

Dilworth Airplane Bungalow

- 1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow is located at 2144 Park Road, Charlotte, NC 28203 in the historic Dilworth neighborhood.
- 2. Name and address of the present owner of the Property:**
Paula Pridgen
2144 Park Road
Charlotte, NC 28203
- 3. Representative photographs of the property:** This report contains representative photographs of the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow.
- 4. A map depicting the location of the property:**



- 5. Current tax parcel reference and deed to the property:** The tax parcel number of the property is 12110209. The most recent deed to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 30104, Page 559.
- 6. A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow.
- 7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description of the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow.
- 8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S 160A-400.5:**

a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture and/or cultural importance:

The Commission judges that the property known as the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow does possess special significance for Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The Commission based its judgment on the following consideration:

- i. The Dilworth Airplane Bungalow, erected in 1925 for Walter Holmes Beardsley (1879 – 1936) and his wife, Leila Nichols Beardsley (1894 – 1984) is the only local example of the Airplane Bungalow style built during the Craftsman Period (1905 – 1930).
- ii. The Airplane Bungalow style is a rare subtype of the Craftsman style that is most common on the Pacific Coast and California in particular.
- iii. The Asian-influenced Airplane Bungalow is inspired by the elaborate “Ultimate Bungalows” designed by brothers Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene who have been credited for creating the Craftsman movement. The Californian brothers’ interest in both the English Arts and Crafts movement and Oriental wooden architecture is reflected in the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow.
- iv. The incredible integrity of the home, both on the interior and exterior, makes the bungalow an exceptional local example of a well-preserved Craftsman-style home.
- v. The extensive use of stonework, which was used in construction of virtually the entire first floor of the 1.5 story home, is rare in the Dilworth community where stonework was common but limited to minor features such as chimneys and porches.

b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and /or association: The Commission contends that the physical and architectural descriptions included in this report demonstrate that the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow meets this criterion.

9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal: The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the property which becomes a designated "historic landmark." The current appraised value of the land and building is \$376,600.

10. Portion of property recommended for designation: This report finds that the interior and exterior of the house and the land associated with the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow should be included in the landmark designation of the property.

11. Date of Preparation of the Report: April 2016

Prepared by: Paula Pridgen

Introduction

The Dilworth Airplane Bungalow is of special architectural significance in Mecklenburg County. Constructed circa 1925, the home is unique in that it is the only example of the Airplane Bungalow style, a rare subtype of the Craftsman style, in Charlotte. The Airplane Bungalow is more common in California, the home of the architect brothers Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene, who have been credited for creating the Craftsman movement. (1)

The high level of integrity, both in the interior and exterior, of the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow is rare to find today in homes that were built in Charlotte during the Craftsman period spanning the years from 1905 to 1930. (1) The extensive amount of existing historic materials and the virtually intact interior and exterior of the home contribute to the Airplane Bungalow's high degree of architectural integrity.

If one does not refer to the home at 2144 Park Road as the "Airplane Bungalow," then he may call it "The Stone House." Stone is widely used as a building material throughout the historic Dilworth neighborhood, but typically it is used on homes as an accent material. On the Airplane Bungalow, instead of limiting the cobblestone work to the porch columns and chimney the original owners chose to have the entire first story constructed of stone.

Credit for the high level of historic preservation of the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow may be due to the limited number of ownership changes to date. The Beardsley family constructed the home and held the property until the 1970s. Walter Holmes Beardsley, one of the prosperous gentlemen of Charlotte in the early 20th century, and his wife Leila Nichols Beardsley built the house shortly after they were married in 1924. The couple never had any children, and Walter Beardsley passed away in 1936.

Leila Beardsley owned the home until she sold it to John Martin, Jr. and his wife Miriam Martin on October 19, 1972. (2) John Martin, Jr. would own and operate the hardware store, Martin's Hardware, located beside the home at 2200 Park Road (present day Ed's Tavern). On May 24, 1993, John Martin was murdered at his hardware store for an insignificant amount of money. (3)



