



photo by [Marcus Frazier](#)

Joseph Stone looks through the many antique maps, which he sells. Stone also offers vintage prints and books.

## Stone follows musical, history interests in business

By [Joan Gandy](#) ([Contact](#)) | The Natchez Democrat



Leaving a stellar career as a clarinetist in New York City, Joe Stone moved back to his hometown of Natchez with a few ideas about what the future might hold for him. Those ideas did not include a bed-and-breakfast business.

Looking back on the years since he returned to restore the family home on Washington Street in 1999, Stone can see the natural transition that took place in making the Joseph Newman Stone House not only a successful bed-and-breakfast establishment but also a venue for some of his other talents and interests.

Stone continues to share his musical talents in providing live classical piano music for his guests in the evening; and he offers music programs to tour groups, arranged through Natchez Pilgrimage Tours.



Photo by Marcus Frazier

Joseph Stone has taken his family home and created a bed and breakfast in which he has incorporated a music program and antique print and map gallery to further grasp the attention of his guests.

In addition, Stone has created a gallery of his collection of rare maps and prints and offers them for sale, not only to B&B guests but to anyone interested in them.

He showed off the large map chest he purchased after moving to Natchez, where maps dating from

the 1600s to the 1900s are stored and can be pulled out for inspection.

Other maps on the wall show early depictions by cartographers of the Mississippi River valley, the Natchez area and other important places in the South.

His interest in old maps and prints has led him to enlarge his collection to include maps from throughout the world. “This is a 16th-century woodcut print of North Africa,” he said, showing the colorful print.

In addition to his maps and prints, Stone also shows and sells from his collection of rare books. Heirlooms passed down to him by family members led to his interest in maps and in books.

At the Stone House, 804 Washington St., the oldest part of the house originally was a billiard hall, built about 1850 by David Stanton on the grounds of the antebellum house The Elms, the Stanton home, Stone said.

The billiard hall, now restored with its original full-length windows and featuring a reproduction of an antique billiards table, was expanded in about 1870 into a house.

“My great-grandparents acquired the house in 1877,” Stone said. The family has lived there since that time.

Stone has memories of the billiard room as his own bedroom. The tall windows had been covered to provide privacy.

The restoration was more complex than he had imagined, Stone said, pointing out, for example, the elaborate glass panes in the pocket doors, many of which were damaged and had to be copied by a glass artisan.

The property includes the main house and a small cottage, one Stone believes his family built to be used as a kitchen dependency.

Stone shared some of the challenges he faced that might be instructive for someone else considering restoring a house for a bed-and-breakfast business.

“First, you should know about bed-and-breakfast guests. They are sociable people,” Stone said. “They want to know local people; they tend to be interested in history; and they enjoy conversation.”

In other words, the proprietor should be prepared to spend some time with guests, he said.

He also advises the would-be bed-and-breakfast owner to look carefully into the tax-credit law if the

property owner expects to take advantage of tax incentives.

“The tax credit is tricky. You have to be aware that the refund you get on what you spend might not be as much as you hope for,” he said. “There is a limit on the time you can spend on restoration.”

Also, tax credits are limited to the part of the house or building where the bed-and-breakfast business is in operation.

“That means I live in the smallest space possible,” he said. “And the guests have the run of the house.”

Stone spent three years on the restoration, doing much of the work himself. He enjoyed the work, he said.

Returning to Natchez after nearly 30 years, Stone enjoys the “very relaxing, appealing lifestyle” of his hometown.

“But in New York, I always lived in an apartment. I didn’t have to care for the exterior of any building I ever lived in,” he said, laughing as he described the many chores and responsibilities of maintaining a historic house and grounds.

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