

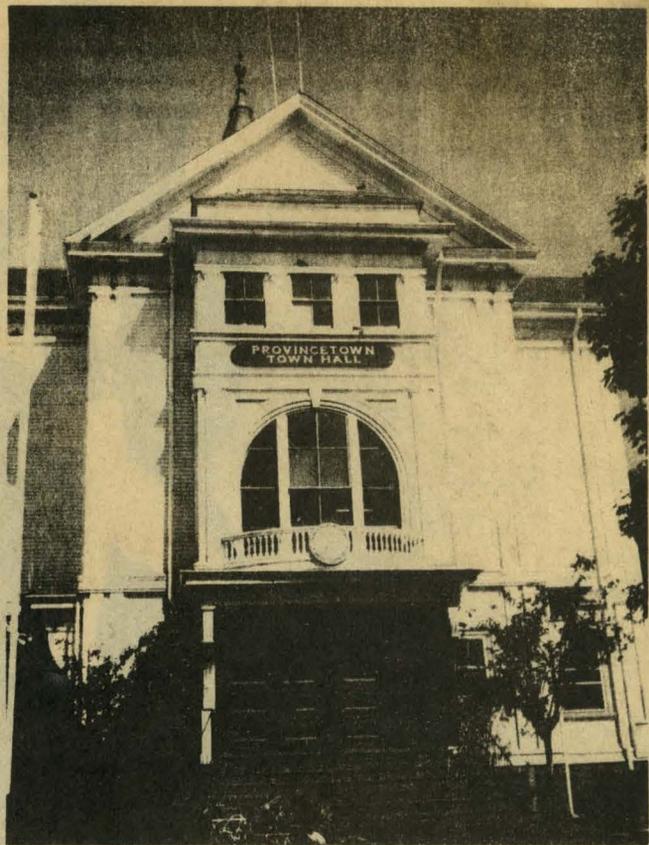
Provincetown's Art Collection Decorates Daily Life

by Michael McGuire
(Provincetown)

Provincetown's reputation as an art colony sometimes seems to rest on the liveliness of its summer gallery scene and the prominence and historical significance of its 75-year-old Art Association and Museum. As a result, what is often taken for granted by residents or ignored by visitors is the important place of the town itself as a cultural archives, including a collection of well over 300 paintings, some of which have a significance that goes beyond local art history.

What's more, much of this varied and historically interesting collection is always on display, existing matter-of-factly as background to the day-to-day activities in several public places. According to Mary Frances Daviess, chair of the Provincetown Art Commission, about half of the paintings reside in the Heritage Museum, at the corner of Commercial and Center streets. But the remaining canvases grace the walls of Town Hall, Cape End Manor, the high school, and the library, and the public is welcome to view them.

At present, a brochure giving basic information about the paintings on display (artist, title, year of execution) is only available for the group that hangs in Town Hall. It can be obtained in the town manager's office and makes a self-guided tour easy and enjoyable. The Town Hall collection, which is the most prominent exhibit of town-owned art outside of the Heritage Museum, is significant for paintings by Charles W. Hawthorne, George Elmer Browne, Ross Moffett, and Henry Hensche. Moffett, in fact, is responsible for the first work of art



Art in Public Places

most visitors will see if they use the front entrance to Town Hall: a two-panelled mural of Provincetown scenes beside the twin stairways that lead to the upstairs auditorium. This is the sort of work that citizens, trudging up and down during Town Meeting nights, are likely to treat as little more than wallpaper, but it is an expressive and effective piece, framed by the dark shiny oak of the staircase.

The greatest concentration of paintings in Town Hall is in its two most open spaces: the main hall, onto which three offices give, and the Judge Welsh Hearing Room. Two magnificent Hawthornes hang in the hall, *Crew of the Philomena Manta* and *Fish Cleaners*, but also of interest are William Hall's *The Peaked Hills of Cape Cod* and Pauline Palmer's *The Lumber Wharf*.

Many other pieces, though by lesser-known or less-gifted artists, nevertheless evoke and commemorate local

scenes and give a concentrated indication of the inspirational Cape environment that has been so important to so many. Among them are William Bicknell's *Eight Bells*, Albert Edel's *Sklarof Wharf*, Lena Gurr's *Blessing of the Fleet*, Koren Der Harootian's *Three Dormers*, and many others.

The rest of the collection can be found in the Caucus Hall and in the offices of the Town Clerk, Town Accountant, Treasurer, Tax Collector, Licensing Agent, Assistant to the Town Manager, Assessors, and the Town Manager. Though these are places where town business is conducted, interested art lovers should not feel shy about going to take a look at these paintings. Rachel White, Secretary to the Town Manager and member of the Art Commission, says, "I never have a problem with people coming in to have a closer look if they want to," and she adds that other



HOLLY NEAR PLAYS THE POST OFFICE CABARET

by A.J.T.

(Provincetown) Whether on stage or screen, as a recording artist or lecturer, Holly Near brings a unique combination of inexhaustible creativity, uncompromising candor, and artistic excellence. With 14 albums recorded on *Redwood Records* and more than 15 years of live performances worldwide, Holly Near is known for her soaring vocals, charismatic stage presence, and infectious warmth.

A prolific songwriting career emerged for Near when she integrated her political passions and show business ex-

perience through the *Free The Army Show* for GIs and service women opposing the war in Vietnam. Extensive concert tours paved the way for the first release of an album. In 1973 she founded *Redwood Records* and from this one-artist label, *Redwood* has grown and developed into one of today's most successful independent record companies with a catalog of more than 30 groups and solo artists. For these life achievements, she was honored as "Woman of the Year" by *Ms. Magazine*. In 1988, Near celebrated her

return to theater starring in *The 1940's Radio Hour*. This magical, highly-praised production, directed by her sister, Timothy Near, received a sold-out run at the San Jose Repertory Theater.

See Holly Near at her best at the Post Office Cabaret, July 16-24. The Post Office Cabaret is located at 303 Commercial Street, right in the center of town. For reservations (strongly advised), call Provincetown Reservation System at 487-6400. □



a panel of Ross Moffett's mural

Town Hall workers feel the same way. Public interest is welcome, and White says that she is always happy to answer questions about the paintings that the brochure does not cover.

Both White and Daviess express the hope that, in the future, similar brochure-guides will be available for the other locations of town-owned art so that a complete self-guided tour will be possible and the town can properly promote its collection. In the meantime, the adventurous will be rewarded with a leisurely treasure hunt that will reveal the cultural riches of the

town.

Daviess also says that the Art Commission wants to mount a large exhibition of town art sometime in the near future. "There will be a concentrated effort to get a lot of the paintings together in one place," she explains, adding that the Art Association is "the most logical" site for such a project, though they "haven't talked to the Art Association" about the idea as yet. But the Art Commission does have a working relationship with the Art Association, which periodically shows significant canvases that have under-

gone recent restoration. In fact, Daviess is currently cleaning and re-stretching Hawthorne's *Fish Cleaners* for inclusion in the Art Association's *Founders of an Art Colony* show, which opens July 14, along with a dozen other paintings, chiefly from the Heritage Museum collection.

Until such time as official recognition comes to this fine cultural resource, it will remain quietly prominent, enriching the texture of Provincetown life and reminding us of the creative history that is ours in trust. □



a panel of Ross Moffett's mural