

The Chapel Hill News

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Save the murals: The blue mural, 1989
Editor's note: Fourth in a series

FROM STAFF REPORTS

CHAPEL HILL -- Some of Chapel Hill's downtown murals are fading or on privately owned buildings whose owners want to remodel or paint over them.

The Preservation Society of Chapel Hill is dedicated to saving the things that make Chapel Hill unique. It's asking the community to help preserve the downtown murals by e-mailing thoughts about them to savethemurals@mail.com.

If the society gets enough support it plans to create an "Adopt a Mural" program, allowing the public to save their favorite mural.

Artist's statement by Michael Brown

The first mural I painted in Chapel Hill was the blue mural, which can be seen from the corner of Rosemary and Columbia streets. It was painted in 1989.

It was the brainchild of Phyllis Lotchin. Phyllis (with the help of the Downtown Commission) was creating a downtown arts festival to showcase work and performances by public school students. The idea appealed to me because I am a product of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro system, and also because the idea was similar to our original intent in starting the Apple Chill Fair.

I was hired for the project because I had some art experience, also because I had taught elementary and secondary art, so I was used to working with kids. I was used to working with volunteers, too (actors making their own sets off-off Broadway). Finally, I had run a small part-time house painting business while in college, so I knew how to work with large amounts of paint.

With lots of input from the committee, I must have done 50 drawings for this mural. We were all eager for this first (and maybe only) one to be popular and not controversial. I hit on the final idea of a night scene when I remembered riding my bike up to work in the wee hours (as a dishwasher at Ye Olde Waffle Shoppe), How beautiful Franklin



The blue mural.
Contributed photo

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Street seemed when it was quiet and deserted in the moonlight!

I chose the pointillist style because it was a rough brick wall. Also, I had so many volunteers that I was afraid I could not supervise them all adequately. I thought if they all had the same size brush and were all instructed to make the same size blue mark, it might unify their contributions into a coherent whole.

Local photographer Laura Shmania has created a photo gallery of Michael Brown's murals on her Web site. To see "Murals by Michael Brown" gallery go to www.butterflites.smugmug.com.

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