The Dilworth Airplane Bungalow

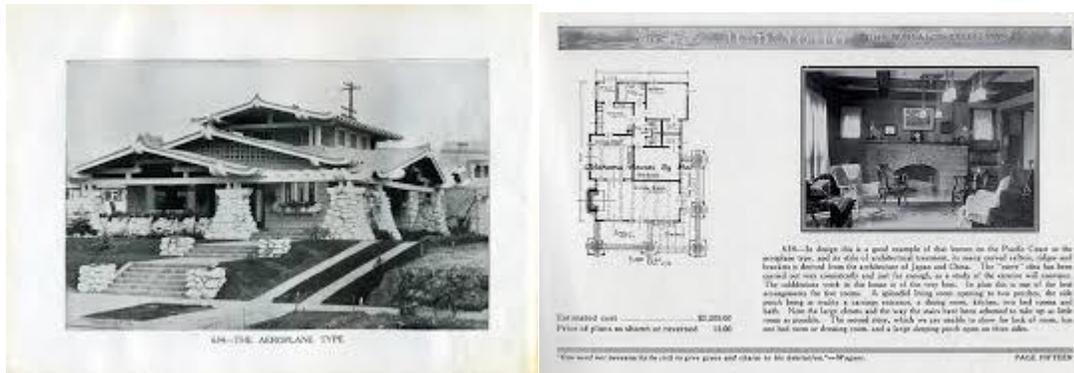
Constructed circa 1925, the 1.5-story single-family residence is a significant example of an Asian-inspired Airplane Bungalow, a subtype of the Craftsman style. The low-pitched roofs resemble the wings of an airplane while the pop-up second story, with its continuous banks of windows allowing sweeping panoramic views of the surroundings, is similar to that of a cockpit of an aircraft. The Airplane Bungalow was common in California during the 1910s and 1920s but was rarely built in other parts of the country.

The Airplane Bungalow is located on the corner of Park Road (originally Avondale Avenue) and Ideal Way in the Dilworth neighborhood, which was established in 1891 as Charlotte's first streetcar suburb. The house is located in southern portion of Dilworth, which is a relatively newer section of the historic neighborhood and was predominantly middle-class. (4) The lot where the home was constructed was purchased on June 16, 1924, from Southside Land Company, which was incorporated in 1921 and authorized to deal in real estate and contracting. (5)

The majority of homes built in the Craftsman style were inspired by two Californian brothers, Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene, who began designing the first Craftsman homes in 1903. While their first houses were simple in design, later plans integrated high-style details that were

influenced by the English Arts and Crafts movement and Oriental wooden architecture. The fame surrounding these intricately-designed “ultimate bungalows” created demand throughout the country for similar craftsman bungalows, which were also called “California bungalows.” (1) During the 1920s, catalogs advertising house plans, a concept which began during the Victorian age, were extremely popular. (6) Bungalow designs made popular by Greene and Greene in California began spreading across the country as a result of these nationally-distributed house plans.

Building plans for the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow were advertised in *Craftsman Bungalows: A collection of the latest designs*, originally published by Yoho & Merritt of Seattle in 1920. The goal of the designs presented in the 1920s publication was to adapt the popular bungalows of California to the cooler climates of northern and eastern states by adding necessary conveniences such as basements with furnaces.



The Dilworth Airplane Bungalow is design number 634 – The Aeroplane Type. Advertisement for the \$20 plans that had an estimated cost of \$5500 to construct contained the following description:

634 – In design this is a good example of that known on the Pacific Coast as the aeroplane type, and its style of architectural treatment, its many curved rafters, ridges and brackets is derived from the architecture of Japan and China. The “curve” idea has been carried out very consistently and just far enough, as a study of the exterior will convince. The cobblestone work in this house is of the very best. In plan this is one of the best arrangements for five rooms. A splendid living room opening to two porches, the side porch being in reality a carriage entrance, a dining room, kitchen, two bed rooms and bath. Note the large closets and the way the stairs have been schemed to take up as little room as possible. The second story, which we are unable to show for lack of room, has one bed room or dressing room, and a large sleeping porch open on three sides. (7)

The Dilworth Airplane Bungalow has retained a significant level of architectural integrity both on the exterior and interior of the home, and has not been significantly expanded. This stands in stark contrast to many of Charlotte’s small bungalows which have been expanded into large, towering or sprawling houses.

On the exterior, the “curve” idea, undoubtedly inspired by some of the oriental-influenced work of Greene and Greene, can be seen in the Japanese-inspired curved rafters extending out from the covered porches. It is also reflected in elements as small as the stone planter underneath the living room window.



Japanese-Inspired Curved Rafters on Front Porch



Front Porch Rafters



Curved Stone Planter on Terrace

Other notable elements on the exterior would include the Arts and Crafts-inspired wood and glass front door, sidelights, and living room picture window that all feature beveled glass. Additionally, the double-hung sash windows remain, many containing the original lead glass.



