

New N 104 Metairie Dr. Madison, AL.  
John Darwin, Owner (1989)



Lee Hse. - south Redstone Arsenal, near river  
Moved to Rainbow Mtn., Madison, AL. c. 1975

photo 1971

Front part 1841

C. 1841  
LEE HSE.  
S. ARSENAL



photo perhaps 1920's (see dress)

Lex Marain 1841 ±  
back part said to be 1820's (demol.)

N  
4

Chimneys rebuilt w/ht TOO SHORT.  
 Would have been ± 4' above roof  
 See 1920's photo attached



Federal David Lee Lee, originally near Tenn River on  
 S. edge of what later became Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, AL.  
 Moved in c. 1980 to Malheur, AL., N.W. corner of Eastview Dr. & Metairie Lane

Moved & owned by  
 John Darwin Sr.  
 (Mrs. D. = antiques dealer)

Photos Feb 95 Harrie P. Jones



Plastic blinds, too small for such



→ N

Metairie Lane



→ N



→ N

2082

Dark wood is "painted"

N  
↑



Lee Mansion, S. Pulaski Arsenal, c. 1841  
photo perhaps early 20th c., copy 1973

back photo said to be 1820's (?)

This part not moved = demol.

could be  
1820's

Joins c. 1900



Ext body, N. Side  
supposedly 1820's (KAT)  
Main Hse 1840's

photo Nov. 73

Sam Harris  
415 E Clinton St.  
Huntsville, Ala.

## THE LEE HOME

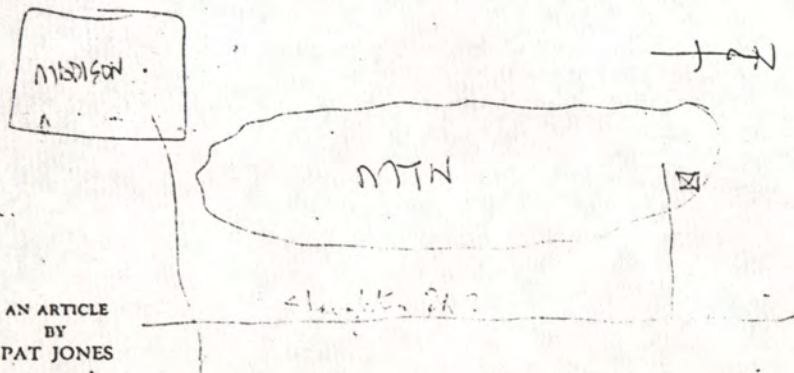
Now owned by Sam Harris

Was on Anzand near Tenn. River.

Moved ca. 1973 to near Madison, Al. (?)

to sail to be restored

P.S. - Saw in June 1984 near Madison.  
Looks good from driving by. HJ



AN ARTICLE  
BY  
PAT JONES

A Z-shaped dwelling in two sections, of different ages, wrapped around an Irish woman with a business tendency, and distinguished by the most beautiful circular stairway in Madison county - all of this comes to light in a review of the Col. H. H. Lee home, for the last 13 years the residence of Joseph B. Harris, situated near the Tennessee river four miles west of Whitesburg. *(The last 5 years this home has been owned*

Tall cedars and two of the largest pecan trees in the South, which have borne for more than 60 years, shade the home, forming a gradual contour from the hundreds of fertile acres of river bottom land surrounding.

Two rooms of the mansion, both of brick and forming the lower part of the Z, were built soon after 1818, and were followed nearly 25 years later by the others, built of substantial frame material.

### Land Entered by Cooper

The quarter section of land, on which this home was erected, was entered in 1818 by James Cooper. This was choice acreage, and included some of the best farming soil in the county, all in the center of what is now known as Pond Beat, a name gained from the number of tiny ponds formed by floods when the river is high. His neighbors were scarce, but he was not many minutes ride from Ditto's landing, the import and export center for this section during the early years of the last century.

