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Hawthorne studio an historic place

By Steven Schwadron

The Charles Hawthorne class studio barn off Miller Hill Road has been approved for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

Built between 1900 and 1907 by Hawthorne, an acclaimed Provincetown painter, the studio has been a painting school ever since. After Hawthorne died in 1930, Hans Hofmann, also a renowned local painter, taught in the studio. For the last 30 years, painter Morris Davidson has owned the building and taught there.

Hawthorne originally taught painting classes in his home near the studio. When the classes grew too large he moved his school to the barn building.

The national register status protects the building from modification or destruction by any project using federal money and also entitles the building's owner to matching grants for structural maintenance and preservation.

The building was nominated for inclusion in the national register by Josephine Del Deo of Provincetown, who has long been active in historical preservation efforts here. Any citizen is entitled to nominate buildings for federal recognition.

Del Deo was helped in supplying maps and photographs by Claude Jensen, with whom she had worked on the Historic District Study Committee. The Hawthorne studio, which Del Deo called "a pivotal building in American art history," had been singled out as important by that committee.

"It was a matter of timing," Del Deo said, because Davidson was considering putting the building on the open market after he quits teaching. She lauded Davidson for keeping the barn intact and unchanged from its days as Hawthorne's studio. That the studio remains in its original form made it possible to attain national register status, she said.

Staff members of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, which administers the preservation grant program in the Commonwealth, visited the Hawthorne studio site last summer in response to local requests for an inspection.

The state commission received an application for historic register status last December, approved the application in January and sent it on to Washington, D.C. The application received final approval late this summer.

"Charles Hawthorne's achievements as a portrait painter, artist and teacher are considerable and among his greatest contributions to us in the founding and leadership of Provincetown's art community," said Paul Guzzi, Massachusetts secretary of state, who is formally chairman of the state historical commission, in a written statement. "The studio is an active symbol of his efforts."

Son of famous painter

Jo Hawthorne, predestined to create

By Steven Schwadron

Joseph Hawthorne, the son of one of Provincetown's great artists, stepped down in May as conductor and musical director of the Duluth Symphony with a rousing performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

The work is seldom mentioned without adjectives like "mammoth" or "monumental." That the Duluth orchestra, and choir singers from the local College of St. Scholastica and the University of Wisconsin, could "course its way through, playing with polish and spirit," as one reviewer wrote, is a testament to Hawthorne's life investment in regional ensembles.

As a child in New York, Hawthorne sneaked into Carnegie Hall to watch rehearsals of the NBC Orchestra. He saw an enraged maestro, Toscanini, berate a soloist on his phrasing of a dotted sixteenth note, curse himself and his orchestra, kick over the conductor's stand and march off the stage.

As a conductor of symphony orchestras in Dallas, Chattanooga, Toledo and most recently in Duluth, Hawthorne no longer has to sneak into rehearsals. After a summer's rest at his home in Provincetown, Hawthorne will return to the Midwest as artist-in-residence at the University of Wisconsin at Superior and as conductor laureate of the Duluth Symphony.

"To be a Hawthorne," said the honorary degree in humane letters granted him this year, "is to be almost predestined to create, whether one wields a pen, as did Nathaniel, a brush as did Charles Webster, or a baton, as does Joseph, their illustrious descendant."

Wintering as a child in places like New York, Paris and Washington, D.C., Hawthorne spent summers in Provincetown in the arts-charged environment of his father's world-famous Cape Cod School of Art. The elder Hawthorne's school here drew many of those who built Provincetown's art colony heritage. The art association last week closed a Charles Hawthorne show.

Joseph now lives overlooking the harbor, just below the house in which he was born. A winding wooden stairway creeps up to the lower house, built by Joseph's uncle. The house, simple and in places nearly stark, feels like a retreat, though its placidity is sometimes shattered by the grinding of gears as trucks downshift to clear the Bradford Street hill below.

"My father's profession was the center of our home," Hawthorne said. The school flooded the home with as many as 100 or 125 students at a time. His parents had met at a Long Island art school, where his mother, Marion Campbell, was secretary-treasurer, as well as a painter herself.

The school took up less than half of his father's time. But the routine was constant, including extensive demonstrations and critical sessions. Still, there was no heavy pressure on the artist's son.

"He said two painters in the family were enough," Hawthorne said. A friend who had dutifully studied Charles Hawthorne's work descended upon the artist with an enthusiastic conclusion: that the paintings were based on a mystical dynamic symmetry. His father considered

