



## Family is renovating its historic home near SMU

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Philip Wise is a sentimental soul, and that's a good thing for those of us who believe in historic preservation.

Wise is renovating his family's 95-year-old home at the northeast corner of University Boulevard and Dickens Avenue because he wants to see the grand lady preserved. Due to structural challenges, a true restoration is not feasible, but Wise wants to renovate the home and preserve as much of it as he can as he enlarges the family room, kitchen and master bedroom to fit the needs of a modern family.

He has hired Dan McKeithen's Provenance Properties to oversee the renovation. It would have been much less expensive to bulldoze the house and build a new one, but that's not a Wise philosophy.

The magnificent structure is the fourth home ever built in University Park — and is the oldest one still standing — built in 1916 by Bishop Edwin Mouzon (1869-1924), one of the founders of [Southern Methodist University](#). The bishop was the first dean of the theology school at SMU. The university lent him the money for the 4,800-square-foot, two-story home, built in the early 1900 Greek revival style.

It was originally known as "Mouzon's Folly" because it was such a large structure out in the middle of a prairie. It was built before there was a University Boulevard (which was the first paved street in University Park) and the street curves before it intersects Hillcrest Road because it was laid out to wrap around the Mouzon house.

He entertained people in the spacious home, and it was there that he garnered the community support to create Highland Park Methodist Church.

Years later, the grand home at 3444 University Blvd. served as the Kappa Alpha Order fraternity house before the KA's built the first frat house on campus. Then it became the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority house in the 1940s.

In 1961, Marvin and Gloria Wise bought the house, renovated it and raised their children — Philip, Jenny and Amy — on the block known as "Professors' Row" because of all the deans and professors who lived there.

"We had a one-car garage out back that was built for a Model T, so we couldn't park in it," recalled Gloria. "We loved living near SMU, in the world of academia. Things were never boring. One morning, I came into the breakfast room and Marvin was seated next to a monkey who had opened the back door, walked in and made himself at home."

Philip remembered [Ann Richards](#) driving in his carpool before she became governor of Texas. One day he walked in after school and found a stranger — actor [James Earl Jones](#) — in the living room, rehearsing for a play while Gloria went to the grocery store. The Wise kids enjoyed growing up across the street from the Barker kids, whose dad, Eddie, was the Dallas CBS affiliate's news anchorman. Philip grew up thinking it was normal to have a famous TV personality across the street.

Gloria took care of Marvin as he became ill, and when he passed away, she wanted a smaller, lower-maintenance place to live. She found a 2,200-square-foot architecturally designed modern home off of Forest Lane and loves it. Philip then began renovating the family homestead. He and his wife, Melissa, (and their high school son, Stephen) live on Bryn Mawr Drive.

Melissa has caught Philip's passion for his childhood home. When the extensive renovations are complete, they will move in. With a spacious new three-car garage under the house, they won't have to worry about where to park the Model T.

*Kirk Dooley is a University Park writer.*