With bricks hauled from the landing, where they had been brought by boat from Chattanooga or some other point, Cooper erected a small two-story building, the beginning of the present mansion. This was to be his home and that of his bride, Charity Cooper, born in 1801, the daughter of William Allison, who had come over from Ireland several years after her birth.

This settler did well, hauling his cotton to Whitesburg for shipment, and occasionally coming to Huntsville to get supplies. He found that his land, untilled before his arrival, could not have been better suited for a young planter, and made the most of his opportunity.

### Bought More Land Later

In 1830, his fortune increasing, he bought for \$800 three-quarters of an adjoining section from Rodah Horton, builder of the present McCracken home on Meridian pike. Four years later, through a deal with Charles G. Bowen, covered by four notes, he added one quarter of still another section. Then came his death-through suicide-on Dec. 7, 1834, the same year of his purchase from Bowen. Just what influenced him to take his own life - whether money matters, troubles with his wife, or despondency over his health - is not known. On this day, cold for the method of dying he chose, he walked the mile to the banks of the Tennessee, fastened an iron pot he had carried with him over his head, and plunged into the waters.

His will, made the June prior, left the majority of his property, estimated at nearly \$12,000, to his wife. Her share included his real estate, his cotton crop, valued at \$2,470.51, and 18 slaves, appraised at \$10,000. She also was bequeathed all cattle, horses and household furniture.

Cooper further specified that \$500 should be given to each of his sisters, Mrs. Mary Wall, Mrs. Nancy Veitch and Mrs. Elizabeth Ross, wife of the Rev. Alexander Ross. His father was to receive \$25 annually as long as he lived.

### Charity Took Over Farm

Charity took over the reins there on the plantation without thought of moving the few miles to Huntsville for an environment not nearly so lonesome. She directed her slaves with as true an iron hand as ever Irish woman possessed, using her own judgment as a farm housewife in having potatoes planted in that field, corn in this one, or cotton over the entire acreage.

by Mr + Mrs. Sam Harris, The son of J. B. Harris

She forgot her troubles during the first year or two of this new task, yet, as the months passed, she gradually began to miss the companionship of her husband.

But a suitor appeared on the scene. He was Col. Houston H. Lee, originally of Tennessee, five years her junior and the owner of half a section of land jammed up into the ell formed by her three sections.

After this courtship began, Lee often was her counsel in matters pertaining to her farm. Often, he rode over in the early evenings and sat there at her doorstep in the bright moonlight that flooded the slope toward the river. Quietly, they talked of new arrivals in Pond Beat, of the latest wrinkle in cotton planting, or of other topics of the day, interrupted only by some cow or sheep in the low lands, or by the sound of a stern-wheeler chugging its way slowly up the river.

As the months rolled by, Charity gradually began to realize that this neighbor was becoming a part of her life, so she listened to his proposal of marriage when finally it came.

#### Marriage Agreement Recorded

Charity was a business woman, and she considered that all agreements should be treated carefully and wisely. On Dec. 1, 1840, she came to the courthouse in Huntsville and had a marriage agreement recorded.

"Whereas, a marriage is shortly intended to be solemnized between Charity Cooper and Houston H. Lee," it read, "and the said Charity is possessed in her own right of a large property, both of a real and personal nature, and whereas, it is agreed by and between the contracting parties that said Charity Cooper shall reserve to her own separate use, benefit and control, exclusive of the said Houston H. Lee .. but that the same (property) shall in all things remain in subject to the rights, control and dominion of the said Charity Cooper in as full and ample manner as if said intended marriage had never taken place..."

On this same day, she recorded a deed of trust with James W. Fennell of near Guntersville, grandfather of W. F. Esslinger and Dr. James L. Jordan of this city.

After their marriage, the Lees began plans to enlarge the wife's home left by her first husband. Four large rooms 20 by 20 feet square, with ceilings 14 feet high, were built in a two-story section to form the upper part of the Z, nearer the gateway.

