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This old house // Reclaimed home part of Brady Heights tour

By [REBECCA L. MARTIN](#)
9/13/1990

When friends first saw the house Rob and Sandy Meinholdt bought in 1988, the most frequent reaction was "No way!" they said.

No way would the couple be able to turn that shell of a building into a home. It was filled with moldy trash, the floors were disintegrating, and the roof had fallen through two stories to the basement.

"You could stand in the basement and see the sky," Meinholdt said.

Two-and-a-half years later, the couple and their two-and-a-half-year-old daughter are living in that basement, painted pink and remodeled with air conditioning and a bathroom.

On the first floor, the living room - which extends along the front of the two-story brick home - the dining room, kitchen and breakfast area need a little more paint, the final layer of wood for the floor and carpeting as a finishing touch.

OK, so the second floor bedrooms still look like a bomb hit them, but the Meinholdts are undaunted.

"The second floor isn't going to be the battle this was," Meinholdt, 27, said as he surveyed the first floor. "We're over the hump."

The house at 1135 N. Denver Ave. is one of a dozen remodeled

homes that will be open Sunday afternoon during the third annual Brady Heights Historic Home Tour. The 200 homes in Brady Heights, a neighborhood north



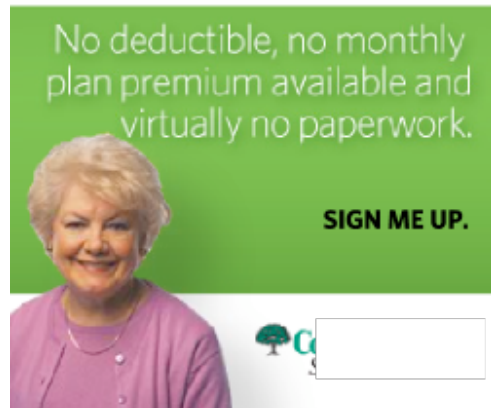

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of downtown Tulsa, were built by Tulsa city founders between 1910 and 1925, said Dana Sterling, president of the Brady Heights Neighborhood Association. Among the first residents were Tate Brady, whose mansion gives the neighborhood its name, and T.S. Mincks, builder of the former Adams Hotel downtown.

The neighborhood is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Boundaries are Denver and Cheyenne avenues between Marshall and Fairview streets.

The Meinholdts are among a growing number of people who are reclaiming the historic homes, 10 to 12 of which are available for sale at any one time, said former association President Tim Williams.

The homes are in various stages of development - from completely remodeled to those that need major remodeling.

Williams, who used to work with Meinholdt, introduced the couple to one of the worst in the district.

"I thought they were just crazy enough to do it," Williams said. "It was a rare case. And it turned out wonderful." Indeed, to many people, the home would have seemed a lost cause.

It was built in the early 1900s, probably 1917 or 1918, Meinholdt said.

Two women who were born in the house and had lived there since the 1930s still were living in one room of the house when the Meinholdts bought it.

When it rained, the women simply spread more newspapers to soak up the water. Eventually, the floors rotted out.

The Meinholdt were living in an apartment when they decided to buy the property, which was available for less than \$10,000.

Mrs. Meinholdt, now 25 and a homemaker, also was three months pregnant.

A month after Audrey was born, the family moved into an apartment above the garage that Meinholdt had renovated - starting with rebuilding the stairs leading up to it.

For a year and a half, the couple lived in a 400-square foot space about the size of their new dining room.

Mrs. Meinholdt said the hardest part for her was the claustrophobia during the time she was cooped up with the baby and couldn't give her husband much help.

"He really did most of it," she said.

Meinholdt figured it would take two years to rough in the house and four to completely finish it.

They are right on schedule.

Because Meinholdt, an airplane mechanic, had never remodeled a home before, he relied on advice from other remodelers in the neighborhood.

Williams often would stop by and said he tried to make sure that when it came time for big projects, such as putting on the roof, the couple had some help.

The neighborhood participation really made a difference, the couple said.

One of the common sights at the house was a delivery truck from the lumber yard, Meinholdt said.

The drivers would pull up and say, "where do you want it this time?" he added with a laugh.

After working for more than a year with flashlights and extension cords, Meinholdt said it was a "big thrill" when they finally got electricity in the house in October

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1988.

The family was able to move into the basement on Christmas Eve last year.

Besides their initial investment, they estimate they probably will spend an additional \$40,000 by the time it is finished.

The Meinholdts said that despite the dramatic increased value of the finished home, they weren't interested in buying it as an investment.

"We could see how pretty it was," Mrs. Meinholdt said.

"And we wanted a home."

[By REBECCA L. MARTIN](#)

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