

Rowlee House History

1116 11th Ave SW, Albany, OR
As of July 25, 2011

According to Sallie Rowlee, the previous owner of 1116 11th Ave SW, the house was started in 1931 by S.O. Griffith (a local builder) with the intention of living in the house. (Griffith Drive near McFarland School on Hwy 99E is named after him.) He didn't complete the house until 1933. Unfortunately, the Depression was at its height and he was forced to put up a "For Sale or Rent" sign and he never lived in the house. During the 1933-34 school year, he rented it to college students.



As the house appeared in 1935 soon after completion.

On March 29, 1935, Howard C. and Gladys Rowlee signed a deed for the house, and several days later they moved in with their two children, Suzanne and Jim. (In 1936, they purchased the adjoining empty lot.) Howard was president and general manager of Silver Wheel Motor Freight, a company he started in 1923.

Gladys died suddenly in 1940, and Howard hired Gertrude Russell, a widow with one child, as a cook and housekeeper. Howard and Gertrude were married in 1941. They lengthened the garage some time prior to 1952, the only change to the footprint of the house. Howard sold the freight company and retired in 1958. That same year he built a shop building on the adjoining empty lot.



Suzanne and Jim on the front porch, c.1937.

Jim and Sallie Rowlee married in 1964. Howard died in 1976 and Gertrude passed in 1984, at which time Jim took on the property. The house was used for storage until Jim retired in 1995 and they went to work updating the house. Jim died in 2000, and Sallie inherited half-ownership in the house along with Jim's children, Anna Gretchen Randall, James Sterling Rowlee, and Cynthia Louise Rowlee. Sallie continued to keep up the house and yard.

In December 2003, David Pinyerd and Bernadette Niederer purchased the house. Jim Rowlee's updating included dismantling the bathroom, replacing all the incoming water lines, and removing the steel dishwasher/sink unit in the kitchen. Most of the finishes and fixtures are original and unaltered, including the unusual chamfered door and window trim, simple leaded glass windows, oak and fir floors, glass door knobs, Art Deco wall sconces in the living room and the matching chandelier in the dining room. The fireplace tiles were manufactured by the Markoff Mosaic Tile Corporation, in business from 1926-1945 in Inglewood, CA. David and Bernadette have completed an in-kind restoration of the bathroom and are still working on the kitchen and painting the exterior.



Howard and neighbor child shoveling snow in 1954.