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# Heritage Home Tour features seven Billings' bungalows

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Tom and Debbie Wagner's enthusiasm is contagious as they discuss their 1916 bungalow located at 229 Ave. C, near downtown Billings. The couple, who bought the home in 1978 for nearly \$50,000, has poured nearly thirty years of care into this craftsman-style home, which retains many of the traditional elements bungalows of the time period are known for.

The bungalow, a common sight throughout the country, gained popularity in the beginning of the 20th century as a vacation home for the rich and an everyday home for the working class. Many of these homes have been updated several times over the decades, revitalizing the historic character that puts such properties in high demand.

The Wagner home is one of seven in this year's Heritage Home Tour, sponsored by the Billings Preservation Society. Titled "Back to the Bungalow," the tour highlights the architectural period between 1910 and 1925, when such homes were popular.

## **A Focus on Community**

When the Wagners bought their home, they did so because they fell in love with the home's character. "We thought the way it looked it was wonderful," Paul said. The Wagners, who previously lived on Broadwater, found Avenue C amazingly quiet and the proximity to Pioneer Park an asset with two children, who were ages 2 and 5 when the Wagners relocated.

"Being near Pioneer Park with kids was wonderful; being able to hear the football games at night and the bands practicing in the morning," Debbie said.

The couple interacts with the neighborhood, and often asks passers-by during football season, "Who won the game?"

Featuring typical elements of a bungalow, the Wagner's home is a one-and-one-half story with an open, rectangular floor plan, a front porch and back porch (converted into additional kitchen space) and decoratively-treated gable ends. The front door, painted red, is original, and has original exterior glass panes as well as stained glass on the interior added by the Wagners.

Original piano-plank wood floors in the living and dining room and wider fir plank wood-flooring in the kitchen have been refinished. The home also features coved ceilings, doorways and an original fireplace in the corner of the formal living room. Original windows exist throughout the home, and the kitchen features French windows that were originally part of the porch. A lack of built-ins is the only bungalow characteristic missing from the property.

The home changed hands nine times between 1960 and 1978 when Tom and Debbie bought it. At some point an apartment was constructed in the basement, which originally had dirt floors.

## **Heritage Home Tour**

The tour, taking place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, is sponsored by the Billings Preservation Society and proceeds go to benefit the Moss Mansion.

"Billings has a pretty unique selection of craftsman bungalows," said Paul Whiting, organizer of the Back to Bungalow Tour. "There has been a resurgence in popularity of these homes."

In years past, the Heritage Home Tour focused on some of Billings' larger, older Victorian homes. This is the first year to feature the bungalow, which has been described as a reaction to the elaborate Victorian houses.

Dennis Deppmeier, partner with A&E Architecture and owner of a bungalow on the tour, located at 128 Clark Ave., describes bungalows as "anti-Victorian."

"A bungalow is not a high-end, ornate home," he said. "It's a non-pretentious, working class home. It's very livable."

Billings has a high percentage of homes with bungalows influences in the Pioneer Park area as well as behind the Moss Mansion. Bungalows were especially common between 1910 and 1925.

Deppmeier was attracted to the large windows and traditional details in his bungalow on Clark Ave. He and his wife Jennifer purchased the home in August of last year, and Dennis said the home had a lot of the same features intentionally designed in the home the couple built previously, such as an open floor plan to provide communicating-type spaces. "I don't feel removed in different parts of the home," he said.

The couple and their six-year-old daughter enjoy living in the historic neighborhood. "I love Clark Avenue and the sense of community it has." Their daughter frequently converses with neighbors and people passing the home. "There is a sense of place, people sitting on porches and the community spirit, sharing and communicating," Dennis said.