

To see the world in a grain of sand
and a heaven in a wild flower,
hold infinity in the palm of your hand
and eternity in an hour.

—William Blake

It's a small world

Through the eyes of Robert Martin's microscopes

By Gerald B. Davis

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

But Robert Martin "got ahead" by thinking small. Very small. Infinitesimally small.

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

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

The research people seek him out because Martin is an authority in his field. He probably knows as

much about microscopes as any man in the country today. You will be seeing a lot of impressive research people coming in and out of the white house 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 30 years, into the home 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 hosted an all-day training seminar last Thursday for a small group of research microscopists who came to Easley to learn more about a new, greatly advanced microscope designed by Martin and adapted to the specific needs of the seminar participants, all doing fibers research for the textile industry.

Three of the group are with

Evan Wood, a research chemist, and Maggie Thompson and Dayle Blackburn, microscopists; Lawrence Greene is a research microscopist with Badische Corporation in Anderson; and Ashley Nunn is a research microscopist at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

Don Felty, a consulting microscopist, was assisting Martin with the seminar. Felty has made numerous trips to California as an expert fibers consultant to authorities working on the freeway murder cases.

Training seminars and workshops are routine for Martin. "We want the people to be happy with the instruments they purchase from us," he said.

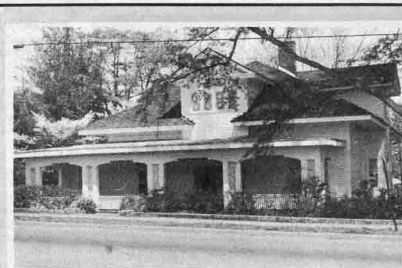
Martin is not simply a retail dealer in microscopes. He adapts and assembles systems for research centers on a one-to-one basis. "Generally," he said, "the sale of a microscope starts with a telephone conference during which they (the research people) describe what they want to do, and it ends with their asking, '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 it is exactly what the client wants. He lets the client try out the instrument for awhile, to make sure. "We usually loan it to them because it is too important to the researchers that they don't spend 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 microscopists participating in a training seminar last Thursday at Martin Instrument Company in Easley are shown above, l. to r., Dayle Blackburn, Maggie Thompson, and Evan Wood, all with Celanese Corporation, Charlotte. Don Felty (at microscope), consulting microscopist, and Lawrence Green, research microscopist with Badische Corporation, Anderson, S.C. The other member of the group (not pictured) was Ashley Nunn, microscopist from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. N.C. Lower photo shows Robert Martin in one of his display rooms, holding a microscope and surrounded by dozens of others.

Charles Lyle photos



New home of Martin Instrument Company

Martin home comes to life

If you love elegant old homes and appreciate good architecture, you will be happy to know that Mrs. Rosamond Martin's house on Pendleton Street is coming to life again.

The stately white house was built in 1910 by Rosamond Martin for his young bride, Mary Hamilton Martin. Easley was little more than a hamlet then, and electricity was a luxury. But Martin wanted the best for Mary, and had wiring installed in his new house as it was built. A few other homes had electricity, but the Martin house was the first one in Easley to be wired during construction. A close look at the house reveals that the very finest materials were used to build it. Although 73 years old, the house is in excellent condition.

Tragically, Rosamond Martin died when the youngest of their four children was still an infant, and Mrs. Martin was left to rear her children alone. The two sons and two daughters are still living, and although they have been away from Easley since young adulthood, all of them still have a sentimental attachment to the family home.

One of the sons, Robert Martin, who has resided in Greenville for the last 30 years, has moved his business, Martin Instrument Company, into the 11 room house. The house has been closed since his mother's death. Martin began restoring 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 his extensive inventory of microscopes and related equipment on shelves in the spacious rooms. 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 oak mantels and beveled mirrors. A unique feature of the house is the charming reception hall at the front entrance.

The beveled-glass front door opens directly into this room, which has its own fireplace and is about twice the length of an average room. Overhead, the ceiling is accentuated by heavy square exposed beams spaced three or four feet apart. Set between

in a geometric pattern.

The architect who designed the house positioned a dormer window on the roof above the front door to capture the rays of the afternoon sun and direct them down onto the skylight. The diffused sunlight coming through the stained glass panes softly illuminates the room with a warm, intimate glow. Mrs. Martin used to receive guests in this room, inviting them to sit by the fireside to chat.

Martin Instrument Company will use the room for a reception area and waiting room.

Another interesting feature of the house is its large glass-enclosed back porch. Martin said the over-sized windows which surround the porch were salvaged by his father in 1913 when the Easley Presbyterian Church erected a new red brick building to replace its first little frame church. The old church was being torn down and Martin acquired the discarded windows to enclose his back porch.

All of the window panes are still in excellent condition and are now genuine antiques. Antique buffs pay premium prices for glass items with any wavy, irregular surface like that on the porch windows. Glass manufacturers of a century ago did not have the technical skills and knowledge to make the clear, unblemished glass we have today. A wavy surface is a sure clue that the glass is antique.

Martin has left his mother's house as nearly like the original as possible, making no structural changes in the building. All of the room partitions will be left in place. The old claw-foot bathtub is still in the bathroom, and a little built-in medicine cabinet will be left as it is. Even the horseshoe nailed up over the back door will be left undisturbed. Martin said his brother David put the good luck emblem there when they were young boys.

Martin plans to use the full daylight basement for a workshop. He said there had been some speculation that he and his family would be moving into the house, but he has no plans to do so. All available space will be utilized by Martin Instrument Company. His business requires a large area to assemble and display the great assortment of microscopes incident to the business.

Martin said he will use much of his mother's antique furniture, which is now in storage, to furnish his offices and reception area. He also plans to hang a number of paintings done by his brother David, an accomplished artist. David Martin is a physics professor at North Carolina State University in Raleigh.

Martin's two sisters, who still have many friends living in Easley, are Mrs. Green Giebner (Harriett) of Greenville and Mrs. Dan Rencher Jr. (Margaret) of Opelika, Ala.



Close-up view of skylight in reception room.

(See Small World, Page 4)