It’s a small world

Through the eyes of Robert Martin’s microscopes

You’ve heard it all your life: “If you want to get ahead in the world, think big.”


Robert Martin makes microscopes. Not just your regular run of the mill high school biology lab microscopes (although he sells those, too). He produces and markets some of the most technologically advanced microscopes in the world.

He assembles them and sells them, believes it or not, right here in downtown Eastley, from his office and show room in Pendleton Street. He provides high-powered microscopes to a big portion of the leading corporate and scientific research centers up and down the Eastern seaboard.

The research people look him in the eye because Martin is an authority in his field. He probably knows as much about life and death as any man in the country today. You will be seeing a lot of impressive research people coming in and out of the whole issue on the corner of Pendleton and East First Avenue in the weeks and months ahead.

Four weeks ago Martin moved his office from Greenville, where he has been for 36 years, into the building formerly occupied by his mother, the late Mrs. Rosamond Martin. The spacious rooms in the house lend themselves quite well to Martin’s operation, much of which involves consultation and training.

He held an all-day training seminar last Thursday for a small group of research microscopes who came to Eastley to learn more about a new, greatly advanced microscope designed by Martin and adapted to the specific needs of the seminar participants, all doing research for the textile industry.

Three of the group are with Evans Wood, a research chemist, and Maggie Thompson and Dave Blackburn, microbiologists; Lawrence Green is a research microbiologist with Becton Corporation in Anderson; and Ashley Nunn is a research microbiologist at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

"Donnelly, a consulting microbiologist, was assisting Martin with the seminar. Polky has made numerous trips to California as an expert’s consultant to authorities working on the freeway master." (Continued)

Training seminars and workshops are part of the business for Martin. "We want the people to be happy with the instruments they purchase," he said.

Martin is not simply a retail dealer in microscopes. He adapts and assembles systems for research centers and offers consulting on a one-to-one basis. "Generally," he said, "the need of a microscope starts with a telephone conference during which the person (the researcher) describes what they want to do, and we send them their questions, "Now, what can you do about this?"

"So then we put together what we think might work for them, and we take it to them, or they come here. And many times it doesn’t work at all and we have to make up a new system," Martin said.

Martin won’t sell a microscope unless he knows exactly what the client wants. "We sit the client down and try to get full instrument for awhile, to make sure. "We usually loan it to them because it is too important to the researcher to spend their money until they know they are going to get results," Martin said. "And it’s important to us, too. We can’t sell people instruments that won’t work. If they don’t work, then we are not happy and they are not happy either."

Research microscopes performing as a teaching seminar last Thursday at Martin led Tuesday at Greenville Academy, and Raywood, Thursday at Greenville High School, and S.C. School of Technology, and even Wood, who were members of the same research team, Thursday at Carolina College, Chapel Hill, N.C. Low power, high power, and even ultraviolet microscopes are shown and examined by all of those who were present.

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If you have any doubts about the architectural proficiency, you’ll be happy to know that Mrs. Rosamond Martin’s house in Pendleton Street is coming to life again.

Martin’s three-bedroom, 1890 by Rosamond Martin’s house in Pendleton Street was the first one in Eastley to be wired during construction. A close look at the residence reveals that the finest materials used in building both 1890 and 1973 are in excellent condition.

"The Martin home," the long suffering of their four children was still an infant, and Mrs. Martin was left to rear her children by herself. She was a hard working woman and they were still young when they became separated, but they have been away from Eastley since young adulthood. All of them still have a sentiment towards their old home.

One of the sons, Robert Martin, who has resided in Greenville for the last 18 years, has made his home, Martin Instrument Company, into the 11-room house. The house has been closed since its mother’s death. Martin began converting the house some months ago, and says he still has considerable work to do before the project is completed.

Last week he and his wife were still arranging extensive interior paintings and螅 equipment and related equipment in the living areas. The house is proving surprisingly suitable for the business operation, much of which involves consultation and training sessions with purchasers of Martin’s highly specialized microscopes.

All of the rooms are light and airy, with enormous windows by today’s standards. Most of the rooms have open fireplaces with fine solid mahogany mantels and beveled mirrors. A large feature of the house is the charming reception hall at the front entrance.

A verdant front door opens directly into the room, which has its own fireplace and in about twice the length of an average room. Overhead, the ceiling is accented by heavy square emplaced beams spaced three or four feet apart. Set between a geometric pattern.

Martin has designed the house positioned a dormer window on the roof above the front door to catch the rays of the afternoon sun. The blinds are made of Venetian blinds. The sunbeams streaming through the stained glass panels softly illuminates the rooms. The Eastley Presbyterian Church erected a new red brick building to replace its old one. The old church’s red brick was used in Martin’s new home, and Martin acquired the discarded windows to enclose his back porch.

All of the windows are still in excellent condition and are now aluminum. Aesthetics buffs pay premium prices for glass with lead lights, and irreplaceable even at that are the personal windows. Glass manufacturers of a century ago did not have the technology to copy the old lead light style.

Martin Instrument Company, he says, new house is a model of its time. "It’s a reverential look at that era when they were young boys.

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