



● A view of the Ross Moffett mural.

Photos by Michael Murphy



● Conservator Kristina Bird, left, and assistant Jennifer Reed work on the Ross Moffett painting at Provincetown Town Hall.

Ripped, dirty and damaged by water, a 1938 mural by Ross Moffett was in sore need of a cleanup.

Provincetown Town Hall called on a local expert to give the painting depicting cranberry pickers a light cleaning, repair and a coat of varnish. The result after two weeks was a remarkable difference.

The conservator was Kristina Bird of Truro who is assisted by Jennifer Reed, an artist and Provincetown native, in the art conservation business Bird began 12 years ago.

Conservators, Bird explains, are actually apprentices for

seven years after they learn the trade, and after completing a program in art conservation at the Instituto per L'Arte e il Restauro in Florence, Italy, Bird worked for a year on fresco projects in Rome, Spoleto and Naples.

Returning to Boston in 1985, Bird learned the art of gilding under the tutelage of master gilder Nils Johnson. Her training in gilding has come in handy. "Sometimes, when you're done with the painting, the frame looks shabby," she says.

She studied organic chemistry at Harvard University and worked at the Fogg Museum's (at Harvard) Objects Conservation Lab and for paintings conservator Peter Williams. She also worked on independent projects and some of her clients have

included the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities and the Seaman's Church Institute of Newport.

In 1989 Bird went to England to work for conservator Polly Blackett and on various private commissions.

The Moffett mural was difficult to clean because it was unvarnished, Bird says. After her work was complete, she did apply a coat of mat varnish with a ultraviolet light prohibitor, to protect the work from fading.

Bird mostly works on private pieces, oil or acrylic. She maintains a record of treatment reports and photographic documentation for each work she undertakes.

Conservator Kristina Bird can be reached in Truro at (508) 349-1731. ■