Original Front Door

Perhaps the most significant exterior change to the home was the removal of the rafters above the terrace in the front, right corner of the home. Originally the rafters from the front and side porches extended to the front, far right stone column. Today, a gas lantern in the Craftsman-style sits on the stone column. Despite this change, the exterior of the home appears much the same today as it most likely did in 1925. Both the covered porches and all the massive, stone columns remain.

While there are other examples of Plan 634 in the United States, one would find it difficult to find an example that contains as an extensive amount of stonework as that used on the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow. Original plans show stonework only on the chimney and supporting columns, but the entire first floor exterior of the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow was constructed in stone. The extensive use of stonework alone makes the home unique in the Dilworth neighborhood. Many other bungalows have stone chimneys and stone detail on their porches, but no other house in Dilworth has stonework carried out as extensively as it was done on the Airplane Bungalow. Perhaps the lavish use of the stonework hints that the man who built this home was wealthier than the average bungalow owner.

In the interior of the house, the floor plan has remained unchanged except for the small addition of a bathroom on the back of the pop-up second floor. The 2003 addition, however, was done in the Arts and Crafts Style and blends well with the original interior. The back porch was also enclosed at an unknown date and the back door was moved to accommodate the interior expansion of the home.



Small Bathroom Addition



Enclosed Back Porch

The house still boasts many plaster walls and ceilings, quartersawn oak woodwork, light fixtures, and oak and pine flooring from its original construction. The picture rail remains intact throughout the home. The large stone fireplace is still in operation and a focal point of the living room. A room divider with built-in bookshelves separates the dining room from the living area.



Large, Stone Fireplace



Dining Room



Dining Room Fixture



Curved Staircase (View from Dining Room)



Fixture in Staircase



Room Divider with Bookcases (Living to Dining)



Room Divider (Dining to Living)



Large Living Room at Front of House



Picture Rail



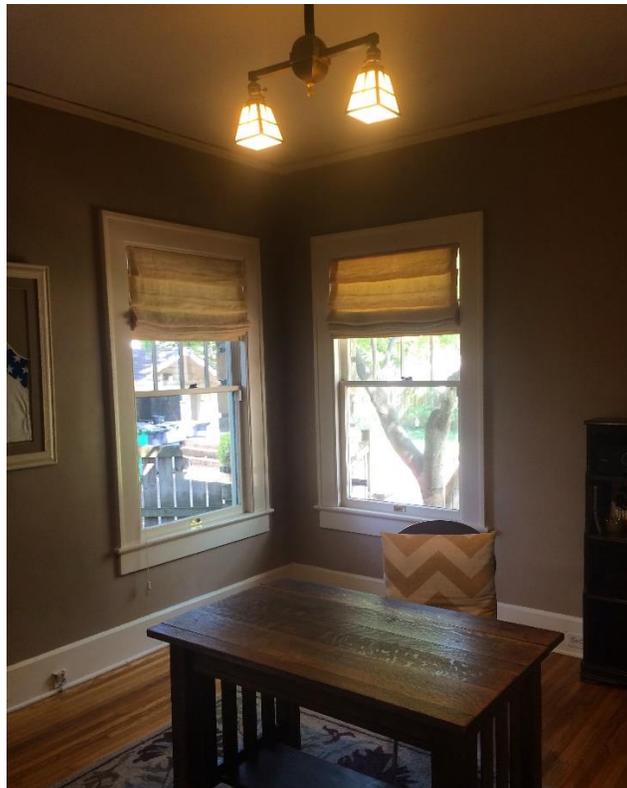
Medicine Cabinet & Original Fixtures



Downstairs Tile & Tub



Downstairs Bedroom (Front)



Downstairs Bedroom (Back)



