



65 SCHOOL OF ARTISTS ON BEACH AT PROVINCETOWN, CAPE COD, MASS.

243-29

1929 - - Near Hilliard's Wharf



ARTISTS AT WORK, PROVINCETOWN, MASS.

- About 1916 -



A CLASS OF ARTISTS AT WORK ON THE BEACH, PROVINCETOWN, MASS.

Another 1920 by Hilliard's Wharf

Cape Cod Times — Summer Preview '78

# Artists now flock to Provincetown — thanks to Hawthorne

By SUE MELLE  
Special Writer

PROVINCETOWN — "One photographer compared the light in Provincetown to that in the desert in Arizona," said Ben Brooks, archivist (historian) of the Provincetown Art Association.

For almost a century now, artists have flocked to Provincetown to paint in that clear light, reflected in surrounding waters, and to represent the beauty of the land that juts into those waters.

Though some painters had begun to work in Provincetown in the latter part of the 19th Century, it was really Charles Hawthorne who gave birth to an adhesive artist colony in Provincetown with his establishment of the Cape Cod School in 1899.

According to Brookes, this "propelled Provincetown into existence as an art community and attracted other artists."

"Once it starts, more and more people come. It is difficult to work in isolation," added Bob Rodgers, Association conser-

vator.

Hawthorne grew up on the Maine coast and was thus comfortable in Provincetown's seacoast atmosphere. He was generally regarded as a good, if demanding teacher.

He was almost neurotically concerned with the use of color and shading, and his critiques of students' use of these elements were rumored to be unmerciful.

Brooks and Rodgers used the words "figurative" and "representational" to describe Hawthorne's work. The terms refer to his tendency to paint the world as it truly appeared, in contrast to the more interpretive forms we associate with art of recent years.

Hawthorne and his school attracted, in the Pre-World War I period, other highly regarded figuratives such as William Paxton and Richard Miller.

Perhaps the most famous of the Cape figuratives, though, was Edward Hopper, famous for the stark beauty of his bleak landscapes. For years he thought Cape land-

scapes "too soft" to paint in his style, so never became prominent on the Provincetown scene until the 1930's.

George Elmer Browne and E. Ambrose Webster established two of the six art schools that flourished in the pre-World War I era, rooting Provincetown more deeply as an art community.

"Provincetown was one of the earliest and most important (American) art colonies," said Brooks, "mostly because of the people who were here."

Webster, whose contemporary Ross Moffett described him as "the pioneer of modernism" was the advance guard of

modernists. Moffett and Karl Knaths followed during the twenties.

Another prominent painter at that time was Edward Dickinson, who kept more in line with Hawthorne's school, supporting traditionalism.

In the Twenties and Thirties, a split developed between the two factions in Provincetown as evidenced by differences between the most prominent artists at work

Between 1926 and 1936, the traditionalists and modernists held separate Association shows, departing from the tradition of a single annual exhibition dating from the group's inception in 1914.

"It was an exciting place to be at the time. There was lots of ferment and discussion," said Brooks.

For almost two decades following World War II, Hans Hoffman was the major artist in Provincetown. He came from Germany to teach in California in the Thirties and was warned by Hitler not to return if he continued his projects.

He eventually found his way to