

# Grand opening of builders supply complex held

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LEXINGTON — Officials of G. W. Smith Lumber Co. and local dignitaries "sawed a log" Friday morning as the path was officially cut to the new builders supply complex on West Center Street.

Jerry Smith, president of Smith Companies, a holding company for G. W. Smith Lumber, Mocksville Builders Supply and Smith Millwork, his brother Steve Smith, president of G. W. Smith Lumber, another brother R. B. Smith Jr., part owner and corporate attorney and brother Dan Smith, along with Lexington Mayor Dwight Hinkle, Tim Timberlake, chairman of the Davidson County Board of Commissioners, and Gene Morris, Lexington city manager, got a whack at the 8-foot-long, 12-inch-thick yellow pine log at the ceremonies marking the grand opening of what Jerry Smith describes as "the most modern builders supply firm in North Carolina."

Also present for the log-cutting were local business officials, bank and savings and loan officers, as well as the general public.

Construction on the complex, which represents an investment well into six figures, began in January and was completed about two weeks ago, when the firm began serving customers. It is the largest investment made by the company since it opened in 1965 under

the direction of G. W. Smith.

"Although the economy is not good, it was a good time for us to expand, because business was slow and we could handle the construction with as little customer inconvenience as possible," Smith said Friday, adding that response to the company's three-day celebration is great so far.

The festivities began Thursday with an open house from 2 to 4:30 p. m., followed by a pig pickin' for building contractors, which Smith says was attended by around 225 people.

Friday's activities included the ceremony, prizes every hour, mementoes for visitors and a clown to entertain the kids.

A carnival is scheduled from 8 a. m. to noon today, along with a free wallpaper clinic scheduled for 9:30 a. m. There will be games played, with T-shirts bearing the G. W. Smith logo as prizes.

The builders supply complex has several innovative features, Smith said, which include three 300-foot long "drive-through" warehouses, in which customers can start at one point, viewing supplies for basic construction, and drive by everything needed to build.

"This enables the customer to see and feel what he is getting," Smith said, "and by the time he has reached the sales area, he can see the products provided for finishing the interior work."

He said there are two sales areas,

one for contractors and one for retail customers. These, along with the office area, a decorating area and paint center, are housed in a pre-fabricated metal building.

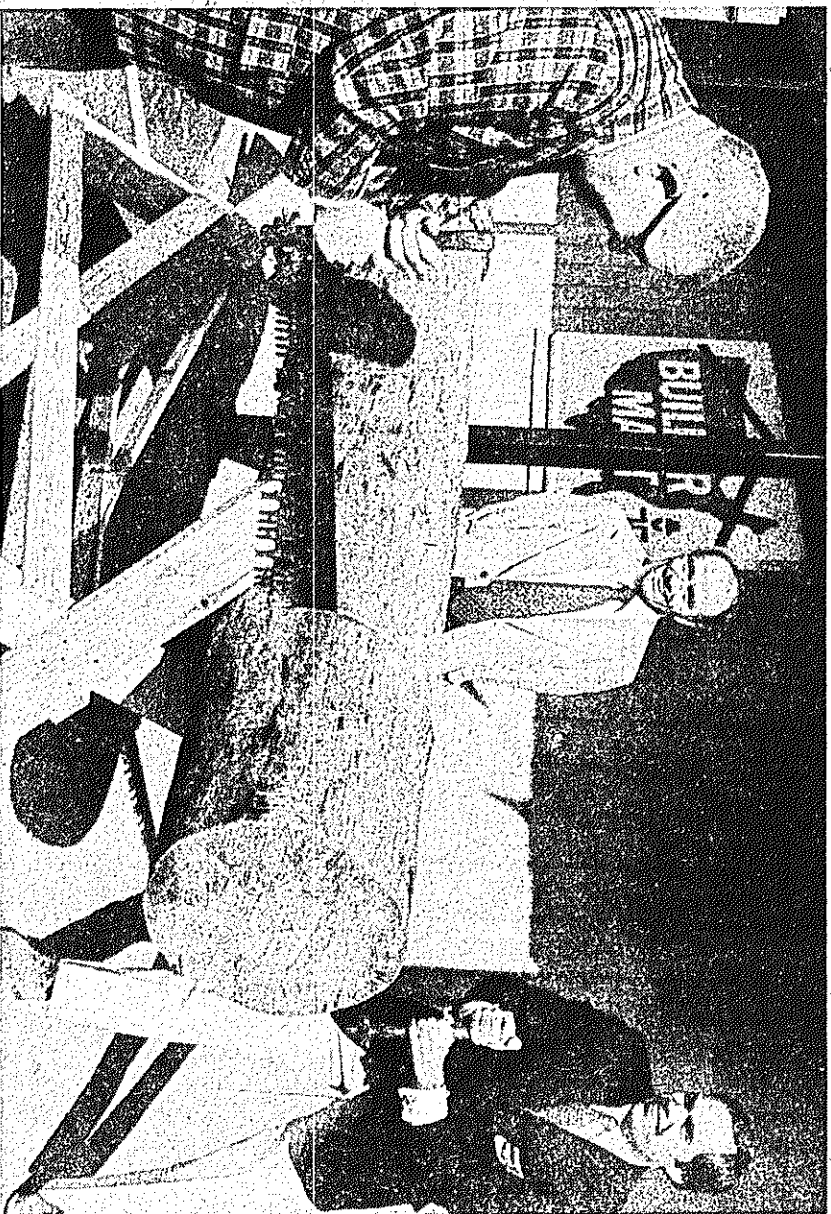
The combined office and sales areas cover about 12,000 square feet, while there are 30,000 square feet in an attached, covered warehouse. Smith says there is also a 7,000-square-foot shop, in which cabinet doors, drawers, mantles and window sashes are manufactured and lumber is cut to size for customers. There is also an additional 9,240-square-foot warehouse behind the office and showroom.

Most of the firm's old structures have been torn down, but the company is not completely parting with the past.

In fact, an effort is being made to preserve the history of the building trade. The first offices of the business, located in a frame building dating back to 1905, has been remodeled and now houses an office setting containing the original desk of G. W. Smith, a pot-bellied stove, several old bills, carpentry tools and home-building tools dating back to the early part of the century.

Smith says the museum has been visited by a number of people since it was opened Friday.

"We just thought it would be interesting to people coming here to see how things have progressed since the early 1900s," Smith, a grandson of the founder, said.



(Photo by Jerry Parrish)

From left, Lexington Mayor Dwight Hinkle, Jerry Smith, president of Smith Companies, and Steve Smith, president of G. W. Smith Lumber Co., cut the log signifying the grand opening of the new West Center Street builders supply complex Friday morning.