Upstairs Bedroom



Upstairs Corner Sink



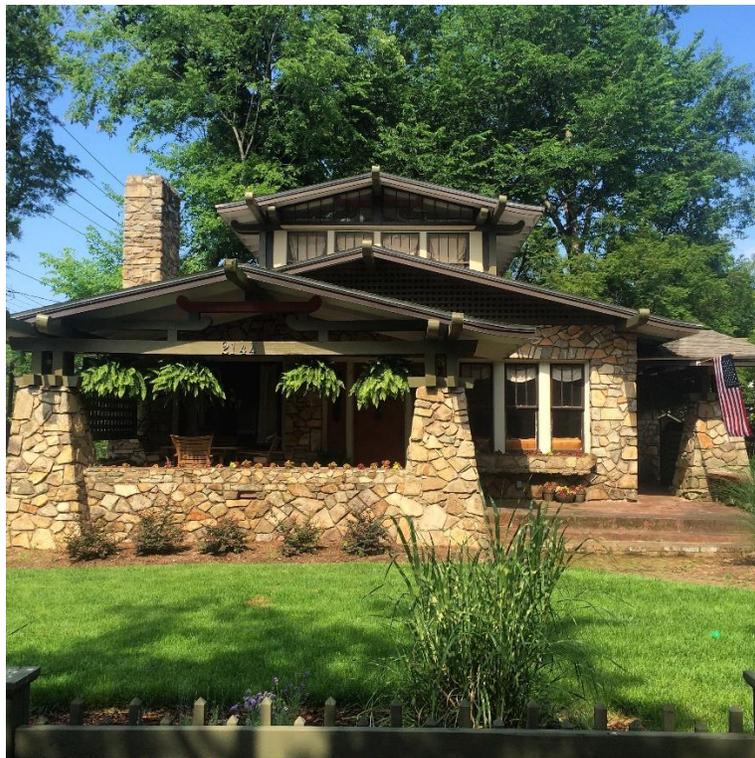
Sleeping Porch



Example of Original Hardware Throughout (Kitchen Pantry)



Front Exterior



Front Exterior



Front Exterior



Front Exterior



Side (Ideal Way - East)



Side (Ideal Way - East)



Back Corner (Ideal Way - East)



Back of House



Back Corner from Parking (West)



Panoramic Shot of Side (From Neighbors – West)



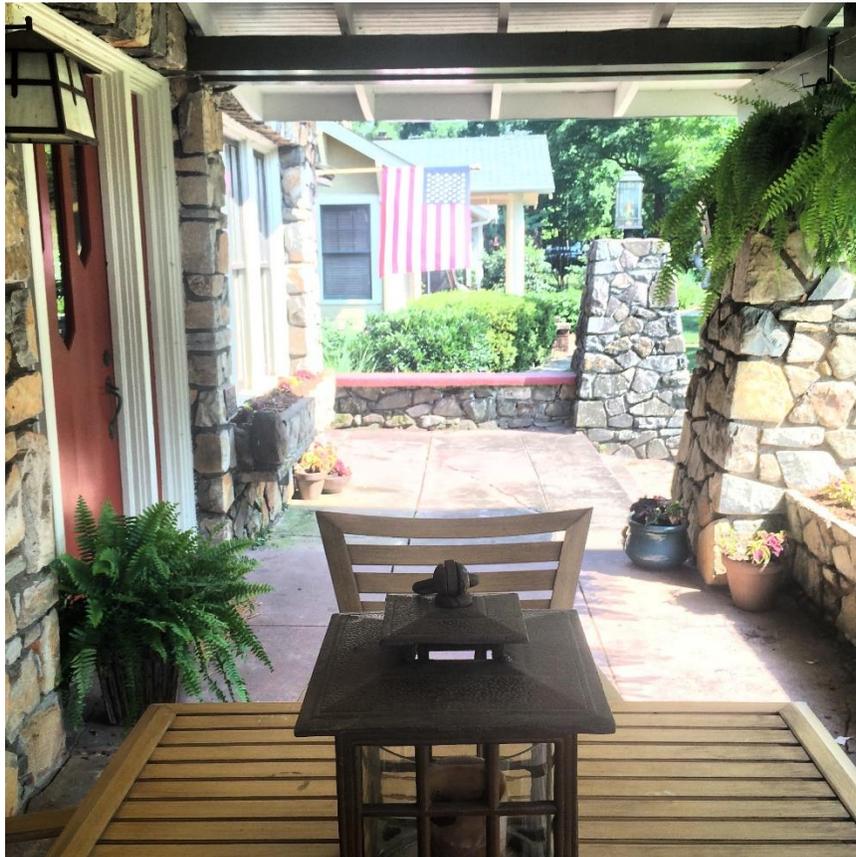
Side Porch (From Neighbors – West)



