



PARTNERSHIPS PRESERVE PIECE OF WYLIE HISTORY

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Charlotte Stoekle, Stone family descendant and owner of a unique house in Wylie called Stonehaven, was approached by developers for years, hoping she would agree to sell the 38 acres that had been in her family since 1850.

The property's location at the intersection of Alanis Drive and South Ballard Avenue was an attractive area for new housing developments to accommodate Wylie's rapidly growing population. The house had been uninhabited for 45 years, and developers tried to persuade Stoekle to sell

and let them remove the home. But Stoekle remained adamant that she would not sell to anyone interested in tearing down this piece of North Texas and family history that was designated a Texas Historic Landmark in 1992.

Historical Architecture

Her interest in preserving the home was more than just sentimental. The historical structure (built by Stoekle's



great-grandfather William Stone in 1912 for his bride Charlotte Howard) was inspired by the "Prairie Style" of Frank Lloyd Wright – a long, low, open-plan structure that emphasized the horizontal line of the prairie and created an environment that was harmonious with the lives of the people of the day. It incorporated unique features, such as the centrally located, two-way fireplace, square pillars, broad veranda, low-profile chimneys, wide entry steps, and strategically placed windows that captured the cooling prairie winds.

In materials provided to the Texas Historical Commission, the house is described as "a superlative example of the elegance of restraint. Dramatically unlike the romantic flourishing style of the Victorian homes of the late 19th century, this home exemplifies the dignity of form to follow function, achieving its distinction through restraint of adornment for its own sake, depending instead upon scale, integrity of design and function, harmony and beauty in detail. The integrity of plan, materials, and workmanship make it a house of architectural importance."



Stonehaven was pulled by a truck 400 feet north, inches at a time.



Hydraulic lifts raised the house 18 to 20 inches above its foundation.

The family moved out of the home in the 1970s, and Wylie grew around the house. As new developments sprang up, Stonehaven might have gone the way of the wrecking ball except for the partnership between the City of Wylie, Wylie Parks and Recreation, developer Douglas Properties, the Wylie Historical Society (WHS), and Stoekle — all of whom worked together to ensure its preservation.

Cooperative Planning

Jim Douglas, with Douglas Properties, planned to purchase the property and create the Stone Ranch Development, but he understood the house's significance and was eager to work with the other entities to preserve it. But there was a problem: in order to create the 145-lot development, Alanis Drive had to be widened, and the house was in the way.

Keeping in mind Stoekle's passion to preserve Stonehaven, Douglas and City staff met to brainstorm solutions, and an agreement was reached. Douglas proposed an innovative approach to the City's developer requirement regarding parkland dedication: he would place Stonehaven on a piece of the property that would be City owned, adjacent to proposed parkland. He would dedicate 1.87 acres of

land and improvements, including a playground with a farm theme. The parks and recreation department worked with Douglas Properties on the type of amenities that would be part of the eventual Stone Ranch Park, including the playground, which would complement the historical nature of the Stonehaven house and the farm that surrounded it. The parks and recreation board accepted the parkland dedication and recommended the approval of the park improvements.

Douglas then went before the Wylie Planning and Zoning Commission, requesting a zoning change for the 38 acres from Agricultural (A/30) to Planned Development, Single Family (PD-SF). He proposed moving the historic home approximately 400 feet to the north, ensuring the integrity of its ceiling, windows, and exterior. The WHS was to be involved in labeling, photographing, packing, and storing the contents and returning the items once the house had been moved. The Wylie Planning and Zoning Commission recommended approval to the city council.

Assistant City Manager Renae Ollie (planning director at that time) presented the unique development project to the council. She said Douglas and Stoekle worked



Workers painstakingly lifted the house up a portion at a time.

diligently with staff and WHS to ensure that the house would be relocated and preserved for its historic value. In addition to the responsibilities that would be assumed by Douglas and the WHS, Ollie explained that maintenance of the park area would eventually be assumed by the homeowners' association. The council approved the zoning change and the division of responsibilities regarding the house and property.

Moving On Up

H.D. Snow & Son House Moving, Inc., seen on the television show, *Texas Flip and Move*, was retained to do the actual move. Using hydraulic jacks, the house was lifted 18 to 20 inches above its foundation, then "cribbing," a steel support structure, was placed under the I-beams. Roller patches, not unlike old-time roller skates, were installed under the cribbing, and the house was literally pulled by a truck 400 feet to the north, inches at a time, a process that took most of two days.

One of the challenges posed by the relocation involved the oversized fireplace, constructed to accommodate three-foot logs. It featured muted green, blue, and gold Italian tile

depicting a lakeshore scene, and its mantelpiece was made of four-inch timber. The fireplace had to be taken apart and reassembled after the move. It was one of the most intriguing parts of the house; its central location provided warmth in winter and ventilation in summer to most of the rooms.

Since the move, the exterior of the house has been repaired and repainted in colors from a historic palette. The farm-themed playground features a silo slide, tractor, and two spring farm animals. Douglas Properties also provided an eight-foot hike-and-bike trail, irrigation, picnic tables and park benches, shade trees, and a 10-space parking lot for Stonehaven visitors. Other tributes to the house's lineage include streets named after Stone family members, such as Virginia Drive and Milford Street.

Although the historical society may someday headquarter in Stonehaven, it will be maintained by the City of Wylie for the foreseeable future. Conversations are ongoing regarding refurbishment of its interior – it currently has no heating or air conditioning, water, or electricity, so work has yet to be done. For now, however, cooperative partnerships have ensured that Stonehaven will continue to steadfastly stand as Wylie moves forward, and this glimpse of history will not be lost. ★



The fireplace's central location provided warmth to the entire house in the days before central heat and air.