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Slick refinishing job

Heritage museum opens quietly

By Steven Schwadron

The letterhead reads, "A Museum Established by the Town of Provincetown in 1976." Take three or four steps into the restored old Center Methodist Church, and it's difficult to believe that Josephine Del Deo's only had the keys to the building since April 15.

The new Provincetown Heritage Museum opened its doors quietly June 20, in preparation for its official dedication on July 4. The Museum will display historical artifacts, but also aims to "capture the town's temperament," Del Deo said.

"We almost lost the building," she said. "It very nearly devolved into that bizarre commercial mess." She gets you excited

enough about the museum that you don't want to talk about it. You want to go see it.

Admire the slick refinishing job (done mostly by Steve Perry's CETA crew) quickly, because you'll be distracted by the Benjamin Franklin II. The gleaming, red 1871 Provincetown fire engine, complete with ladders and hoses rests next to, among other things, an 1869 trophy for the fire company which could "horizontally shoot water the furthest distance." Each firehouse donated relics to the Heritage.

"This is the kind of cooperative spirit that the Museum can inspire," Del Deo beams.

Around the corner from the Ben Franklin is the turn-of-the-century Provincetown

library room, reconstructed with many of its original furnishings. For authenticity, Wendy Everett will paint a window that "overlooks" the harbor, as well as a braided rug on the floor, which Del Deo says was customary.

Your eye catches the old sea chest of Joseph Bickers (grandfather of Arthur, former Pilgrim Monument curator.) And you quickly move on to the exhibit honoring the legendary Dr. Daniel Hiebert, who brought more people into Provincetown than any tourist attraction.

With help from the Mayos', Romolo Del Deo, Josephine's son, mounted two inlaid salt-water aquaria (rock pool and sand flat.) Below an 1836 town map stretches one of the few intact salt pipes that once carried sea water to be evaporated for salt.

A simulated winding "beach walk" will frame a collection of Coast Guard equipment.

The museum is laced with high-quality historical photographs, from the George Bryant collection. He has also researched many of the photos' explanations and interpretations, Del Deo said.

Up the wide staircase, a porthole alerts you to the scale model of the *Rose Dorothea*. For the *Dorothea's* victory in a 1907 challenge match with the Gloucester fleet, she brought home the Lipton Cup. In 1918, she was sunk by a German U-boat.

Eventually, the scale model will be accompanied by a 54-foot, half-sized replica of the *Rose Dorothea*.

Counting on private donations toward the project to augment the Museum's \$20,000 town grant, Del Deo hopes the *Rose Dorothea* "will be for us what the monument is for the Pilgrim Museum."

Cyril Patrick, chairman of the Historical Association and member of the Museum's Board of Trustees, explained that a false ceiling over the auditorium would be torn down, and the old vaulted church ceiling restored.

The masts of the schooner *Rose Dorothea* would then totally fill the 38-foot high auditorium, he said.



"Self Portrait" by Helen Sardor.

Meanwhile, the auditorium handles the overflow from the Museum's art galleries. Provincetown Art Association collections of artists compose a rotating collection.

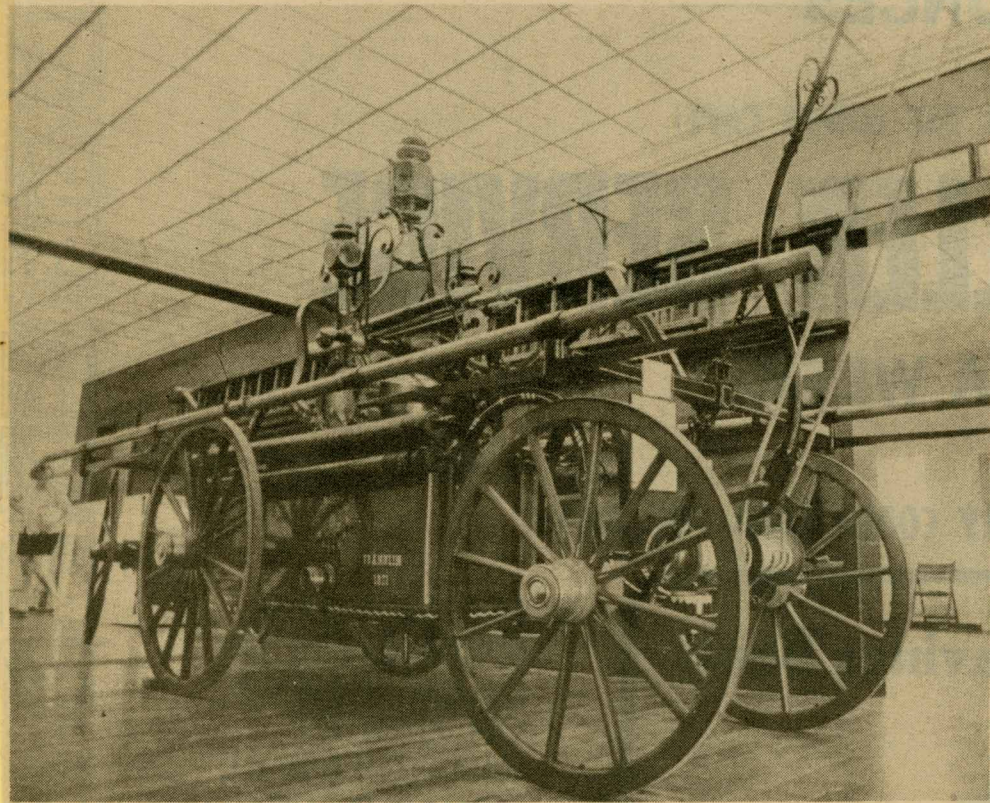
"We're really after the total heritage of Provincetown, industry fishing and art," Del Deo said.

"It's really a unique kind of museum. In one sense, it's different because its exhibits might seem unrelated. But there aren't too many places which could fill a museum with town color and flavor."

Chaim Gross, whose sculpture will stand at the Heritage's entrance, happened by and described his glee in watching the Museum "build and build and build till it takes shape." "You're doing a great job," he told Del Deo.

It's not an art gallery or a natural history museum or a science fair. But it is also not merely a haphazard array of old things. It is, simply, a tribute to Provincetown's Heritage.

Admission to the Provincetown Heritage Museum costs \$1 for adults, 50c for children, and is free for town residents each Wednesday.



The 1871 Ben Franklin

Advocate photos by Steve Schwadron

The Provincetown Heritage Museum

Established in 1976 by the town of Provincetown, the museum was built in 1860 and is now a Registered National Landmark. It houses a growing legacy of the town's treasures: antique fire equipment, marine gear, artifacts of this 19th century fishing village, art work which reflects the illustrious lineage of American artists, plus native habitat aquaria and environmental displays. This year visitors will be able to see under construction a 1/2 scale model of the famous fishing schooner, *Rose Dorothea*, which won the Lipton Cup in 1907. Location: Commercial and Center Streets. Open daily in the summer: 10 AM to 10 PM. Admission: Adults 75¢; Children 25¢. Tel.: 487-0666