#### Stairway In Hall

In the wide center hall between the two rooms at each end of this division of the mansion was built the gradually winding walnut stairway, the really remarkable phase of the home, considering the tools with which carpenters worked in those days. These steps were put up so carefully that even now, nearly a century later, they do not shake or give with the weight upon them. To allow the curve, the wall in the rear part of the hall was rounded to coincide with the angle of the outer banister. At regular intervals in the wall along the stairs were placed niches for statuary, comprising another feature seen in few local homes.

From the front section of the dwelling, back to the old brick part was constructed a connecting link a story and a half in height and composed of four more rooms. This division was inclosed on both sides and at the back by a brick stoop, making it possible to pass from any room in the house during the rainy weather without going out into the dampness.

A cellar, reached by two doors from the outside or by an inner door near the back, was excavated under the entire building.

#### Porch Built of Cedar

Though its floor was of brick, the frame work of the front porch was of solid cedar, shading a doorway in two panels, with transoms at both sides and at the top.

This home probably never saw many dances during its occupation by the Lees, but in later years, particularly the decades following the Civil War, it became the social center for Pond Beat. Gay times, with many guests from Huntsville and the surrounding country, were frequent there then.

On Oct. 3, 1853, Charity's second husband died. His survivors, besides his wife, included eight brothers and sisters, Caswell of Tennessee, Alfred of Missouri, Anne J. of Tennessee, P. J. G. Lee of Missouri, Preston of Tennessee, W. P. of Missouri, Pryor N. of California and Eliza A. of Madison county, all of full age, but the last named mentally deficient.

With the exception of \$1,000, which he willed to his niece, Mary Elizabeth Inman, daughter of Anne J., he left his entire estate, including 18 negroes, nine mules, four wagons, 51 sheep, one bull, four yokes of oxen, six steers, 15 yearlings, 11 cows, three heifers and 162 hogs, to his wife.

But even with the property left her by her two husbands, Charity was unable to meet her indebtedness before the beginning of the Civil War. The strain of this conflict carried her debts to such a large figure that she had to turn the home over for a sheriff's sale in 1867 in order to cover her agreement with Fennell. The estate was bought in by the Fennell heirs, James W. and Francis Fennell, for \$7,745.97.

Charity died childless and with a small amount of money in March, 1872. In her will, she set aside funds for her own burial and for the removal of the graves of her two husbands to the graveyard at Ebenezer Presbyterian church. In addition, she left \$200 to the church to buy window blinds, curtains, library, bell, stoves, and for the repair of the cemetery.

Her second husband's portrait was willed to a neighbor, the Rev. A. Pendland, her books to the church, and the remainder of her property to the Young Men's Board of Education of the United States and to the Foreign Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church.

The plantation was sold by the Fennells to George F. Scruggs in 1882. Four years later, it was bought by Solomon Schiffman. Since that time and up to the year it came into the possession of Mr. Harris, several others have owned it.

The home stands intact today, with the exception of the old slave quarters, which once stood a few yards away to the east. Even a huge old cistern remains, though not in use. Huge logs give cheer from the fireplaces and wide pine boards mark the original floors. In fact, successive owners have made no change to mar the testimony of their existence left by Cooper, Lee and Charity Allison.





Rec. Jones  
Article

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Part 3  
Article

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LOCATED ON REDSTONE ARSENAL, MADISON CO.,  
ALA.

1970 OWNER - UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT  
NE 1/4 Sec. 19 T55 R1W

Page 14 The Redstone Rocket — October 7, 1970

# House's History Begins With Girl Bride

Ghosts of seasons past hover in the imaginations of men. Some say they wander up and down a beautiful circular stairway in the old Lee mansion on Redstone Arsenal.

A visitor to the old place which stands on a low hill beside Buxton Rd. would not miss the ancient magnolia tree and equally ancient pecans that recent tornadoes wrenched from the earth. They would note the oversize fig tree on the southeastern corner of the house and the structure's odd Z shape.

Used as government quarters for almost 30 years, the house and adjoining lands were acquired when the Army bought what is now Redstone Arsenal in 1911.

The first section of the house was built in 1818 for an Irish-born bride, Charity Cooper, then 17, by her cotton grower husband, James.

