

Bungalow on the River

BY KATHY MORGAN

THE WICHITA BEACON touted the new buff brick bungalow along the Little Arkansas River as a “real home, perfectly equipped for labor saving and comfort [E]very feature of this wonderful little home has a purpose.” In 1922, Alfred T. Sayers and his first wife, Ethelleitta, built this charming bungalow in the popular Riverside neighborhood for their small family, which included a seven-year-old son and a newborn daughter.

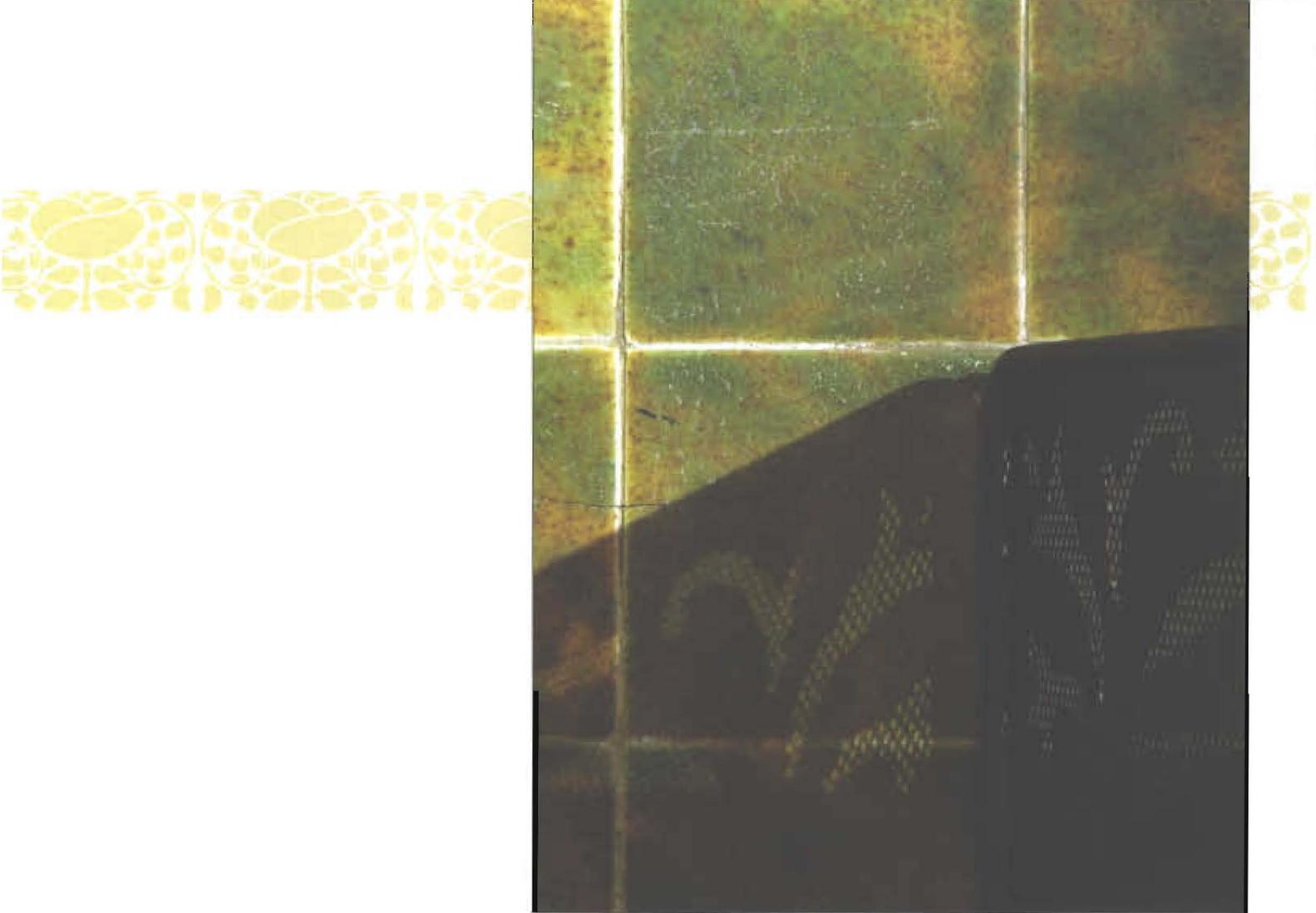
Sayers came to Wichita in 1904 from a neighboring town to accept a job at a small dairy operation and learn the business. By 1909 he is listed as the owner of Sayers Dairy and living on the property. The WICHITA BEACON reported that his was the first dairy to bottle milk for his customers. In 1915 he began pasteurizing the milk and enlarged his facility to accommodate the rapid growth of the dairy.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEXANDER VERTIKOFF









Expansion loomed on the horizon again, and in 1920 a new, modern plant was opened at 132 N. Walnut in the Delano Business District. It produced cream, pasteurized milk, cottage cheese and buttermilk. A year later the dairy had steadily increased its business, doubling its product volume.

Ethelleita died in August 1924. Two years later, Alfred sold the dairy to the Wichita Creamery. He was listed as the production manager under new ownership in the 1927 *Wichita City Directory*, but by fall he had left Wichita for San Antonio. After he died there in September 1939, his body was brought back to Wichita and interred in Old Mission Mausoleum next to Ethelleita.

Prior to becoming one of the most prominent dairy-men in the Wichita area, Alfred supplemented his income as a carpenter. It comes as no surprise, then, that the building permit issued on May 24, 1922, for a residence and garage valued at \$7,400 listed him as the owner/builder. According to an October 1, 1922, article published in the *Beacon*, he included all of the modern conveniences available at the time. Today, the exterior remains relatively unchanged from his original design, and few changes have been made to the interior.







