

ARTS AND FEATURES

# Center cements black culture in Durham

By Beth Tatum  
Assistant Features Editor

On the corner of Old Fayetteville Street, its form breaks the horizon through gray sheets of rain. Inside the renovated church, rain streams down the old stained-glass windows and patterns on side glass panels. Oil paintings grace the walls while, in contrast to the pulse of the rain, a melody drifts through the building from a set of steel drums.

This is the Hayti (pronounced hay-tee) Heritage Center, an African-American center located in Durham. Established in September 1991, the facility promotes culture, art, health and whatever else affects black people, said Dianne Pledger, program director of the Hayti Heritage Center and chief operations officer for St. Joseph's Historical Foundation.

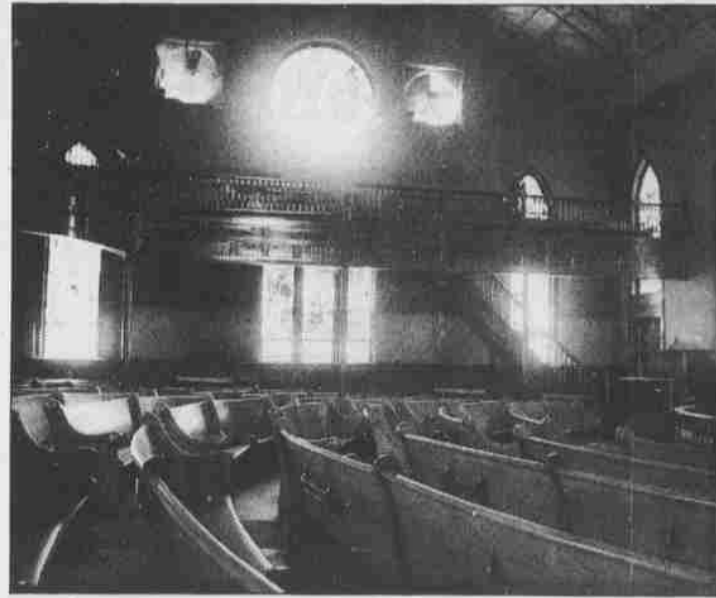
This fall, the center hosted the Durham Blues Festival, put on a sold-out production of "God's Trombones" and exhibited art from local artists. The center focuses on local black artists, Pledger said. "It's opened a lot of doors."

Once a woman came in and told Pledger she could paint, Pledger said. She asked if she could show Pledger her work. "That's what this center does."

Pledger said she most wanted to work with the artists in the community and to be a support system. "I'd like to see us be a funder for local artists and even educators."

Linda Norfleet, involved with the theater department at N.C. Central University, put on a production of "Azusa" at the center. "The center is a wonderful facility — it's a venue to make things happen," Norfleet said. "The community is excited about it and uses it."

Even though the Hayti Heritage Center emphasizes local art, the center is also open as a facility for meetings, ranging from wedding receptions to seminars about owning your own busi-



The original St. Joseph's church, which is now the Hayti Heritage Center

ness to Narcotics Anonymous. "We touch on different issues," Pledger said.

Because it is a non-profit organization, funding comes from private contributions, ticket sales and the city of Durham. The city of Durham has given the Hayti Heritage Center \$126,000 for this year, but the center has to reapply for the money each year.

The building for the center was originally St. Joseph's Church. After the church relocated to a new building, a campaign was started by the St. Joseph's Historical Foundation in 1975 to make the original building a national historical landmark. It succeeded.

After a city referendum was passed in 1986 and money became available, the Hayti Heritage Center was established. The center took the name Hayti because of its location in the old Hayti neighborhood, the former black eco-

nomie center of Durham.

"This church has been a part of the community," Pledger said. "But the center is for the whole Durham community. It's functional for all groups, and it's for everyone to come enjoy. It's important to learn more about each other, why we are what we are."

Although the center is unique to the Triangle, similar centers exist in Charlotte and Asheville. But once the Hayti Heritage Center is completed, it will be one of the nation's five largest, she said.

Durham has needed a facility like Hayti Heritage Center for a long time, Pledger said. Before the founding of the center, other arts organizations and programs at public schools tried to educate others about the black experience, she said. Now that the center is in place, it can respond to the community in more concrete, more focused ways, she said.

