

Smith Restores Home For His Big Elephants

Mike Smith, East School teacher and a Kings Mountain native, always dreamed of renovating an old house and when he saw the "for sale" sign at 303 East King St. he couldn't resist going in and browsing around.

That was in July when the young bachelor bought the former M.L. Houser home, built in 1909, by Mrs. M.L. Houser, now of Ruffin, and the late Mr. Houser. Mrs. Houser, a former school teacher, converted the two-story frame house into a boarding house after her husband died during the depression years. Many newlyweds in Kings Mountain started their marriages in an apartment in the Houser home, one of the first homes constructed along U.S. 74 East when U.S. 74 was a dirt road. Mr. Houser operated a cash and carry grocery store and when he and his bride built the house there was water but no sewage and electrical services. The Houser children are PrueNell (Mrs. M.C.) Poston of Kings Mountain, Mrs. Edna Ruth Saunders of Kings Mountain, LeRhyne Houser of Goldsboro, Mrs. Viola H. Stokes of Ruffin, and Joe Houser of Tucson, Arizona. All the children but Mrs. Poston were born in the house. Mrs. M.L. Houser, 94, moved to Ruffin to make her home with a daughter several years ago and was reluctant at first to sell the home which held for her so many memories. Edna Rhyne and M.L. Houser were married in St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Jan. 29, 1907.

Smith's reason for buying and renovating the house interested Mrs. Houser because she also liked to collect the unusual and Mike wanted to open "Mike's Big Elephants". No, he doesn't collect elephants but offers the community a place to bring handmade crafts and antiques, any of their "old elephants"

around the house they don't want" and offer them to the public on a consignment basis.

"My folks always accused me of collecting anything and taking what they termed 'old elephants' that nobody else wanted", explained the young man who has been collecting and refinishing furniture for his house for over a year. Furnished with antiques and turn-of-the century furniture, the first floor of the house has been renovated to retain the classic beauty and period of the house in earth tones with wallpaper accents of colonial provincial red to match the trim on the gray two story dwelling. The entry hall, which is 25 feet long, is especially beautiful with the floral printed wallpaper used above the wainscoting and also around the mouldings in the living room. The filigree grillwork in the hall and the original pine floors, which have been refinished, are highlights. Mike's aunt, Mrs. Etta Parton, his mother, Mrs. Eunice Smith, and students in the Home Economics Department at KMSHS helped in decorating and making the beautiful provincial red drapes which pick up the color in the wallpaper in the first floor rooms. A 70-year-old friend helped Mike paint the house. The interior is painted colonial white with accents of colonial provincial red. And there is a fireplace in every room, which Mike plans to use this winter, and woodstoves in the bedroom and kitchen.

Ionic greek columns on the front of the house attest to its age and Mike says he has not changed the design of the house, only the decorative motif and furnishings to enhance the turn of the century look. He has replaced a mantel in the living room with another of similar appearance, purchasing the Victorian mantelpiece from owners

of a Victorian home which burned in Grover a few years ago. The oak mantel is enhanced by columns to the floor and a mirror.

Mike Smith admits to visiting yard sales and flea markets for unusual items but will feature, not only old pieces in his Elephant Shop, but handcraft and furniture. Unusual items and good merchandise will be featured and persons who want to offer their goods on a consignment basis are invited to call him or come by his home from 7 until 9 p.m. week nights and on Saturday from 1 until 6 p.m. Customers are also invited to come by his home and browse during those hours.

Mike Smith has furnished his master bedroom with an antique bed and accessories and is using an old-timey cook stove in the kitchen which is bright with red and white check curtains and tablecloths.

He does not plan to cover the floors, which are spotless, and the pine has been refinished by Smith, assisted by Robert Edgerton. In the living room is an old-timey sofa, matching chairs, and an old RCA Radiola which really plays music. A drop leaf table holds tiny glass elephants which are among Mike's small collection of the tiny animals.

Cyprus clocks, Christmas wreaths and other Christmas gift items will be featured in Mike's house which is expected to resemble a holiday house in a few weeks.

The past few months have been busy for Smith who said that the job of restoration had not been easy, since he was trying to study for a master's degree, go to school and then broke his left arm taking a group of Church of God Sunday School kids on a skating party. He is still wearing his arm in a cast.

When he is not looking for items to add to his collections, Mike is busy at books and his job at East School where he teaches a fourth and fifth grade combination class. He is also active

in the Church of God on Bessemer City Road and teaches a young people's class. A graduate of KMSHS and Appalachian State University, Mike taught two years in Gaston

County and then served a tour of duty with Uncle Sam. He has been a K.M. teacher since 1973 and is the son of Mrs. Eunice Smith and the late Manuel David Smith of Kings Mountain.

"Mike's Big Elephants" will open for business this week and Mike tells us that "anything you don't need is an elephant, a desk, chair, buffet, etc. Maybe he can sell your "elephant" for you.