Much as it Was

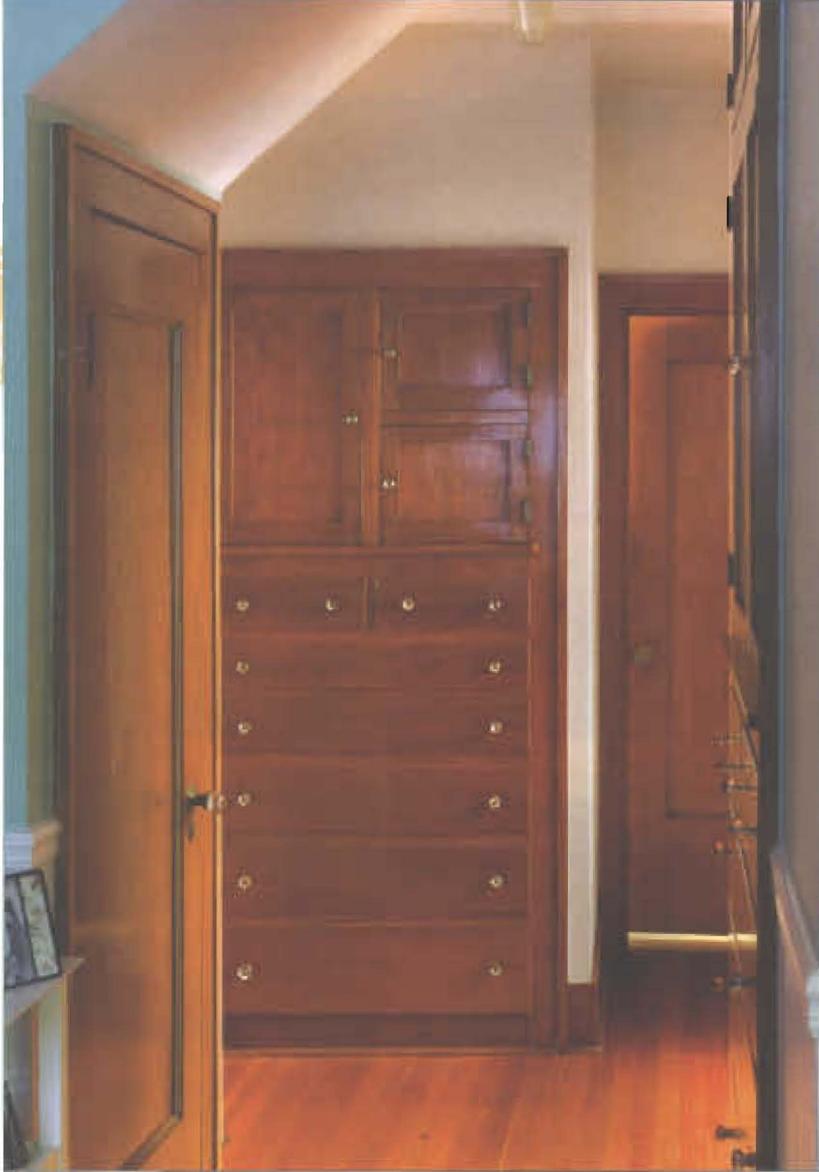
The current owners, Cara and Erik Graves, bought the house in 2002 and have been careful to retain what is left of the original finishes and fixtures. The bathroom has its original tub and shower. The tile in the bathroom and on the fireplace was done by Southwest Tile and Mantel, a company that was in business from 1909 through 1925. They were listed as designers and dealers of interior marble, ceramic encaustic and mosaic tiling.

The kitchen had large built-in cabinets on either side of the sink, along with a built-in Hoosier cabinet and a refrigerator room to allow food deliveries to be made without entrance into the kitchen. A built-in breakfast nook between the kitchen and dining room was lost to a previous remodel.

The original built-in oak linen cabinets, woodwork and floors, along with the fireplace, window and door hardware, radiators and some of the lighting fixtures, remain. One of the bedrooms had a built-in ironing-board cupboard and a new-style closet for storing bedding. The second-story sleeping porch on the back side of the house afforded comfortable breezes from the east, north and south during temperate spring, summer and fall months.

The living room has been changed to accommodate more recent occupants' lifestyles. Originally the room was divided by a wall with beveled-glass French doors that once separated the single room into a living room and a sun parlor.





Another unusual feature of this bungalow, especially being located right on the river, was a finished basement. Sayers had the most up-to-date laundry room, storage for traveling trunks and a billiard room with a fireplace built for his home.

The side-gabled bungalow had a front-gabled porch dormer with a pergola attached at the south end extending over the driveway. Only the original porch and porch gable remain; the pergola and its brick support piers have been removed.

“We both like older homes,” says Cara, a registered nurse. “They have a sense of history, a connection to the past, that we appreciate. And they have features, like the built-in cabinets, that newer homes often don’t have.

“And because Riverside is an older neighborhood, it’s close to downtown yet quiet like a park. Canoeing and kayaking are a big part of life here.”

A Living Past

Oftentimes we can only imagine the stories that a home could tell, but because of the prominence Alfred Sayers had in the Wichita community, the story of this house was captured in the local newspaper, giving us a glimpse into the home that cradled a family. Quality materials and thoughtful design have kept this comfortable bungalow serving its purpose for 90 years and will continue to do so for future generations. 🏠

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