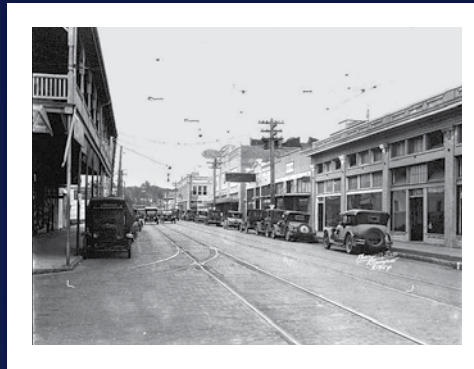


Visionary Workshop

It takes vision to design furniture. And to build a shop. When Florida furniture makers Carl Johnson and Kate Swann were looking for a site for their dream shop in 2008, they came across a building in downtown Tampa that was a bit of a nightmare. Built in the 1920s and first used as an auto parts store, it had long been vacant—as had many neighboring buildings. Its blond brick storefront had been infilled with concrete block, the skylights had been roofed over, and there was no power



or plumbing. They had to inspect the dank interior by flashlight. As they peered around, though, what they both instantly saw was its potential. A year and a half later,

after a thorough restoration, so could everyone else, including the National Register of Historic Places, which put the building on its list, and a number of other businesses that have since renovated buildings on the block. “We wanted a place with a great vibe,” Johnson says, “the kind of place that makes you want to go inside.” That vision seems to have succeeded. “I can’t wait to get to work in the morning,” Johnson says. “If I weren’t married, I’d probably live at the shop.”

—Jonathan Binzen



Shop photo: Steven Widoff; vintage photo courtesy of City of Tampa

How They Did It Turn to p. 90 for details of this shop renovation, and to p. 76 for a portfolio of other great shops in converted spaces.

Audio Slide Show To see an audio slide show featuring a variety of shop spaces in converted buildings, go to FineWoodworking.com/extras.

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