

# ONCE UPON A TIME IN NORTH PARK

## THE COTTAGE AT 3775 UTAH STREET

**BY OWNERS ED OROZCO AND JEFF VIGNEAU,  
NORTH PARK RESIDENTS SINCE 1995**

We made an offer on the house the first day it listed. The offer was accepted the next day. We fell in love with the house because it had a good feel to it; it had good bones and the potential of being a fun project. The house needed a lot of TLC; the yard was overgrown, and was also filled with the previous owner's rock collection and other objects they collected through the years. The cedar shingles on the house and garage were in desperate need of repair. It looked as though they had not been treated or replaced for decades. The same was true for the roof. The house has beautiful old-grove redwood built-ins in the dining room and bookcases in the living room. We were happy to see they had never been painted over. The floors throughout the house are pink oak and were originally stained a dark brown. The walls in most of the rooms were covered in several layers of burlap; the first layer was applied in 1909. Needless to say, the house's interior was very dark and uninviting. After a new foundation, some needed repairs and some cosmetic work (keeping in mind the original look) the house has been turned into the place we now call home.

Soon after we purchased the house, we started our research on it. We were curious about who had lived in the house; what they were like; who designed the house; when was it built; what did the house look like 90+ years ago; what did North Park look like 90+ years ago; what was San Diego like 90+ years ago, and why was the house's design so unusual for the area. So, I started my research by getting the building records in the County of San Diego Administration Building that showed the house specifics. Then we visited the City of San Diego Water and Sewer records office for more information. The next step was to visit the San Diego Historical Society's research library in Balboa Park. There we found more information on the previous residents of the house. We also went to the San Diego Library's Reference Department where we found newspaper clippings of the previous residents of the house. Our research had, to this point, yielded interesting and valuable information about the house and its original occupants.

We found out that the house had been occupied by the original family from 1909 to 1989 and that the house was completely covered in climbing fig (*Ficus repens*) for most of that time. Since then, we are the second owners outside of the original family.



The cottage in 1962 just before the garage was built

Just when we thought we could go no further with our research, our luck took a fortunate turn and made our efforts to document the house's past worthwhile. We met Francis, the original owner's granddaughter, who lives in the neighborhood. Francis is a long time North Park resident. She gave us access to early pictures of the house and her family members. Francis said her grandmother, Ella Foote, often mentioned she really liked the house's location because she could lie in bed and look at the mountains to the east. Boy, the view has changed since then! She also remembers her mother, Leslie Barrows, always attributing the house's design to Ella. In addition, she gave us copies of the original Grant Deed and other important documents. The Foote-Barrows family members were indeed San Diego pioneers and active participants in early San Diego life.

The Foote-Barrows families came to San Diego in 1897 from Helena, Montana. They settled in a nice piece of mesa land near Chollas Valley and set out to farm citrus. As irrigation systems and rainfall were not what they expected, their ranch folded up after several seasons of drought. The two families then pursued other ventures in San Diego. On April 24, 1908, Henry W. Foote and his wife Ella W. purchased lot 10 in block 7 of the West End Tract for \$150 (payable in one year at 14% interest). On May 8, 1909, the Daily Transcript recorded that Ella W. Foote applied for a building permit for a cottage at 3775 Utah Street, for an estimated value of \$1,400. On May 24, 1909, Ella Foote paid \$10 for a water tap and meter. Three years later, on May 16, 1912, Henry W. Foote applied for a sewer connection.



Ella W. Foote

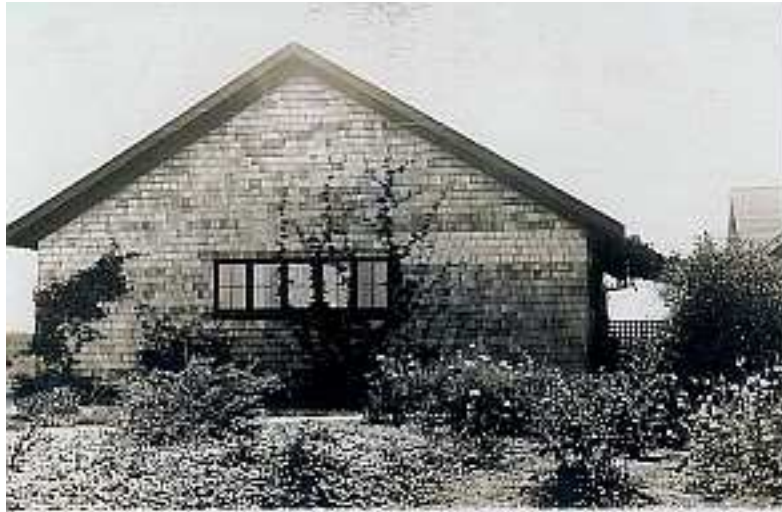


Henry W. Foote

Ella and Henry Foote had three daughters. Leslie, their first born, married John R. Barrows in 1902 in San Diego. After Ella and Henry's passing, Leslie and John inherited the "cottage." There they lived with their five children, Francis being the youngest. John R. Barrows Jr. attended Yale University as a music student. During his college years, he discovered and produced a new French Horn effect that gave him world-wide notoriety. John Barrows Sr. at 70, after losing his sight 16 years prior, wrote a book entitled *Ubet*, an autobiography and fictional anecdote that portrays the Montana cow-country as it was in the 1880s. Ubet was a famous stage-coach station in Fort Benton-Billings established by John's father.

John Sr. died in San Diego in 1939. Leslie, who worked at the San Diego Main Library, rising to head of the Newspaper Department and retiring in 1952, died in 1973.

It has been tremendously enjoyable to dig into the past and find the cottage's humble beginnings and many interesting facts about the last 100 years. We are lucky and honored to call the cottage at Utah Street our home.



The cottage in 1909



Barrows family in 1929 looking north from 3775 Utah before the Masonic Temple was built