

Have You Seen Julian Hoke Harris?

Certain works of public art are so understated that they become a part of our subconscious experience. You can walk right past them and not even see them. But as awareness takes root, the viewer may become curious about the identity of the artist and the origin of the work. Have you noticed the limestone carving on the Starbucks building at 133 E. Court Square in downtown Decatur? The carving's clean lines, powerful figures and depictions of labor are evocative of art produced by the Works Progress Administration (1935 - 1943). However, sculptor Julian Harris created this bas relief for the opening of the First National Bank of Decatur in 1951.

The original 1925 building underwent an extensive renovation in 1950 directed by F. P. Smith, an architecture professor at Georgia Tech. The new exterior had "walls faced with cut limestone above a high base of Dakota Mahogany granite" and featured two carved panels by Julian H. Harris, emphasizing the cultural and educational strengths of Decatur and

DeKalb. This is from an article in *The DeKalb New Era* which preceded the opening of the refurbished building:

"The subject of the panel on the left of the main entrance to the bank is Industry and Agriculture, with a large figure of a worker surrounded by smaller scale ones depicting a welder, a moulder and figures typifying poultry raising, dairying and farming. The other panel is devoted to Learning and Culture, and is dominated by a student in an academic costume, surrounded by five small symbolic figures; on one side Christ stands for Religion, Moses for Law, and Socrates for philosophy, while on the other, Galileo stands as an exponent of Science and Michelangelo of Art...These sculptured panels can now be seen in process of being carved at the main entrance of the new structure."



A view of the First National Bank of Decatur from our collection, ca. 1965

Honoring Community Champions

In conjunction with *The Champion Newspaper* and our temporary exhibit, we are pleased to honor DeKalb champions from the past 20 years who have cared enough about our community to get involved, stay involved and make a difference. This year we focus on a select group of gentlemen with achievements both past and ongoing.

This fifth annual event recognizes outstanding African American leaders who have made a positive impact on DeKalb County. The luncheon is Thursday, February 9 from 11:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m. and

Julian Hoke Harris was

Continued on page 4

Inside this issue

- Upcoming Events, page 3
- End of Year Donations, page 4
- Membership Report, page 5

Continued on page 2

Community Champions (Cont.)

Continued from page 1

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includes a performance by Capoeira Maculele Decatur and a seated luncheon catered by Soiree. Call Melissa at 404-373-1088, extension 22 for ticket information. Publisher Carolyn Glenn will be the Mistress of Ceremonies as we honor:

Sheriff-Elect Derwin Brown
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Please join us for this special event!

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Upcoming Events

Please check our website for these and other events!

Lunch & Learn, Tuesday, March 20 at noon at the historic DeKalb Courthouse

Mera Cardenas, Executive Director of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance, explains how this National Park Service program is helping to protect and connect the area's natural, historic and cultural resources. From early settlers to granite quarries to a community forged by emancipated slaves – the Heritage Area is rich with stories, history and breathtaking beauty. A model of private-public coordination, the Heritage Area was awarded the Atlanta Regional Commission's inaugural Great Places Award in 2011. Come see how history and nature formed this unique landscape and how The Alliance is working to protect these places for future generations. **Free—bring your lunch!**

Annual Meeting & Silent Auction

Friday, March 23, from 6:00—8:30 pm at the historic DeKalb Courthouse

Enjoy an evening of wine, beer, hors d'oeuvres and music while bidding on fantastic items donated by generous local businesses. Silent auction packages may include event tickets, golf, dinner certificates, art, jewelry, hotel stays, special tours, books, professional services, children's activities, fitness opportunities and more. If you have something to donate to support DHC, please contact Melissa at director@dekalbhistory.org or at 404-373-1088, extension 22. *This annual fundraiser features delicious food from our caterers: Avante, Avenue, Badda Bing, Bold American, Endive, LowCountry Barbecue, Sawicki's, Soiree, Sun in My Belly and Zest Atlanta.*

Lunch & Learn, Tuesday, May 22 at noon at the historic DeKalb Courthouse

Reviving South Decatur: Urban Homesteading and its Effects by Dr. David Rotenstein.

In 1975 Decatur became one of 23 American cities to have neighborhoods included in a new federal program devoted to returning foreclosed and abandoned homes to private home ownership. South Decatur in the 1960s had undergone a rapid transition from all-white to a majority African American neighborhood. The Urban Homesteading program was designed to attract new homeowners who would receive low-interest loans to rehabilitate the houses to bring them up to code, spurring investment in surrounding properties. David looks at South Decatur's history and the impacts Urban Homesteading had on the neighborhood and the greater city. **Free—bring your lunch!** ✦



Feb. 18
9 am-5 pm



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\$10 in advance • **\$15** at the door

DecaturOldHouseFair.com

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Artist Julian Harris (Cont.)

Continued from page 1

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**And a very special
thank you to
Fred Turner**

born in Carrollton, Georgia in 1906. He was the youngest child of a hardware store owner who had managed Hoke Smith's gubernatorial campaign. His parents supported his interest in art, but encouraged him to attend Georgia Tech as an alternative to studying illustration in New York City. He chose architecture because it appeared to be "the closest thing to art" and earned a B.A. in 1928. He then studied sculpture at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and returned to Georgia Tech in 1936 where he served as a part-time architecture professor for the next 36 years. Although considered stylistically conservative by some of his students, he was nevertheless a well-regarded and popular teacher. He lived with his wife Jean and their two daughters near the center of the Tech campus, in a house he built in 1937. The backyard was a sculpture garden filled with his art.

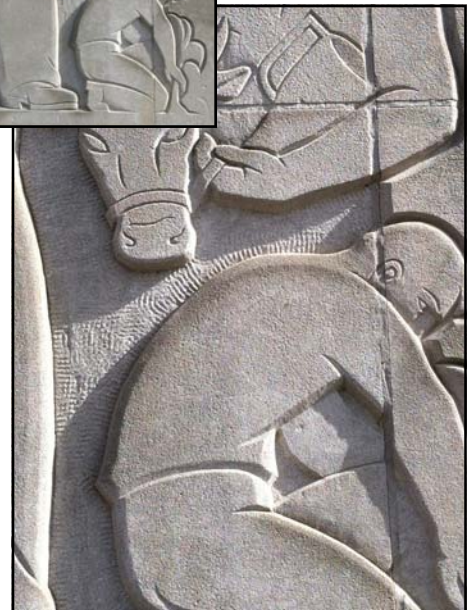


produced dozens of portrait busts and medallions. Sitters included former Mayor William B. Hartsfield, Coca-Cola magnate Robert W. Woodruff and former President Jimmy Carter. Julian Hoke Harris died in Atlanta on January 15, 1987 at the age of 80, after decades of creative output.



Following his graduation from Georgia Tech, Harris took a trip to Egypt that would later influence the cleanliness of his sculptural style. That impact can be felt in the images at 133 E. Court Square, which call to mind the Egyptian technique of low relief with a "sunk" outline. The simple elegance of those ancient carvings demonstrates a lesson worth remembering – that even those things that take a while to notice can ultimately make a lasting impression. ✦

In addition to the many architectural sculptures and reliefs he created for public buildings in the Southeast, he



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