

CHECOTAH â€” The general store had a little bit of everything, and the proprietors lived upstairs so that they could be available whenever a customer needed help. That was merchandising on the frontier. And, for a Checotah family, it is merchandising in 2017. â€œThis is the way it was done in the old days, and it totally makes sense,â€• said Krista Bryant. â€œIt simplifies your life. You are right here. You live here. You work here. â€œWe home-school our children here. We can pretty much walk anywhere we want to get what we need.â€• Krista and Terry Bryant, owners of Union Antiques, recently completed a two-year project to add an upstairs home to their thriving downstairs business. The business is on the first two floors and includes about 4,400 square feet of antiques and antique vendor booths. The final project was a four-bedroom, two-bathroom, 4,400-square-foot home for their family on the third floor. â€œIâ€™m not handy at all,â€• said Terry. â€œThatâ€™s what made this project so daunting at times. We learned a lot about renovation over the past few years. â€œKrista had her eyes on this building for a long time. The first time we ever came in here we had a flashlight, and it wasnâ€™t for sale. But we could tell it was enormous and it was what we wanted.â€• The building, constructed in 1906, is in the heart of historic downtown Checotah at 135 S. Broadway St. It is listed as part of the downtown area on the National Register of Historic Places. It was originally opened as J.O. Price Hardware and Implement Co. They were building and selling â€œStudebaker Wagons.â€• It was later Bynumâ€™s, a general merchandise store. It is also believed that an undertaker once ran his business in the building. â€œThere are some strange noises in this building,â€• said Krista. â€œBut it is that way with any old building. I donâ€™t want to scare the kids.â€• Every detail of the renovation was done with an eye toward accurate preservation. A current project, to renovate what was once a hand-pulled elevator to lift and lower wagons in the back of the shop, is underway. There is a small plaque on

the machine that identifies it as a 1906 hand-pulled Otis elevator. "It is very cool," said Terry. "That is the last room we have to tackle in this building. We saved it for last because the business was first, followed by our home." The Bryants had been thinking about opening their own business for a few years. He worked for the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture; she worked for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Once they had the building, it was full-speed ahead on the new adventure. "Terry was kind of watching the building after we became interested in it to see if anyone else was looking at it," said Krista. "There were a lot of leaves and debris in the doorway, so Terry kept telling me we're the only ones looking at it. We later found out that wasn't true. However, the day the "for sale" sign went up, we made a bid for it. I just had a feeling about this building. I didn't know what we were getting into, but I felt it was the right thing for us. I was sweating it until the deal was finalized." Then, the real work began. "It just felt so big when we got in here," said Krista. "It was a real chore to get it up to code and to make sure we kept as much of the original as possible for historical purposes," said Terry. It included a complete renovation on the interior from the walls to restoring the original wood floors. Also, 18 new windows were installed, and a five-unit heating and air-conditioning system was needed. Much of the electrical and water needed to be updated. "We were living out in the country near here, so it was a couple of miles in here to work on it," said Terry. That is no longer the case. Now, if things get busy, you can holler up the stairs for help. Just like in the Old West. "A couple of Saturdays ago Terry was upstairs watching college football and I needed help, so I hollered for him," said Krista. "I was right in the middle of the OU-Texas game," said Terry. Yes, there

is a sign on the stairway headed to the third floor that tells customers that the store is only the first two floors. The upstairs apartment is huge with an open space that combines a dining room, living room and game room into one large space. There are also four bedrooms and two large bathrooms. The kitchen is also huge. "We have space, no doubt about it," said Krista. "We love how it turned out. We were able to keep so much of the original brick and wood." It has changed their lives. "I guess it is kind of fitting that we live and work in an old building and that we sell old things in this old building," said Krista. "I know it is kind of a throwback to a different era. "People say it was a simpler time. It has definitely simplified our lives. And we love it." John Klein 918-581-8368 [john.klein@tulsaworld.com](mailto:john.klein@tulsaworld.com)  
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