The brick for the house was shipped on stern-wheelers chugging up and down the Tennessee River approximately a mile from the house. On Dec. 7, 1834, Cooper walked down to the river, put an iron pot on his head and plunged into the icy water. Speculation for the reason he took his life includes money matters, trouble with his wife and dependency over his health.

Cooper had done well financially hauling his cotton to Whitesburg and occasionally visiting Huntsville for supplies. In 1830 with his fortune increasing, he bought three-quarters of an adjoining section from Rodah Horton. Four years later, through a deal with Charles Bowen, covered by four notes, he added one quarter of still another section.

His will left the major portion of his estate, then estimated to be about \$12,000 in land, crops, slaves and livestock, to his widow. She reportedly ran the plantation with an iron hand, directing the planting of the potatoes, corn and cotton.

Apparently she never missed the companionship she might have found in Huntsville, but it was a lonely life. When Col. Houston H. Lee, a former Tennessean came a-courtin', Charity said yes to his proposal of marriage.

For reasons of her own, Charity made a trip to Huntsville on Dec. 1, 1840 to draw up a remarkable document for the record:

"WHEREAS, a marriage is shortly intended to be solemnized between Charity Cooper and Houston H. Lee, and the said Charity is possessed in her own right of a large property, both of real and personal nature, and

whereas, it is agreed by and between the contracting parties that said Charity Cooper shall reserve to her own separate use, benefit and control, exclusive of the said Houston H. Lee...but that the same (property) shall in all things remain in and subject to the rights, control and dominion of the said Charity Cooper in as full and ample manner as if said intended marriage had never taken place..."

After their marriage, the Lees enlarged the house left by James Cooper. Four large rooms 20 by 20 feet with 14 feet high ceiling were built in a two story section to form the upper part of the main house.

The heart of the house is the wide center hall with a walnut, cantilevered stairway all the more remarkable for the utilitarian character of the rest of the structure. The wall is curved to match the turns of the bannister.

An additional four room section of a story and a half was built onto the front of the house, enclosed on both sides. A small brick porch built of trapezoid shaped bricks in which the finger and handprints of Charity's slaves can still be seen provided an outdoor passageway making it possible to reach any part of the house without being directly exposed to the elements in inclement weather.

Charity's second husband died in October, 1853, leaving her the bulk of his estate, but the Civil War and its inflationary economy ruined Charity financially. She sold the property to James W. and Francis Fennell for \$7,745.95 at a sheriff's sale in 1867.

