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Stone at home with family house

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NATCHEZ — Tourists may know him as the owner of the Joseph Stone House during Pilgrimage, but Joseph Britton Stone has more stories to tell than just the history of his house.

Stone grew up in the house as a child, but his love for music led him to New York City, where he spent 25 years of his life pursuing a musical career.

In 1999, Stone moved back to Natchez to care for the house, which was badly in need of repair. But when The Dart landed at 804 Washington St., the home had long since been restored.

Stone grew up with two sisters, one brother, both of his parents, and uncle and a grandmother all sharing the house.

“We were a large family,” he said. “Most of the rooms were bedrooms. It wasn’t restored, and it was kind of run down. We didn’t have much money.”

Stone began playing the piano when he was a child, but stopped in sixth grade to do other things. In eighth grade, Stone picked up clarinet playing.

“I knew by the 10th grade that I wanted to pursue music as a career,” he said.

After graduating from South Natchez, Stone attended the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y., to pursue a degree in clarinet performance. During that time, Stone also began playing the piano again.

After four years at Eastman, Stone moved to New York City to pursue a master’s degree in clarinet performance at the Manhattan School of Music and stayed in the city afterward.

“It’s kind of stressful living, but it’s very, very energized,” he said. “It’s a very driven environment, and you had to really get in gear and move with it.”

Stone spent the last eight years of his time in New York City working for Bloomberg Financial Markets, current New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s company.

“Hardly a day went by when I wasn’t talking to him on the phone,” Stone said of Bloomberg. “I never saw him in person a lot, but we spoke every day on the phone. He was a micromanager.”

After 25 years in the city, Stone said he felt it was time to return to his roots in Natchez.

“I was tired of working at Bloomberg, and I was no longer in New York for the original purpose,” Stone said. “I had property here that needed attention, and a mother who needed my attention.”

Stone’s mother died before he was able to relocate, but he was able to restore the house. In 2008, it was added to the Pilgrimage tour list. Stone both gives guided tours and hosts classical piano performances in the house’s music room.

“I enjoy putting it on tour, but it can get a little repetitive,” Stone said. “There’s plenty to talk about, so I can focus on different things from tour to tour.”

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