



Southern Accents, Preserving the Past

Ever browse through an exclusive high-end home and garden magazine and dream of having one-of-a-kind accent piece to add an element of the unexpected to your home?

If you love turn of the century millwork, opulent chandeliers, you'll find everything you've ever wished for in the way of distinctive accents that have been carefully gathered into one great collection in a store unlike any other you've seen. Welcome to *Southern Accents Architectural Antiques* whose client list includes celebrities like Peyton and Eli Manning, Marty Stewart, Pat Dye, Billy Reid, and Mother Angelica. It's right here in the South, and closer than you think.

In 1969, Dr. Garlan Gudger saw one of Cullman's oldest homes about to be destroyed. Realizing the need to salvage the unique period wood trim, doors, lighting and hardware that would otherwise have ended up in a landfill, he obtained the proper permits to save those artifacts.

This was the beginning of Dr. Gudger's architectural odyssey. Because of him thousands of the most important and interesting pieces from older homes and buildings across the United States have been saved.



What he describes to his high school buddies back home in North Carolina as 'a little junk business' has actually become the largest architectural salvage business in the South.

Southern Accents is now a second generation family owned and operated business, with Garlan Gudger, Jr. at the helm and his young son, Tripp, just beginning to show an interest in the operation.

Housed in one of Cullman's historic downtown buildings, Southern Accents is an emporium of which decorator's

dreams are made. It is filled with ornate turn of the century chandeliers, magnificent mantles and stacks of other architectural masterpieces such as gingerbread from the late-1800s, ornately carved corbels, uniquely trimmed solid wood doors, newel posts caressed with the patina of decades of hands being rubbed across their finial's and a world of exquisite stained glass windows and antique crystal door knobs.

The winding aisles take you back in time, into an alley filled with claw-foot bathtubs. Venture up an iron staircase

and enter a warehouse where time seems to have stood still. Columns of every shape and size are stored here with stacks of antique doors, mantels and vintage windows. Just down the sidewalk are two huge lots filled with ornate wrought iron gates and fencing, garden ornaments, stately urns and scrolled benches. The showroom, warehouse and outdoor lots are spread over an entire city block, creating a paradise of historical artifacts displaying an elegance and beauty sadly lacking in today's modern world.

In the wood warehouse you'll find



over 20,000 square feet of storage space housing stacks of salvaged oak, heart pine, poplar planks and pallets of salvaged timbers and old barn wood.

There is really no way to measure what the Godger's have managed to save from extinction over the years.

"People often ask how we can bear to bring down lovely old Victorian houses," said Godger. "My answer is that we have always prided ourselves in never taking historical fabric from a structure that has not been scheduled for demolition. Our primary mission has always been

to promote the preservation of our architectural heritage through rescuing, restoring and protecting artifacts of historical significance."

Webster's definition of 'salvage' is to 'save'. Demolition means 'to destroy'. It has always been the mission of Southern Accents to save these historical elements

"We feel that by carefully removing these works of art, they are actually given a second chance in life."

It is the family mission – their passion – to make sure that these once loved artifacts find a new home. They take pride

in the accomplishments they have made in the past 54 years of rescuing, restoring and protecting historical elements for many years to come.

Southern Accents showroom is located at 308 Second Ave SE, Cullman, Alabama – open Tuesday through Saturday.

At www.sa1969.com to browse their inventory, sign up for an informative weekly newsletter, follow their blog and find them on Facebook.