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JUST IN TIME FOR COMPANY!

Selling Since 1907

Meg and Terry Troutman continue a downtown Knoxville tradition at their family's O.P. Jenkins Furniture Co.

BY JAMES T. BLACK

It still surprises Meg Troutman when someone asks the question. “They’ll wonder how long we’ve been here,” the co-owner of O.P. Jenkins Furniture Co. says. “I tell them, ‘oh, a little more than a hundred years.’”

One of the oldest family-owned businesses in Tennessee, the downtown store was founded by Meg’s great-grandfather in 1907. New customers are still discovering its four floors filled with furniture, accessories, artwork, gift items, and more.

Meg and her husband, Terry, took over the business from her father, Bobby Sherwood, five years ago. Having spent most of her life in the furniture business, Meg knows how to keep old customers while attracting new ones.

“Basically, you have to provide anything that people need for their homes,” she says. “In the past few years we’ve added an interior design service and started carrying decorative items and accessories such as artwork, lamps, candles, and coffee table books. We get so much walk-in traffic these days that we have to offer something they can carry home with them.”



The family-owned business witnessed the revitalization of downtown Knoxville.

The family business has done more than just keep up with the times—it has helped inspire other businesses. “More people are living downtown these days, and the area is undergoing a major revitalization. That’s really helped us,” Meg says. “Market Square is just a few blocks away, and it has great restaurants and shops. There are also several art galleries nearby, so we’ve started letting local artists exhibit their works here.”

To Bobby Sherwood, Knoxville’s promising future looks a lot like its bustling past. “Downtown was thriving in the 1960s,” Bobby says. “The decline

started after the malls opened.” Some help arrived in the 1970s when the city built Summit Hill Drive, a direct path from the interstate to downtown. “That opened up the store to a lot more traffic,” Bobby says. But her family didn’t sit around waiting for the road, Meg adds. “My grandfather moved into this location in 1937, and my dad expanded into the building next door in the 1960s,” she says. “We’ve added two warehouses and increased the parking area. We’re always growing.” Even after a century of expansions, Meg still hears the question. “It’s almost a daily thing,” she says with a laugh. “Someone will come in and say, ‘I didn’t know there was anything like this downtown—it’s so cool.’” *

O.P. JENKINS FURNITURE CO.: 209 West Summit Hill Drive, Knoxville, TN 37920; opjenkinsfurniture.com or 865-522-9632.



Meg and husband Terry started running the store five years ago.