

## Architectural Analysis of 216, East Craig Place

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A short drive down East Craig Street will take you by a house whose exterior is designed in a whimsical Moorish Revival style. Underneath the shade of tall trees with branches thick with greenery is nestled a three-story house, whose roofline and other parapet walls echo the iconic convex and concave curves of the Alamo.

The striking front entry, which stands out from the face of the building, welcomes you to enter through an unusual, deep arch in the shape of a spade. Faux *vigas*, the rafters that appear to extend through the wall to the exterior at the second story, are added to enhance the Spanish rustic look; as well as the *ramada*, a trellis on the porch above, usually made from rough branches.

However, that rustic Moorish look is transformed once you enter the house. The dark wood beams in the ceiling and heavy wood trim and paneling found throughout the first floor might appear, at first, to be a continuation of the Spanish theme. In reality, it is the first indication that this house has a history that is a little more complex; if not down right mysterious.



The residence at 216 East Craig proclaims a “Tale of Two Houses”: once a romantic Victorian built in 1912; later renovated in thick stucco to create the illusion of a Moorish palace. Decorative Spanish iron grills cover windows with diamond-pane lights, typically seen in King William and neighborhoods with turn-of-the century houses.



On the sides and rear of the house you can still see the old wood clapboard siding and the tell-tale Victorian gabled roofs with decorative half-timbering just under the eaves. The plan of the house is essentially a square, with wrap-around porches on two of the three stories. The upper floors have walls placed at an angle to the square, which open up the space of the bedrooms, a detail often seen in late Victorian residential design.

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The term “Victorian” refers to a variety of housing styles built from as early as 1820 until right before World War II. The Victorian Queen Anne, Shingle Style, and Second Empire, just to name a few, were remarkably innovative designs replacing the previous, rather stuffy classical tradition.



I believe the house on Craig Street is formerly a Victorian Shingle style, due to the added lines of woodwork under the gabled roofs and the woodwork on the interior, especially the built-for-the-house buffet in the dining room. Inside the house, you will see several fabulous turn-of-the-century chandeliers, push-button light switches, and an original claw-foot bathtub.



The outdoor porch was almost as important as the indoor living spaces, since in the hot Texas weather, the family would spend a good deal of time out there. How did one deal with the heat before the days of air-conditioning? I asked an old-timer and he told me, “well, we just suffered.” But to tell you the truth, houses were much better designed to keep their residents cool on hot summer days and nights.

Windows were placed to capture prevailing breezes, a lost art in modern construction. And, this house once had sleeping porches wrapping all the way around the house on the second floor. Today many of these porches are enclosed as interior rooms and closets.



Climbing up to the third floor, you will find a private den or game room, reserved for the children and more familial guests, which is also a typical feature of the large, rambling Victorian house. The house harbors several mysterious nooks and crannies, due to the additions and renovations made to the house over the years. I will leave those for you to discover on your own.