Side Porch



Side Porch Rafters



Front Porch

The Beardsleys

Walter Holmes Beardsley was born April 12, 1879 in Memphis, Tennessee as the only son from the marriage of the prominent Moss White Beardsley and Marcia Elbertina Beardsley. In 1907, Walter Beardsley and his brother-in-law, Mr. Fredrick H. Gans, operated Gans & Beardsley, a New York cotton firm located at 18 Wall Street. However, around September 1 of 1907, the two opened a branch in Charlotte at 31 East Fourth Street with the purpose of conducting a cotton brokerage business with the Carolina Mills. (8) Walter Beardsley moved to Charlotte in August of 1907 with the intent of managing the new location. Mr. and Mrs. Gans followed their brother a few weeks later. Shortly after, Mr. Beardsley's mother, Mrs. Marcia Beardsley, joined her daughter and son in Charlotte. The family lived at the residence of Mr. J. P. Caldwell located at 603 South Tryon until January of 1909, when Mr. and Mrs. Gans returned to New York. (9) Walter Beardsley and his mother would be Charlotte residents for the remainder of their lives.



Walter Beardsley's mother, Mrs. Marcia Beardsley, was a native of Mississippi and was born into a wealthy family. She was a prominent social figure in many states that she lived in but became well-known in Charlotte's social circles after the family's move. In August of 1910, she passed away. (10) She had not been well for a while. About a year before, Mrs. Beardsley had suffered a stroke while walking the streets of New York and had been confined to a wheelchair ever since. Despite her ill health, Mrs. Beardsley was known as "one of the most scholarly women in the city" of Charlotte and active in Charlotte's social scene. (11)

After his mother's death, Walter Beardsley continued to live in Charlotte. For many years, he remained engaged in the cotton business. When his sister and brother-in-law returned to New York in January of 1909, Gans & Beardsley was dissolved, but Walter Beardsley assumed all responsibility of the cotton firm and continued to run the office under the same name. (12) Walter Beardsley was well-known as a "cotton man" in Charlotte (13), but he was also involved in other business ventures. In February of 1909, DesChamps Merchandise Brokerage Business was purchased by Walter Beardsley and J. M. Boykin. It operated under the name Boykin & Co. at 31 East Fourth Street. (14) On July 1, 1910, Newburger Cotton Company of Memphis, one of the best-known and most reputable cotton houses in the South, opened a branch office in Charlotte. Walter Beardsley became assistant manager of the firm and reported to Mr. Lloyd C. Withers. (15) In May of 1911, The Marcia Yarn Mills of Lincoln County (perhaps a tribute to Walter Beardsley's mother, Marcia, who had passed away the year before) was chartered with \$125,000 authorized capital and \$500 paid into manufacture yarns. Walter Beardsley along with Brevard D. Miller and R. K. Blair were listed as stockholders. (16) The mill, consisting of 9,600 spindles, was listed for sale in October of 2011. (17) In September of 1912, the Marcia Yarn Mills changed names and became known as the Stirant Yarn Mills. (18)

In later years, Walter Beardsley was involved in the auto industry and was a road salesman for Pyramid Motor Company selling White Star extra quality oil. (19) In the fall of 1917, he was busy in South Carolina shooting in orders for the White Star oil and traveling to sell the quality motor oil to be used in Fords. (20) Beardsley reported that business was booming in every sector that he visited. (21) In 1920, Beardsley worked for the Carolina Distributing Company, distributors of Rainer trucks, and spent time traveling and overseeing the development of the company's dealer organization. (22) Around 1923 – 1924, Walter Beardsley was the President and Manager of Piedmont Specialty Company. (23) During the rest of the 20s, Walter Beardsley held secretary and treasurer positions with the Red Fez Club and Elks Lodge. (24) (25) After the stock market crash in 1929, Walter Beardsley began work as an inspector at Ford Motor Company for a few years. (26) Later he became a salesman with D&S Engineering Company. (27) When Walter Beardsley died from heart failure in 1936, "Salesman" was listed as his profession. However, the 1936 city directory shows him as clerk at WPA, presumably the Works Progress Administration, which was created in 1933 with the goal of getting unemployed Americans back to work during the Depression. (28) (29)

While Walter Beardsley, a prominent social figure early on in Charlotte, was not always listed amongst the stags at parties (30), he proved to be a bachelor for much of his life. Beardsley was very active in and beloved by the Charlotte Elks. He served as the Elks State President in 1915 (31) and was the exalted ruler of the Charlotte Elks for many years. (32) In 1913, Beardsley orchestrated the purchase of land on East Third Street known as the old Henderson place and owned by Mr. R. L. Vernon. (33) (34) The Elks built their first home here, opposite of the Mecklenburg County Courthouse. Perhaps in

appreciation of his hard work in securing the property, the Charlotte Elks gave Walter Beardsley an elegant gold watch on Christmas Day in 1913. (35)