Story And
Photos By
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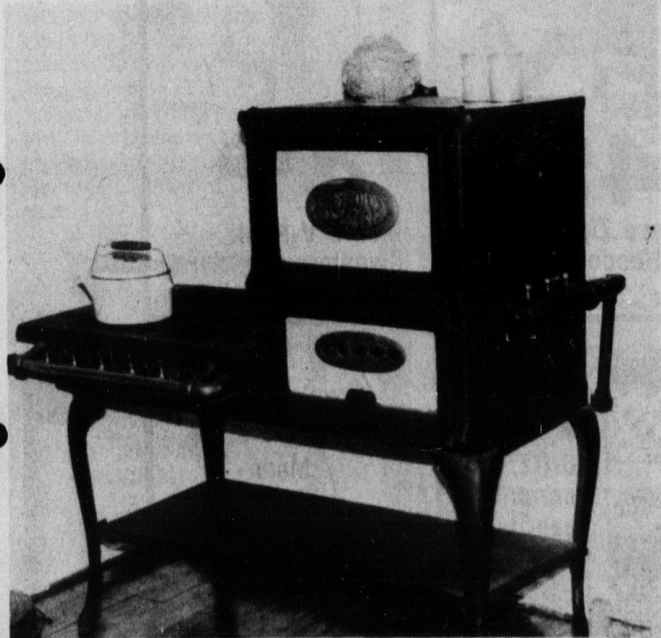


MIKE'S BIG ELEPHANTS—Mike Smith, Kings Mountain teacher, has restored a turn of the century house on East King Street as a residence and as a place for his "big

elephants". A collector, the young man is encouraging citizens to bring all their unwanted big elephants to him.



FORMER OWNERS—Mr. and Mrs. M.L. Houser, above, are pictured on their wedding day in 1917. Two years after, they built one of the first homes on U.S. 74 East on East King St. Mr. Houser died during the depression years and his widow opened the house to boarders. Mrs. Houser, 94, now resides in Ruffin.

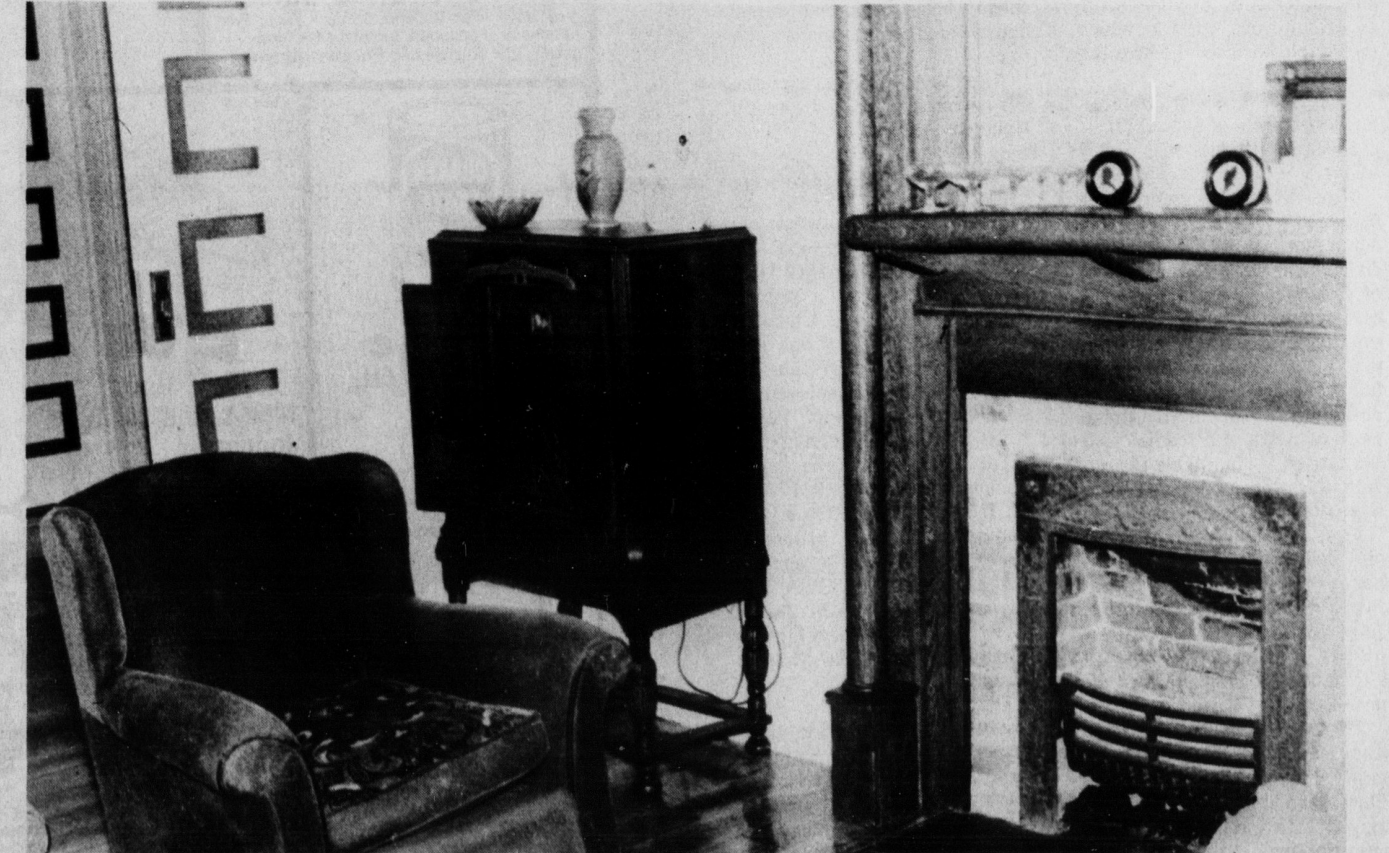


ANTIQUES WILL SET THEME—Mike Smith likes to collect old pieces of furniture and has been collecting for more than a year to furnish his home on East King St.



OLD TIMEY STOVE—An old-timey wood stove is among antique items in Mike Smith's refurbished home on East King St. which he

has beautifully redecorated while still preserving the charm of the old home.



VICTORIAN RED MOTIF—A Victorian red motif enhances the former M.L. Houser home which has been renovated by Mike

Smith. The mantel in the living room came from an old Victorian home which burned in Grover several years ago.