





ARCHITECTURAL  
**LIVING**

THIS COUPLE'S LOVE OF STORIED  
ANTIQUES EXTENDS FROM THEIR  
BUSINESS TO THEIR OWN LOFT HOME

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**G**arlan Godger Jr. tells stories. He takes old architectural pieces, preserves their stories while turning them into something new, and passes them on. In building his dream home, he followed this motto, taking a building from 1911 and fixing it up. Now he is using it to create his own story in downtown Cullman.

Garlan is the owner of Southern Accents Architectural Antiques, which, he says, sells "anything you can think of taking out of an older house," and some pieces go straight into the Godger home rather than the store. The loft sits above the business's woodshop, which makes custom pieces from old, salvaged material, while paying homage to their rich history.

"What we do at the store is try to preserve the stories of pieces of architecture. We're living by that same motto by creating our own house," Garlan says.

Garlan was looking for a place in 1999 when he moved back to Cullman, and he was intrigued by loft living. He found a building on Third Avenue that had once been a funeral home. It needed a lot of work, but he had a plan. "I could see this vision of where I wanted it to be," he says.

In 2003, Garlan moved into the loft with his wife, Heather, shortly after the Cullman City Council decided people could live in commercial buildings. The Godgers were the first to live in a loft in downtown







Cullman and now have 5,000 square feet all on the second level.

"We love it," he says. "We don't want to go anywhere else."

Garlan designed the layout, wanting an open living space for the kitchen and living area. He said he enjoys taking salvaged materials and designing a whole space around them. Every door in the house is different, and he used roofing slate for the kitchen floor, flooring from a Mississippi River steamboat captain's home for cabinets, and old furnished factory carts for coffee tables, and he refinished the heart pine flooring. He says that each of the pieces has integrity and character, and he believes that the artisan who made it had the same passion for making it as he does for preserving it.

"My passion is for architectural salvage. Pretty much my whole house is salvaged, and I want it to be that way. I enjoy that each piece has its own story," Garlan says.

For the interior design, Heather took the reins and added the perfect complement to her husband's masculine design. She brought in softness and comfort by adding color with rugs, fabrics, and accessories. She wanted the space to have that "everyday living" feel. "I love it because it describes us, and it describes what we do," she says.

The couple also worked to make the game room as appealing as possible as a draw for their two children, but even in that room they focus on pieces that carry a story. Old signs hang on the walls, and there is an antique pool table as well as a mix of old and modern games.





According to the Gudgers, the house is never finished, and they love changing it up. Heather says that sometimes they find a piece they know they'll never find again, so they make a place for it, rearranging a room—or even the whole house, if needed. They're creative at work, and

she enjoys using this creativity in their home, too.

"We may like it how it is now, but that doesn't mean a month from now it's going to be that same way," she says.

Garlan agrees. "We didn't want to rush it. We're taking our time and doing it the way that we wanted to do it."



