“Diverse sunny hill-sides and shadowy ravines, a forest and an orchard, a little brook, here and there spreading into a bit of a pond”

-Mary O. Nutting

“The Western has never lacked friends to help”

-Dr. Lilian Wyckoff Johnson
In 1974 the former home of the presidents of Western College became the offices of the Western College Alumnae Association, Inc. and the Patterson Place Museum. The Museum collection consists of paintings, furniture and other artifacts that are part of Western College history and were in Helen Peabody Hall, the residence halls and other buildings on the campus, and Miss Peabody’s retirement home in Pasadena, California. The Museum has a large collection of Western memorabilia. It also contains the Narka Nelson Archives which has material concerning alumnae association matters and the history of Western College.

In 1870 Mrs. Patterson, now a widow, and her children John, James, Alice, and Virginia were living in the house when it burned down and the site was abandoned as a home. Western students, however, found the remains of the house a romantic ruin. They would walk down from the Seminary to The Ruins, as they named the site, where wild flowers grew, to “botanize” for their classes. They and the young women from Oxford Female College, located east of North Patterson Avenue, also enjoyed picnics there.

In 1898 James Patterson, who had inherited the seventy acre site, decided to build a summer home in Oxford. He arranged with T. C. Lloyd, an Oxford contractor, to construct the two story, seven room house of dark brick with a porch on three sides. The house did not have central heat or running water except for a pump in the kitchen.

After Patterson’s death in 1913, the property was acquired by Western College in 1914 and became the home of Western presidents until 1974. While the house has been renovated a number of times since it was built, the major renovation was in 1916 when an addition was built at the rear as a kitchen and the interior modernized. The first Western president to live in the house was William Waddell Boyd whose inaugural reception was held in Patterson Place on Nov. 14, 1914. Annual teas, evening socials, and commencement receptions have been held in the house through the years.

PATTERSON PLACE MUSEUM

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