

# **Elijah P's to see new life as "Lovejoy's," an event center**

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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ALTON – After closing potentially forever at the end of 2017, the defunct Elijah P's building and its extensive back patio are looking at a sort of rebirth in the near future.

Building owner, Russ Smith, said he put it on the market after the closure of Elijah P's, adding he was having a hard time selling it through the summer and fall. As autumn came across the Riverbend, however, Smith said he was receiving a fair amount of inquiries from brides-to-be regarding using the building, especially the back patio, for events such as weddings and their receptions. He said this inspired him to give the building on Piasa Street a new lease on life – this time called “Lovejoy's” after the second half of the slain abolitionist's name.

Once reopened under the Lovejoy moniker, Smith said the building will focus entirely on hosting events. Outside of weddings, he said it could host corporate events, fundraisers and even luncheons with little change to the current settings.

“We need more floor space than bar space,” he said. “We had a large bar with 60 taps and a large walk-in cooler, and those will be cut down in the future to make more floor space. We'll have a small service bar, which will be more practical for events. We're also hoping to get the outdoor bar reopened by spring.”

If that sounds ahead of schedule, Smith said he expects the entire event center to be up and running by Thanksgiving, saying he is working on getting proper permits and insurance work over the course of the next two weeks. He said some brides in a rush are even looking to book the venue as early as this winter.

“It's a little late to really accommodate a lot of 2018 weddings, but we may have some openings for brides in a rush,” he said.

Food, which was one of the draws during its former life as Elijah P's, will no longer be done in-house. Smith said people who want food at their events will have to consult a caterer, but did say food prep will be available in the former kitchen, after the Madison County Health Department approves it.

This reopening may breathe new life into an Alton favorite many believe was not around long enough to truly make its mark, but it does not mean more jobs in the area, necessarily. Smith said needed bartenders will most likely come from his own pool at his other business, Bossanova.

“We won't be hiring a lot of people to work there,” he said, “But it will hopefully give more work to caterers, florists, photographers and wedding planners in this area.”

Anyone who would like to book an event at Lovejoy's is invited to contact Smith on his cellphone at (314) 409-1998, adding a second line, (618) 208-7473.

Smith will also be debuting some of his plans for the place at Alton Main Street's “What's Up Downtown” event to be held at the Jacoby Arts Center Tuesday night at 5:30 p.m. That event will also feature John Simmons discussing possible plans for the former Grand Theater. Simmons recently acquired Jacoby as well.