

REMODELING REVEALS OLD MURALS  
IN COURTHOUSE SQUARE BUILDING  
Information sought on artist Harold Blackwell  
By Jill Thomas  
*Herald Citizen*, Cookeville, TN  
Front page 19 April 2005

Be careful when you strip away old paint from walls.

I may be covering something special.

That's what Cookeville attorney Henry Fincher found when he recently took over the store building on the Courthouse Square that formerly housed Deb's Bed Shed, next door to his law offices.



When he started to renovate the old space he had no idea it would contain hidden treasures.

“First were the original oak floors that probably go back to the old Allen-Brown hardware store that was first there from around the turn of the century,” he said. “But then we started to repaint one of the original walls and shot some primer on it only to have the primer sort of bubble up.

“I was so close to simply putting up drywall and covering over the old paint. But I decided I liked the look of the old wall,” Fincher said.

“So we gently removed the primer and layers of paint under it and there were these two old murals that had simply been painted over and forgotten,” he said.

Fincher did some research and discovered that the murals had been painted by Cookeville-area artist Harold Blackwell, probably sometime between 1930 and the 1960s.

“Blackwell painted a lot of advertisements on the walls of buildings. He was the sign painter guy,” Fincher said.

“If you go to ‘The Lamp and Lighthouse’ on the Square, we think it’s his work on the side of the building that faces Broad St.

The old-fashioned, fading letters simply spell out an ad for Terry Bros. department store operated there through the 1960s.

Fincher said Blackwell worked for the Coca-Cola company and painted signs all over town.

“I’d love to find someone who know Harold Blackwell’s descendants.” Said Fincher, an amateur historian. “We’d like to write up some sort of bio that we could put next to the paintings.”

The most intact mural shows the Parthenon in Nashville and the other is simply a landscape, Fincher said.

The two murals have been covered with a transparent protective called Penatrol.

“It restores luster to old paints without roughing them up. It gave the murals a good sheen and will protect them at the same time,” he said.

Anyone with information about Harold Blackwell should call Fincher at (931) 528-4000.

<http://www.ajlambert.com>