

Architectural Analysis of 614, East Park Street

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Why did the chicken cross the road? To get to the other side.....and hoping you might give them a little treat, if you buy this classic Craftsman Bungalow on East Park Street in Tobin Hill. If you see a posse of chickens running loose in this neighborhood, just remember, the neighbors consider them to be adopted pets. Friendly, local charm characterizes both this neighborhood and our historic bungalow.



The house's most eye-catching features are the gabled roofs that emerge from the roofline and fold downward, like a folded sheet in origami, and the five battered wood piers that line the porch and porte cochère. The battered piers, which rest on brick podiums, uphold the long horizontal beams of the roof. These beams,



spanning over twenty feet per member, are one of the remarkable characteristics of a house built in 1922. Most

houses in San Antonio were built with dense hardwoods and balloon frame construction, up until the Depression. Old growth trees provided solid, insect-resistant beams and columns for the construction of our historic neighborhoods; a kind of wood that cannot be purchased today. The balloon

frame was a method of building developed in Chicago in the mid-19th century that eased the cost of wood frame construction by using slim, closely spaced studs, which were nailed to the sill and roof plates with inexpensive, mass-produced nails.

Around the side of the house you can see the original stepped-brick fireplace, which has been recently renovated inside. A detached "auto barn" (garage) and servant's quarters are in the back, a modernizing



feature for the time. There is also a limestone well in the backyard that may pre-date the construction of this house.

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Stepping inside the house, one is greeted by many scenes of “local character”. The owner told me that a mad scientist who once worked for Southwest Research Institute assembled an airplane wing in the front spaces of the house! Standing along the axis of the front living room and adjoining study, I certainly do see how that would have been possible. The original molded baseboards, doors and window



frames, and ceiling molding give the house that historic bungalow look. The house has many built-ins, which add to the house’s character: Bookshelves are tucked into the niche of the wall that separates the living room from the study and are added to several bedrooms. Matching built-in bookshelves are built on either side of the entry from a side porch in to the study,

which is surmounted by a low broad arch, which portrays a beautiful painting of a peacock done by local artist Roch Babin.



Continuing with the theme of “local character”, a later resident was reputedly the family who owned the La Prensa newspaper. I am assuming that they were responsible for the renovation of the house’s central ballroom in stucco with niches for sculpture or candles and for the two Mexican tile artworks embedded in the walls.