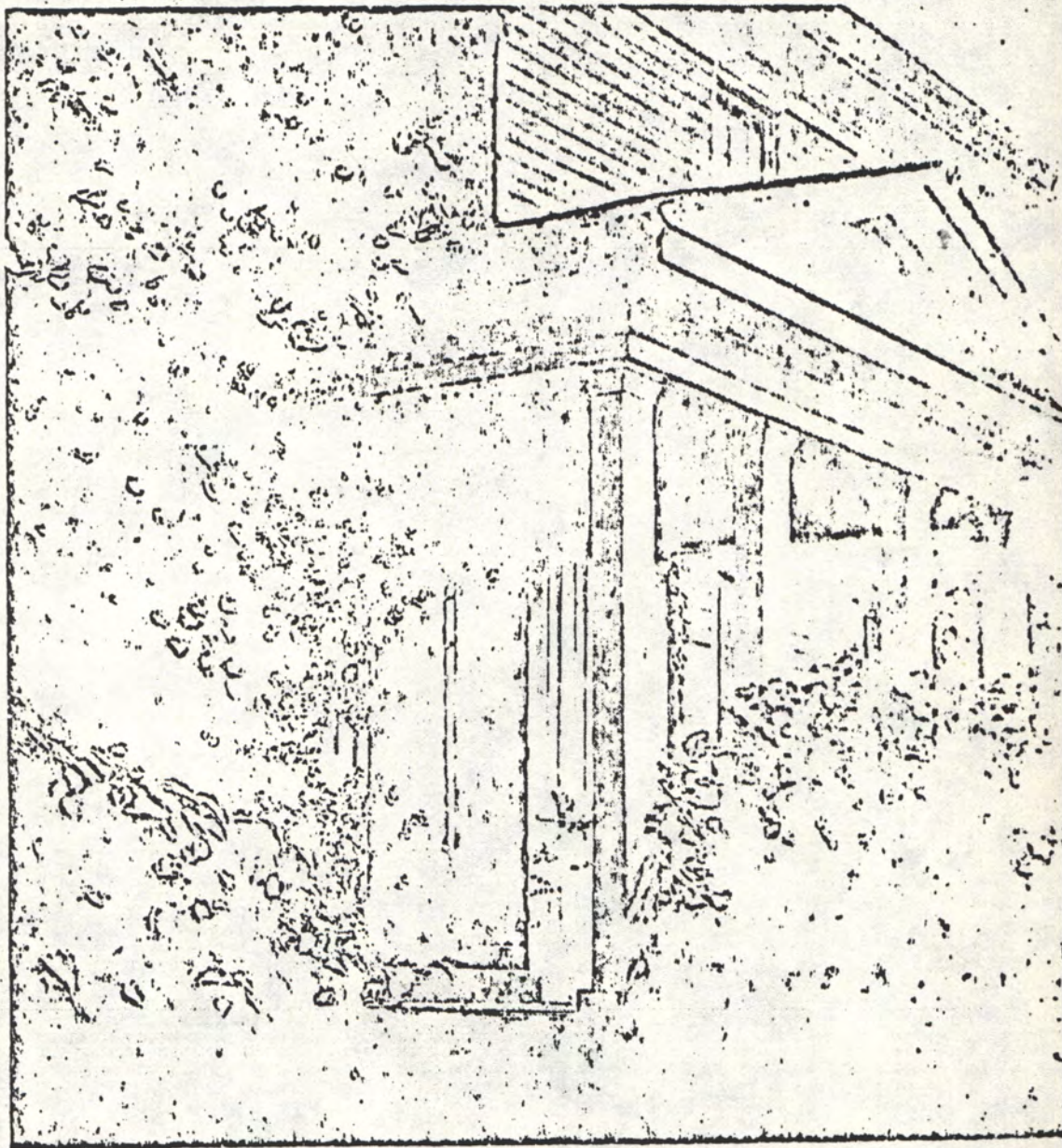
She died childless in March, 1872, leaving a will which directed that her meager funds cover her own burial and the removal of the graves of her two husbands to the grave yard at the Ebenezer Presbyterian church.

The house changed hands numerous times before the Army bought it from Sam Harris in 1941.

Like all old houses, there are tales told about this one. Most involve a ghost.

However, the Army families haven't been spooked by such tales. The house is assigned to families with several children who need the space, active families without much time to devote to ghosts.

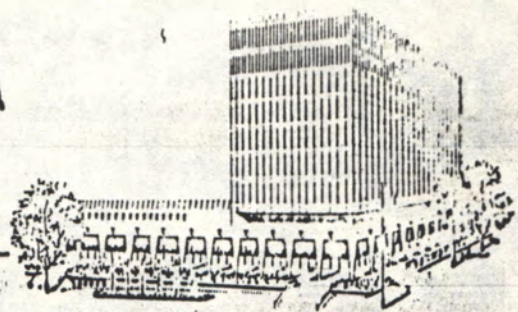
Lt. Col. and Mrs. Edward Detchemendy and their family of seven for example, made a game room in the stone-lined basement that underlies the whole structure. They had a Christmas tree two-stories high in the stairway and decorated it clear to the top by leaning over the bannister. The oldest son placed his amateur radio equipment in an out building and had his own private place to pursue his hobby. Melissa, who was very young when they lived there, used the house as a subject for a paper when she became a freshman in high school and earned herself an A for her energetic efforts in tracing the history of the old house which had very little social life while Charity lived but which became a recreational center for Pond Beat after the Civil War. The community got its name because of the many tiny ponds formed on the land when the Tennessee flooded its banks—and old timers still refer to the southern part of Redstone by that name.