Walter Beardsley's father, Moss White Beardsley, was a "man of learning and wide experience." He was an expert in constructive engineering, especially railroad construction. M. W. Beardsley was a native of Ohio but he spent a significant portion of his life in Southern states. In later years, he lived in Oakland, California. In September 1920, Walter Beardsley traveled to San Francisco with the Shriners, where he met his father, who had been living in the West for 27 years at that time. It is possible that Walter Beardsley was inspired to build a bungalow, or even an airplane bungalow by his travels to California. (36)

While Walter Beardsley was purchasing a mill in 1911, the father of Leila Nichols (also formerly known as Lelia Nichols and Lela Nichols), the woman who would become Walter Beardsley's wife, was working as a sawyer in a mill in Barnwell County, South Carolina. (37) Leila Nichols Beardsley, born March 12, 1894 in Earl, North Carolina as the daughter of Martin "Frank" and Hattie Bridges Nichols, came from a very different background than Walter Beardsley. Hattie Nichols passed away on April 8, 1909 in Grover, North Carolina. (38) She has been sick for a while. (39) At that time, Leila was just 15. In October of 1909, Frank Nichols moved his family of four girls (Mabel, 17; Leila, 15; Florence, 13; and Lucy, 4 as of 1910 census) to Robbins, South Carolina where he was engaged in sawmill work. (40) In May of 1912, Frank Nichols passed away. (41)

In 1924, Leila Nichols was living at 709 East Worthington in the Dilworth neighborhood with her youngest sister, Lucy Nichols, and older sister, Mabel and her husband, Thomas Spratt. At that time, Leila was a stenographer for the cotton merchants L C Withers & Co, which was owned by the same Lloyd C. Withers that Walter Beardsley had worked for back in 1910 at the Newburger Cotton Company of Memphis. (23)

On June 16, 1924, Leila Nichols purchased the land described as Lot 12 in Block 1, as shown on a map of the property of Southside Land Company, from Southside Land Company for \$2,250. On the deed for the lot that would be given the address of 2144 Avondale, Leila Nichols is listed as unmarried. (42) In fact, the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow, which was built on this lot, was never in Walter Beardsley's name.

The truth was that Leila Nichols was not an unmarried woman in June of 1924 as she may have claimed. Walter Beardsley and Leila Nichols were secretly married in Gaffney, South Carolina, a town with family ties for Leila, on April 12, 1924. It wasn't until July 16 of the same year that the marriage between Walter and Leila was announced by her sister and brother-in-law, Mrs. and Mr. Thomas E. Spratt. (43)

According to an interview with Allyson Cooksey, the grandniece of Leila Nichols Beardsley, the reason for the secret marriage was related to Lucy Nichols, the youngest sister of Leila. After the deaths of the both their mother and their father, the older Nichols sisters made a pact to remain unmarried until the youngest sister, Lucy, finished school. In April of 1924, Lucy was just shy of graduating. The announcement of the Beardsley marriage in June was made after Lucy's graduation. It is unclear why the young Beardsley couple could not wait a few more months, but the significance of the wedding date may have played a part. The day the couple got married was, after all, Walter Beardsley's birthday.

Fortunately, the young Lucy Nichols did not play as large a factor in the Beardsley couple's choice of house plans as she did in their wedding announcement. Evidently, Lucy thought the Airplane Bungalow,

an idea that Leila got from a picture taken out West, was a bad idea. She thought the Oriental-inspired Airplane Bungalow was inappropriate and would look out of place in the Dilworth streetcar subdivision. Relatives of the Nichols speculate that perhaps the extensive use of stonework was the Beardsleys' effort to make the home fit in more with the surrounding simpler bungalows of the neighborhood. (44)

The Dilworth Airplane Bungalow was constructed sometime after Leila Nichols purchased the lot in 1924. The 1926 Directory lists the couple living at 2144 Avondale. (45)

Even after her husband's death in 1936, Mrs. Leila Beardsley continued to live in the Airplane Bungalow many years. (46) She held various secretarial positions during her life but most notably she was the church secretary at Pritchard Memorial Baptist Church for 42 years.

The Beardsleys never had any children, but the Dilworth Airplane Bungalow did become home to a few of Mrs. Beardsley's relatives. Despite not being a fan of the house style, Lucy Nichols and Mrs. Mabel and Thomas Spratt, sister and brother-in-law of Mrs. Beardsley, lived in the home when the 1930s census data was collected. (47)

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