This past summer an assignment to write the feature film Remembering Rachel brought me from Los Angeles to the small southern town of Princeton, KY. The script, a fictional narrative, is based upon the real-life project “Let’s Paint the Town!” that has its origins in Princeton.

“Let’s Paint the Town!” is described as “a historic preservation/downtown revitalization effort that has communities rolling up their sleeves and volunteering in ways that would challenge any town in America.” The campaign was created in 2006 to enhance the downtown historic area, promote an appreciation for preservation and stimulate economic development, which is now spreading throughout the nation to other small towns.

Remembering Rachel is a story about the human spirit; one man against all odds who can make a difference. It’s a fish out of water story about a man devastated by the loss of his young wife, that upon bringing her home to be buried in her small, economically depressed town where he’s treated as an outsider, decides to restore the memory of his wife’s childhood by getting the townspeople to band together and bring its main street back to better times. Met with many obstacles at first, our hero is forced to gain the trust of the people and unite them and by doing so not only succeeds in his goal, but gives this town its hope and pride back as well as finding an appreciation within himself for a town he never really felt at home with.

Spending a little under a week in Princeton offered up valuable research into the real-life project and the essence behind it. Though the film is set in a fictional town, the key to writing is to “write what you know,” and if you don’t, then research is of the utmost importance. As for character, well our hero is from New York and, myself, being born and raised there, character development was easy, but finding those little nuances that could trip him up in unknown waters, as well as surrounding him with a colorful cast of great characters could only be discovered by experiencing them myself.

Editor’s Note: Once Remembering Rachel is completed, it will be submitted for consideration to some of the world’s premier film festivals, including Sundance, Cannes, Toronto and Berlin.