

# 'Miracle' rocks artist's world

## Arts & Entertainment

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Some people are born knowing their passion; others spend their whole lives searching for it. And then there is Dawn Grimes Myers.

She said she found hers guided by divine intervention. "I was out walking and found a rock that looked like a church," said Grimes Myers of Claremont, who used her hands to describe the stone. "It was long and high in one place. Here was the steeple. I could see it."

Grimes Myers took the stone home and painted that church. As an artist she had painted on varied surfaces but never thought of stones.

She was pleased with her creation and subsequently painted many generic buildings on stones, enough to bring to Upland's Open Air Market as a test.

"They sold out within 10 minutes," she said. "People were running over to me and buying them. I knew I was onto something. Then people started asking me if I would paint their house on a rock. That was when the miracle happened. For the first time I knew I had found my niche. It was a connection, a spark."

That was five years ago, and since then Grimes Myers has established Sketched In Stone, a business where she is commissioned to replicate homes, businesses, schools, churches or other structures near and dear to someone's heart.

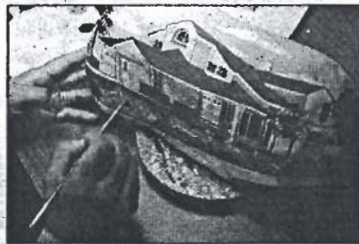
Grimes Myers had always been interested in architecture, but art was her first love.

"Now I feel I have the best of both worlds," she said.

In the past she has worked in various art media and has made jewelry and her own brand of multicultural dolls.

She has loved all her artistic ventures, but the stone art is special. Not only does she love the work and helping others capture their own fond memories, she's preserving some of her own.

"I remember walking with my daughter Camille around the vintage homes of Claremont



This rock painting by Dawn Grimes Myers is of a Claremont building.

when she was little," said Grimes. "We'd love to walk and talk about the history of the house, the age, style and who might live there."

Upon accepting a commission the groundwork begins. Grimes Myers will first go to the sight and take between 30 and 50 photographs of the subject. She will also sit down and talk with the commissioner about the project. She finds the finished product benefits from her learning about the structure, its history and the personal connections to it.

"I've known people who are moving say this is a way they can move and take their house with them," she said. "It's so much fun sitting and talking about the history of the house or business. That way I really get to know what the structure means to the person or that family."

It takes about a month to complete a project; sometimes what takes the longest is finding the right stone.

Grimes Myers is always on the lookout. She combs construction sites, vacant fields, local mountain trails and any place else a good rock could be hiding.

"I get a lot of my rocks from Lytle Creek," she said. "There are millions of them there. I'm in hog heaven."

Grimes Myers not only looks for a stone to match the shape of her commission, leaving no stone unturned, so-to-speak, she also seeks those with a fairly straight base that won't tip over after several blunt pokes with her finger.

That stability will allow the painted stone to be displayed



Grimes Myers works on a rock painting at her Claremont studio.

properly on the lazy-Susan type, felt-covered base she presents her creation on.

Once the perfect stone is found, it is scrubbed with a toothbrush and mild cleanser and left to air dry. Then the painting begins.

"There's no exact process. I just start. Everything is done freehand," she said. "By the time I start painting I know the structure very well."

Grimes Myers is also extremely detailed oriented. She is aware of the color of the couch in the porch, the stained-glass window by the door and the trash cans on the side of the house. She sees every bush, tree, flower, roof pattern and hose placement.

"I always tell my clients if there's something they don't want painted, let me know, because I paint everything I see," she said.

The stone is painted front and back and is weather coated.

Claremont resident Pat Boss owns one of Grimes Myers' creations and treasures it.

Boss has lived in Claremont since 1963, but it was not her house that was commissioned. Boss's three children requested Grimes Myers recreate Summer

FYI

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Elementary School where their mother taught, in the same classroom, for 17 years.

The children presented their mother with the gift shortly after her retirement in 2001.

"It means so much to me," Boss said. "I look at it nostalgically. Summer was such an important part of my life, just looking at the stone brings back such fond memories of my time at Summer."

Boss had first seen Grimes Myers' artwork at Claremont's Village Venture. She was with her daughter, Kathryn, admired the work and mentioned how amazing the pieces were.

"I'd never seen anything like that before," Boss said.

Kathryn picked up on her mother's enchantment with the art and believed it would be the perfect gift.

"I love looking at my school on that rock. It's better than a photo," Boss said. "I consider it a family heirloom and will pass it down to my children." ●