



80 W. Grand View Avenue  
The Norris House  
1885

By the current owners  
2014

Photo: John Johnson

Stephen Rendell Norris came from Canada, arriving in Sierra Madre in August 1884. Established in 1881, Sierra Madre was only four years old then. Mr. Norris liked what he saw and bought four acres from N.C. Carter on November 18, 1884, paying \$250 down. In October 1885, Mr. Norris bought 10 more acres from George Renfro and these 14 acres became part of the Norris Tract in which he named two streets, Laurel and Victoria Lane. Since then, six generations of the Norris family have lived in Sierra Madre.

Stephen R. Norris started building his house on Grandview Avenue in 1885 and he planted a lemon grove between Victoria Lane and Laurel Avenue. When the house was built on Grandview, apricot trees and many other fruit trees were also planted. On Laurel Avenue, oleanders were planted as shade trees. Stephen Norris married Adda Lockart on February 22, 1888. They began housekeeping in the Grandview Avenue home and lived there until 1891.

Mr. Norris soon became one of Sierra Madre's earliest merchants. The first grocery store he owned was purchased in 1887. It was called Hart & Norris. By 1889, Mr. Norris had a new partner and the store was known as Norris & Spear. The first pay telephone in Sierra Madre was in this store and it was the first telephone in town. He paid \$300 to the Sunset Telephone and Telegraph Company of Pasadena for the telephone. It is understood that Mr. Norris also had the first indoor toilet in town. He expanded his businesses, which included the first dry goods store in town, the Sierra Madre Department Store. In the 1930's, the business he established was sold to Fred Roess and became the popular Roess' Market.

Present owners of the Norris House purchased it in 1985, 100 years after it was built. The current owner first became acquainted with this vintage home when, as a member of the Sierra Madre Volunteer Fire Department at the time, he came to put out a floor furnace fire. The house had been changed over the years, not for the better, and was quite unattractive, with several additions that were not historically compliant to Country Victorian design. However, he liked the house and recognized its potential. When the current owners were house hunting, this property came on the market. They quickly made the purchase.

Since that time, the couple has worked to restore the home to its original 1885 appearance. Abiding by Country Victorian guidelines, the current owners have maintained much of the original Norris House, including the formal parlor entrance, the fretwork on the front porch, and the traditional molding. Every effort has been made to use what was original or to replicate where necessary. Some of the interior molding used on the house came from samples the couple obtained from the Pegler House, another Sierra Madre Victorian house of the same vintage located on Highland Avenue. As part of the renovation, a butler's pantry was built between the kitchen and dining room.

The current owner has done the major work himself, such as the carpentry, plumbing, electrical work, and installing the brick driveway and walkway. Sierra Madre's own Rodney Spears was hired as the engineer for the foundation and the house was then connected onto the city sewer. The kitchen was modernized and Jim Walsworth, a brother fireman at the time and now owner of Phoenix Property Services, made cabinets. The driveway was moved to the left side of the property to give the house more of a setting. In addition, the property was completely re-landscaped.

The Norris Home was on the SMHPS Home Tour in 1999. The current owners have a wonderful collection of period furniture in their home. They also proudly display some historic artifacts from the fire department. Since that time, the garage has been replaced with a carriage house, designed by Sierra Madre architect Karen Moran to reflect the proportions and style of the house.

The Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society has made a special commendation to the current owners for their careful, painstaking, and authentic restoration of this rare example of very early Sierra Madre. The home is also on Sierra Madre's list of historic places.