**PEACEFUL AND SUNNY**—Beyond the mainstream of traffic at Redstone Arsenal, the front porch of the Lee mansion faces on Buxton Road. The original trees and shrubs of the 152-year-old structure have been replaced by other foliage, the former having succumbed to the ravages of time and weather.

# MADISON COUNTY, ALABAMA

OFFICE OF  
Madison County Commission



MADISON COUNTY COURT HOUSE  
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA  
35801



PHONE 526-5911 EXT. 225

- JAMES RECORD  
CHAIRMAN
- DUDLEY CLARK  
DISTRICT 1
- ERWIN JONES  
DISTRICT 2
- JAMES BELL  
DISTRICT 3
- WOODROW BALEH  
DISTRICT 4

- G. E. QUICK  
CLERK-AUDITOR
- RALPH FORD  
ATTORNEY
- JAMES W. MAPLE  
ACTING ENGINEER

October 1, 1973

Honorable Howard "Bo" Calloway  
Secretary of Army  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Again, we thoroughly enjoyed your visit to Madison County, and look forward to subsequent visits. I am writing you today to request that you take appropriate action to see that the Lee Mansion on Redstone Arsenal is saved from destruction. I am quite familiar with the history of this structure, and feel that the Army would do itself proud if it would maintain this 1818 building for use as a home for the Post Commanding General, or for use by visiting VIP's. I am certain our community would support your move very strongly.

The house may soon be destroyed under provisions of contract number DACA 01-7-73-599, Mobile District Engineer. A contractor for this has told us that he would be glad to give the home back to the Army if they so desired, otherwise he must destroy it or move it off the Arsenal, and it seems obvious he will choose the destruction route, unless you act.

Incidentally, the house was owned by a great aunt of a good constituent of yours, William P. Drake, P. O. Box 102, Route 1, Owens Cross Roads, Alabama.

Sincerely yours,

James Record, Chairman  
MADISON COUNTY COMMISSION

JR/bc

- cc: Mr. William P. Drake
- cc: Huntsville Historical Society

Moved to N.E. side of  
Rainbow Mtn. in  
Madison, AL.  
in 1970's  
H. Jones

JONES AND HERRIN, ARCHITECTS, A. I. A.

215 RANDOLPH AVE. S.E.

HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA 35801

PHONE 589-0764

HARVIE P. JONES

WILLIAM W. HERRIN, JR.

November 14, 1973

Mrs. John T. Darwin  
2113 Lufkin Drive  
Huntsville, Alabama 35810

Re: Lee Mansion at Redstone Arsenal

Dear Mrs. Darwin:

I would like to congratulate you on your acquisition of the Lee Mansion. The new site in north Huntsville will enable the house to live again. The 1840's front portion of the house is virtually intact and is a handsome example of its period. Clapboard buildings this old are quite rare. It is even more rare that they have their original front porch, as this one apparently does. The Lee Mansion has one of only two winding stairs in the county that I know of, and this one is probably the finer of the two.

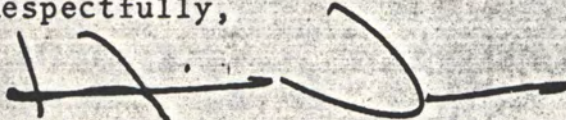
*Madison, Ala., E. side of N. end of Rainbow Mtn. (104 McFaire Drive, Madison)*

Enclosed are a history from the "Redstone Rocket" and a history by Pat Jones, of several decades ago.

I have a recent (1972) clear 8 x 10 photo of the stair that shows the stolen section of stairrail. I would be glad to let you copy it if it would help in reproducing the rail and balusters.

Thanks for saving this important, early-nineteenth-century house.

Respectfully,

  
Harvie P. Jones  
Architect Member of the  
Ala. Historical Commission

cc: Warner Floyd      Elbert Peters  
James Record      Catherine Gilliam  
Paul Hancock