

## VRBO BUNGALOW

BY TIFFANY HORTON, HORTON DESIGN STUDIOS

PHOTOS BY MATT CORNELIUS

There is so much more to Texarkana than most natives realize. While many of us can't imagine raising our families anywhere else we are often a bit surprised when someone new moves to town without being brought here directly by a job or family. It is even more surprising when we hear of someone coming simply to visit or explore. However, there are a growing number of successful vacation rentals right here in our backyard! For instance, this charming Craftsman bungalow that has been loved and updated by Jason and Kerry Eppinette is providing the best of Texarkana's hospitality to its visitors.

The story really started with the Eppinettes' love of the historical neighborhood they live in. For years, they have looked out their front window and seen the sad shell of a Craftsman home, full of potential, just across the street. They reached out to the owner, who lived out of town, and expressed their interest in purchasing the home. Initially, the owner wasn't ready to sell the house. Over the years, the Eppinettes reached out a couple more times, but each time the owner declined. Then, in 2018, a letter from the city of Texarkana, Arkansas, was sent out to all the neighbors stating the house had been added to their condemned list. "[The owner] was living in North Arkansas and her children had lived here off and on, but they probably had not been in the house for at least two years," Kerry explained. Jason added, "As a result, it had become totally derelict. People had stolen the air conditioner,



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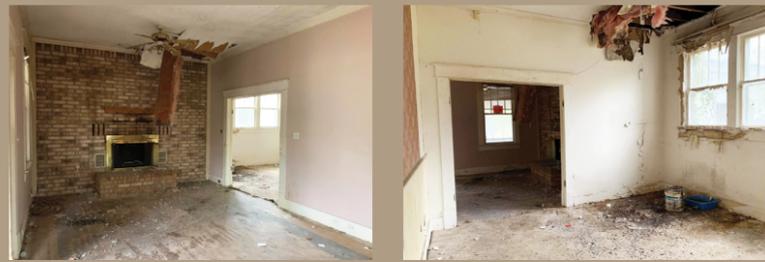
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there was a hole in the roof from a tree branch that had fallen onto the house, and water had gotten in; there was even some graffiti." However, as a contractor, Jason knew this house was not beyond repair and he felt it was certainly worth saving.

Once the Eppinettes purchased the property, they started on their design plan and demolition. One area of the roof had been leaking for years, so they knew they would need to begin with their focus on repairing the roof and checking for any structural issues. They also decided that to maximize the house's potential, they would take every wall down to the studs. "What allowed us to do such a good remodel is the fact that we just took all the ceilings out and all the walls out, so we could see clear to the roof trusses and through [the house] to the back of the brick walls. We had total control," described Jason.

As work unfolded at the house, the Eppinettes had a change of mind for the house. "When we first started trying to purchase it, we thought we would flip the house. But [when] we started traveling with our son doing golf tournaments and bringing

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his girlfriend along, this meant we needed separate rooms,” Jason said. “So, we started looking at Airbnb and VRBO houses in the cities we were traveling to. We stayed in one similar to this, and I just thought ‘That’s what we ought to do with the house across the street.’” As a result, Jason and Kerry shifted gears a little and focused on not only highlighting the historical qualities of the home but also creating something guests could enjoy as a rental. “We really are surprised. We didn’t know how well it would do, but it turns out that Texarkana is a middle ground for a lot of people. We’ve had a lot of [renters] that were in town for a wedding or a family reunion. We’ve had a few families here for funerals. During the week, most of our tenants are business travelers. Some of them are even repeats. For example, we’ve had doctors that come to our area for, say the first week of every month, to work at St. Michael’s or Wadley, and they’ll just go ahead and have us put

them on the calendar as a repeat guest,” Kerry elaborated. “In the spring and summer, we get a lot of families on the weekends that are here for baseball tournaments.” Jason thinks part of the draw to this property is its age. “People always comment, ‘Wow! This is a 100-year-old home that was saved; it’s really cool.’ I think the fact that this is a 1927 bungalow in the historic area on a red brick street just has a vibe to it,” Jason said. Kerry added, “It is a little different, and it’s a really quiet neighborhood. They can come in, sit on the front porch and get a little bit of that old-time feel. Plus, we’re really close to Downtown, Ed Worrell Park, and the fairgrounds. It’s a great location.” You might be surprised to learn that it is not just travelers from the surrounding areas coming to visit. In fact, the Beech Street Bungalow has hosted people from all over the United States and even international travelers. “We’ve had several families from Florida, guests from Hawaii and even a

British family,” who Kerry explained, “had young children and jobs that allowed them to work remotely, so they decided they wanted to show their kids the U.S. and that they wanted to make their way across the country staying at Airbnbs. They found us randomly but stayed here an entire week. They loved being in the historic district and sitting outside on the porch just taking in the neighborhood.” It is really no surprise that people would be drawn to this beautiful bungalow given its friendly feel and welcoming charm. Kerry and daughter, Erin, worked together on decorating the house in a spirit reminiscent of the 1920s, deciding that Americana would suit the delightful navy exterior and open gray and white interior. With its deep, shaded front porch, fun pops of color and historical nods throughout, I am sure this home, and Texarkana, will continue to draw visitors from near and far. ①

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