

Architectural Analysis of 504, E. Mulberry Avenue

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This sweet little bungalow on 504 Mulberry, near Trinity University, was once owned by two women, possibly sisters or spinsters, who owned the house for most of its life. Built in 1937, on the tail end of the Depression Era, it lacks some signature details of a true Craftsman bungalow, however the arrangement of its plan, a few interior details, and its roof demonstrate the design of an architect who was very familiar with the Arts and Crafts Style.



A prominent portico extends from the center of the front façade, and pairs of windows are arranged symmetrically to each side. The house's most dramatic characteristic is the shape of the roof, a half-hip, and the miniaturized version echoed in the smaller roof sheltering the entry portico. The half-hip roof is essentially a gabled roof, but the end point of the gable is replaced by a small hip (a fold). This style of roof came in vogue in the U.S. in the early 20th century, when designers of the Arts and Crafts movement were intrigued with Japanese design. Americans first direct contact with Japanese design came about with the construction of several Japanese pavilions at the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876 and the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. The exquisite craftsmanship and clean-cut forms of these buildings drew tremendous attention, and the practicality of the deeply extended eaves of both gabled and half-hip roofs were quickly understood.



The Japanese roof, like our house on Mulberry, utilized exposed rafters to provide support for the deeply extended eaves. The extended eaves of the half-hip roof offer a greater degree of protection from the sun

and inclement weather to the walls, windows and interior space below; greater than the simple gabled end. Considering our present concern with energy use, a more efficiently sheltered and shaded house is a plus.

The chimney on the west side of the house has a whimsical curve, as seen in other bungalows nearby, and literally punctuates the roofline. Looking once more at the entry to the house, the classical columns, and definitely the front door, are later additions, not in keeping with Arts and Crafts decor. However, the interior arrangement of the living room is almost classic. A central fireplace with a shifting pattern of bricks is flanked on each side by a double-hung window with a bookcase and a window seat below. The square-shaped window to the left is more traditional; indicating that perhaps the window seat and longer window design to the right may be a later renovation.



The kitchen retains its original cabinetry but has been updated with modern appliances. The cabinetry, walls and trim have been painted in beautiful shades of green and white that highlight the outline of the former wall's wainscoting. The built-in ironing board niche has now been turned into an enclosed space for shallow shelves. Other details worthy of note throughout the house are the extensive window and door moldings and the numerous versions of cut-glass and bronze door knobs and hinges, all original to the construction of the house. The shiny black and gold chandelier in the dining room is probably an addition from the 1970s.

