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Work Under Way For Macado's

By Kit Huffman

The newest addition to the Macado's chain of restaurants is scheduled to open in Lexington this fall.

Richard H. Macher of Roanoke, who purchased the historic Willson-Walker House last July from Grant and Josephine Griswold of Raphine, hopes to open his 15th Macado's in the North Main Street premises this September or October.

The "demolition stage" is nearly complete inside the historic building, he said last week. "We're entering the building stage now."

The previous interior was "rather dark," he said, and work so far has included tearing off wallpaper in the foyer and beginning to open up the downstairs space by removing the wall between the foyer and the street-facing section of the dining room. The more open interior, he said, will be closer to the original plan of the building, which once served as a butcher shop.

He said he remembered the building from its days as the White Column Inn in the 1970s, when he lived in Lexington. Then, he remembered, one entered the inn and stepped down into the bar/restaurant.

In removing the plaster from the interior wall, workers have found part of an old brick wall. That brick fragment may be restored, Macher said.

The two former dining rooms in the downstairs area will be turned into one larger room, to include a bar and dining area. Those entering the restaurant will encounter a large, 16- by 20-foot wraparound bar with a glass display case. Near the entrance will be a "walk-in area," where customers may buy desserts, food to-go and different kinds of coffee. Further inside will be tables for seated dining.

Overall, Macher said, the d/cor will be "metro," with "interesting" glass in front of the bar, which will be "back-lit."

The designer of the space was architect Mark McConnell of Roanoke, whose partner designed the bar at The Homestead, in Hot Springs. The demolition has been carried out by Building Specialists, out of Roanoke.

Though the wallpaper has been removed, builders have retained the old wainscoting, as well as the exterior windows and doors. Macher said he's applying for historical tax credits, both state and federal, for the work.

Upstairs, the large, street-facing banquet room will be opened up even more, to become a little larger. Both porches, upstairs and down, will be available for dining.

There is no elevator to the top floor, but wheelchair access is provided to the first floor through an entrance at the side.

Macher, whose brother, Roland "Spanky" Macher previously owned the former Spanky's restaurant and deli on Jefferson Street, sounded upbeat about his newest enterprise.

"I'm looking forward to it," he said. "The house will look great. We're going to brighten it up and make it fun."

The building was constructed around 1820 by the local firm of John Jordan and Samuel Darst for Capt. William Willson, a merchant, postmaster and treasurer of Washington College. In 1911, Harry Lee Walker, a prominent local African-American, opened a butcher shop in the building.