The center also collaborates with other groups that haven't been able to reach the black community before, Pledger said. Such groups include the Durham Arts Council, Durham County Health Department, Duke University and even the Ackland Art Museum.

One result of this collaboration will be an African-American quilt exhibit from Feb. 2 to Mar. 22 at Ackland that will move on Feb. 20 for a one-day showing at the Hayti Heritage Center. This marks the first cooperative effort between the two groups.

"I think this is a good opportunity to work together," said Beth Shaw, educator for outreach and access at Ackland Art Museum. "There tends to be a line between Durham and Chapel Hill. I hope this program will dissolve the myth of distance."

As for the future, Pledger has high goals. "I would like to see the center become the mecca of African-American culture on the East Coast," she said. "We want to develop (the Hayti Heritage Center) into a national landmark, be a visitor's destination point."

For the immediate future of 1992, the goals are more solid. The center will begin fund raising for a St. Joseph's Performance Center within the building. Hayti will also be staging more performances, such as the plays "Mother Love" and "Ladder." In February the center plans to exhibit the works of sculptor Barbara Gault.

"We want to uplift the community with our programming," Pledger said. "If people come to the center, the community itself will have a better understanding of what our culture is and become involved."

The Hayti Heritage Center will put on "A Night with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr." at 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Tickets will be \$6 general admission, \$4 for students and senior citizens. Call (919) 683-1709 for information.



The Holmes Brothers

## Holmes Brothers will color Carrboro blue with their spirituality

By Anne Michaud  
Arts Coordinator

People Magazine called their music "raw-boned virtuosity." Rolling Stone Magazine applauded their "urgency and energy." Billboard Magazine called them "utterly astounding."

A band with more than three decades of performance experience, the Holmes Brothers are finally getting the public approval and listenership they deserve and have broken into the recording mainstream with success and critical accolade.

Showcasing their newly released album, "Where It's At," the Holmes Brothers will appear at the ArtsCenter in Carrboro at 9 p.m. Saturday performing their unconventional lyrics to mixes of gospel, blues, R & B and country.

The New York-based band began in the early 1960s when Virginia-raised brothers Wendell and Sherman Holmes, playing guitar and bass, performed in blues bars such as Dan Lynch's.

Drummer Popsy Dixon was added in 1980, and together they recorded and released their 1990 debut album "In the Spirit," which catapulted them into national blues acclaim. Their southern roots of gospel and blues, which they performed in churches in their beginnings as a duo, still linger in their music, giving it a spiritual spark.

Using gospel as their cornerstone, the Holmes Brothers link gut bucket blues and red-clay soul with rock and funk in their innovative renditions of traditional blues standards, obscurities and original material. They are able to make a swift transition from

exalted gospel chants to heavy low-down blues almost instantly upon changing songs.

But the Holmes Brothers are also able to show their essential musical link: emotional truth. They draw upon the common musical heritage of raw energy and spirituality of both blues and gospel in songs that cry out to audiences in exaltation and desperation.

This is seen especially in their vocal harmonies and in the diversity of the musicians' three distinct voices. The dominant baritone voice of lead singer Sherman sets the mood, while Wendell's gruff soul style combined and contrasted with Dixon's haunting falsetto provide an exciting counterbalance to their music.

They have the vocal range to accommodate gospel quartet singing and blues shouting and can bring the "soul" out of this music so deeply rooted in their childhood and early years.

But just because their music pours out emotion doesn't mean the Holmes Brothers can't pack a solid beat-driven punch. CMJ Jackpot said, "Just because there's spine-tingling singing doesn't mean this isn't a rockin' soul party."

No matter whether they aim to deliver a message or express emotion, the Holmes Brothers can do it with intense showmanship and commitment. They've still got that old gospel fire igniting their music.

Tickets for the Holmes Brothers concert at 9 p.m. Saturday are \$12.50 for the public and \$10 for friends of the ArtsCenter. For more information call the ArtsCenter at 922-ARTS.

### Gift

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enable us to reach a group of children who we haven't been able to reach before," she said.

The museum also has received \$100,000 from the Nathan Cummings Foundation, but there is still a long way to go before the school meets in campaign goal, Britt said.

"Things are looking positive, but we

are keeping our \$2 million endowment for the campaign flexible," she said. "We are behind the rest of the University, though, because we had to close last year for renovations."

NCNB Corp. made the largest corporate campaign pledge of \$2 million in October.

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