we want them to enjoy living here."

It's clear that they do. Before running up the staircase, the Reeses' 6-year-old son, John, hugged this reporter and said, "I love this house."

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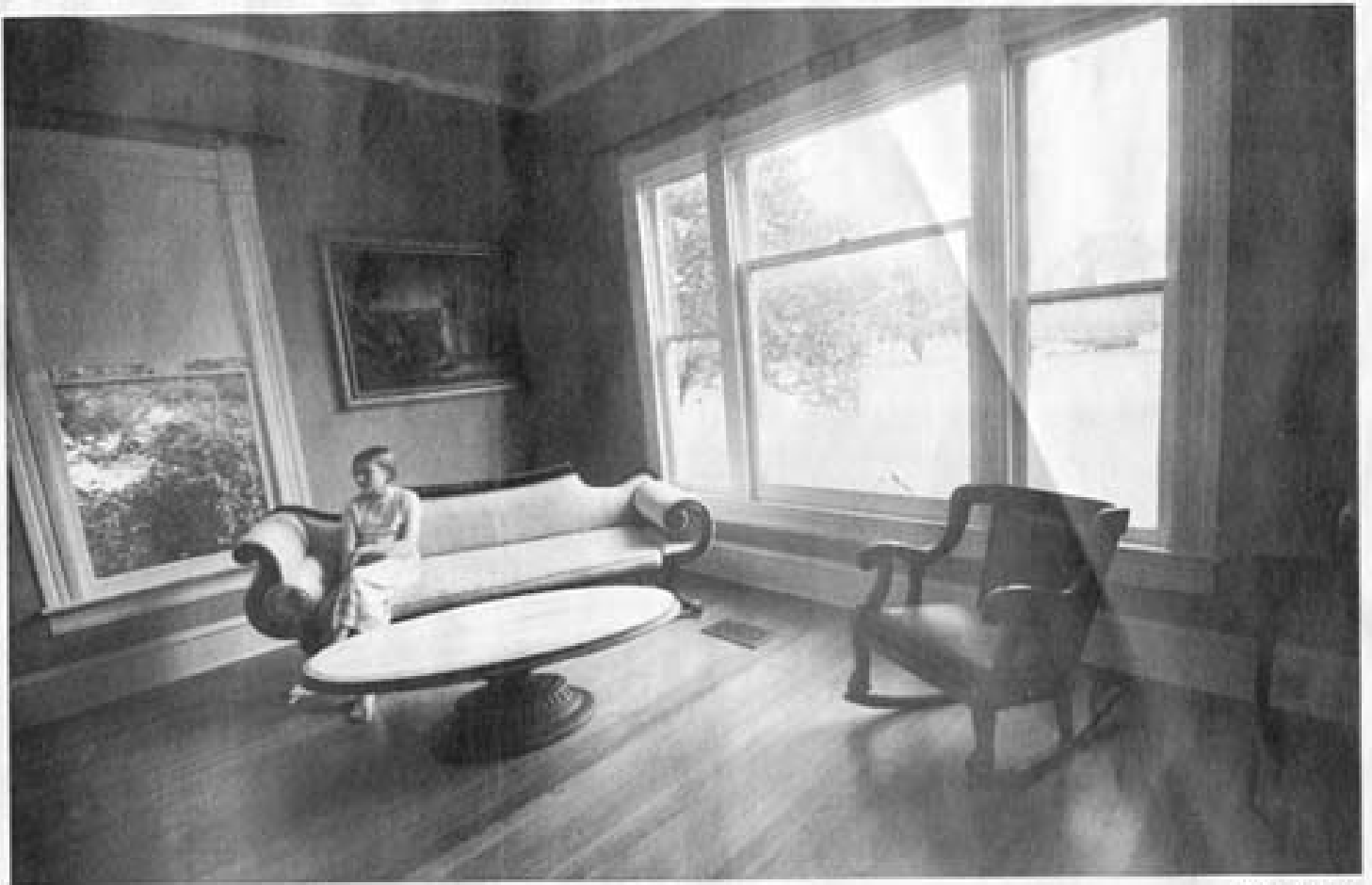


Photos by Andrew McLemore

John Reese, 6, hangs on the original oak banisters of his family's 105-year-old home at 304 East University Avenue.



The Cody House is named after C.C. Cody, a math professor at Southwestern who became its first dean. The Reese family bought the house in 2004 after it had been left vacant for a decade.



Andrew McLemore

Sarah Reese, 12, sits in the living room of her family's historic home, the Cody House.