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# The Man

## Behind the Pictures - Artist Lee Harless

by Pat Woodward

[EDITOR'S NOTE: ARTIST LEE HARLESS HAS CONTRIBUTED MANY DRAWINGS OF LOCAL HISTORIC BUILDINGS TO HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE FOUNDATION FOR THE BENEFIT OF ITS VARIOUS PROJECTS. HIS ART HAS APPEARED IN THE HHF **HUNTSVILLE ENTERTAINS** COOKBOOK, IN THE 1980 CALENDAR, AND ON SEVERAL INVITATIONS TO HHF SOCIAL AND FUNDRAISING FUNCTIONS. MR. HARLESS HAS RECEIVED NUMEROUS AWARDS IN LOCAL AND STATE COMPETITION. HE HAS ALSO DONE WORK IN SAVANNAH, GEORGIA AND FOR OTHER HUNTSVILLE ORGANIZATIONS.]

Having grown up in the shadows of the Twickenham District, Lee Harless has always been near the wonderful old homes of Huntsville. As a small boy attending East Clinton School, he would take shortcuts through the yards of those wonderful homes and be amazed at their beauty.

Several years later he would find himself staring out the window of the old Huntsville High School (on Randolph Avenue) during study hall and admire the uniqueness of the older homes. And he remembered what he saw, each and every detail.

"I love Huntsville now and have always loved it. When I grew up, it was a small town, and I loved to go downtown on Saturday because it was like New York City.

The cars would be lined up for blocks with people bringing their goods to town to sell or trade on the square." These were the first words spoken by Lee Harless during a recent rainy afternoon interview.

As a self-taught artist, Lee is well known in the Huntsville community. Look through the pages of the **Huntsville Entertains** cookbook at the drawings of the old homes of Huntsville and you will see some of his illustrations. When he first had the opportunity to observe the work of Albert Lane, his first thoughts were "Gee, I would love to do something like that because no one has taken the time to do that before." Seeing the work of Albert Lane inspired him, and we now have the



"The Cedars" - Pulaski Pike - Built early 1800's. (Calendar)

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pleasure of observing the work of Lee Harless.

When asked who is responsible for his artistic training, he is quick to answer with the name of Mable Metcalf. "She was the only art teacher in the school system at the time, and she encouraged me to draw." He would later minor in art at what is now the University of North Alabama, where Hilda Mitchell taught him the basics and further encouraged him. Although his major was in history, Lee has continued with his art. He has been commissioned to paint many of the older homes in Huntsville. He also loves to paint the native natural beauty of this area. "There are many

places you can go and see beautiful wildflowers, birds, and trees. But these places are vanishing right before our eyes, and we must enjoy them while we can. Huntsville is growing so fast." He went on to tell about some of his favorite places to visit nature here in North Alabama. Wheeler Wildlife Refuge (not the civilized part) and the foot of Monte Sano Mountain were just two of his favorites.

Lee owns and operates the Gift Linen Mart at Madison Square Mall. He is married to Carol Anderson Harless and they live on Locust Street, at the edge of the Twickenham District.



Erskine House 1918

Erskine House - 527 Franklin Street - Built 1818. (Notecard)



Shepherd House - 505 Holmes Avenue - Built circa 1828.  
(Calendar)



Clay House - 513 Eustis Avenue - Built circa 1830. (Cookbook)



Hollowell House - 601 Franklin Street - Built circa 1835.  
(Calendar)



Smith House - 704 Adams Street - Built circa 1854. (Calendar)



Bibb House - 300 Williams Avenue - Built circa 1836.  
(Notecard)



Abingdon Place - Meridian Street near Lincoln Mills - Built circa 1880's; torn down 1969. (Cookbook)



Pleasance House - 127 Walker Street - Built 1889. (Calendar)



*Halsey House 1894*

Halsey House - 308 Eustis Avenue - Built 1894. (Notecard)



Van Valkenburgh House - 501 Franklin Street - Built circa 1902. (Calendar)





Huntsville in the 1890's. (Calendar cover)