

INTRODUCTION

The one historic property that remains in its original location (NE ¼ of Section 19, T5S, R1W) on Redstone Arsenal is the Harris House. When the Government acquired the land from the Harris family, another historic structure that dated much further back in time was also present. It was moved from the arsenal a few decades later. During the days the Harris family lived on the land, the Lee House was owned and inhabited by J.B. Harris and family. The Harris family members who were interviewed referred to the house as, simply, “the big house.” Friends and neighbors called it the Harris place.

In the early 1930’s, Pat Jones wrote descriptive articles about a number of the historic houses in Madison County, including the Lee House on the Harris property. Jones called it The Lee Home, giving it the name of the man who built the finer part of the structure. By the time the structure (the majority of it) was acquired for removal from RSA in 1973 by Mr. and Mrs. John T. Darwin, the name Lee Home had evolved to “the Lee Mansion.”

This section first presents Charity Cooper and her husband, James Cooper, who built the first two-room dwelling, and then Charity’s second husband, Houston Lee, who added to it, building the large house that would come to be called the Lee House. The second presents a description of the “Lee House” when it was owned by J.B. Harris, and the Harris House, which was built when J.B.’s son Sam married and had a family, resulting in his being referred to within this manuscript as Sam Sr. Then, information from ethnographic interviews and historic documents brings together the past and a perspective of life on the property as it was between 1920 and 1941.

HISTORY OF THE “LEE HOUSE”

Records and Articles Written about the Lee House

A number of articles were published in the *Huntsville Times* and *The Redstone Rocket* in the time period surrounding the removal of what they referred to as the Lee Mansion from its location on the north side of Buxton Road [old Farley-Triana Road] on the arsenal in 1973. In addition, the Cultural Resources Manager at RSA holds on file various items of military correspondence concerning the acquisition of the Lee House by Mr. and Mrs. Darwin. A letter from the Commanding General written to the Commander of the U.S. Army Material Command in Alexandria, Virginia, which refers to the action to relocate the Lee House, provides a history of the house using material written by Pat Jones.

The history written by Jones was provided to Mrs. John Tyler Darwin as an attachment to a letter written to her on November 14, 1973 by Harvie P. Jones of Jones and Herrin Architects in Huntsville, who was also an Architect Member of the Alabama Historical Commission. Mrs. Darwin had submitted the letter and the attachment to the RSA Commander.