

# Weatherly 'steamboat house' being moved and renovated

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"I'm trying not to watch this," says Florence Hughes with a half worried, half laughing expression. She's watching the house movers ease the house of her dreams down a steep incline. "You don't know what that's doing to my stomach," she adds, turning away so she doesn't have to see if her newly-bought gingerbread porch comes crashing off the trailer.

In spite of her worries, the "steamboat house," as the locals affectionately call the old Weatherly home on Baxter-Duncan Street, makes it down the steep driveway without any problem. Travis "Shorty" and Florence Hughes are the newest owners of the Weatherly house which was designed and built by renowned architect Dietrich Rulfs sometime in the 1890s. They are moving their new home to Texas Street to a lot behind their daughter and son-in-law's home.

"The house really needed to be moved. This is such a small lot and the commercial surroundings. It needs to be somewhere else," Mrs. Hughes explains.

The three-story Victorian style house has a total of ten rooms at the moment but used to have more when in its original position facing North Street. At some point, the house was moved backwards and turned north to allow space for commercial

enterprises in the area. Part of the home was left off and then rebuilt later. The Hughes' plan no structural changes at all, but do plan to do some remodeling and additions on the newer part of the home including enlarging the breakfast area, adding a bed and bath and converting attic space into loft rooms and a playroom for their grandchildren. Other than taking the sheetrock out, the older part will remain intact.

"We found some beautiful stained glass that had been sheetrocked over and the original narrow board (paneling). We're going to remove all that sheetrock," plans Mrs. Hughes. That job won't end after they remove the sheetrock, because the paneling has years of different paints and wallpapers layered upon each other.

Mr. Hughes is a former athletic director for Stephen F. Austin State University (1962-79) and decided to retire to Nacogdoches from the Clear Lake area near Houston. He and his wife had remodeled a home before and had a definite preference for a Victorian house. After they had looked at several in the area, Jim Calahan of United National Realty took the couple to this one.

"I couldn't get Florence out of the house. I guess it was love at first sight," recalls Mr. Calahan.

Mrs. Hughes agrees that it was love at first sight, mainly because of the large ivy-laden octagonal porch and the oddly shaped rooms. She also adored the beautiful old doors and the stained glass.

Mr. Hughes estimates that it will take three months to get the house into the shape he wants it, after the movers spend one month putting the structure back together. The top stories of the house had to be cut into six sections and the ground floor had to be divided into three to make the move. In accordance with city statutes, these sections had to be moved at night so as not to impede daytime traffic.

The Hughes couple plans to do as much of the work as possible themselves, but admit there will be some things they won't chance to their amateur hands. Aside from the obvious chores like painting, wallpapering and refinishing, they may have to have the house rewired or replumbed. It's just too soon to tell.

"There are two things you have to have when you remodel a house — an open mind and an open bank account," claims Mrs. Hughes. "Everyone I ever heard of who remodeled an old house has said it took twice as long and twice as much money as they thought it would. You just always hope it won't happen to you."

Sunday Sentinel  
July 17, 1988