

Town art collection graces library walls

By **Melora B. North**

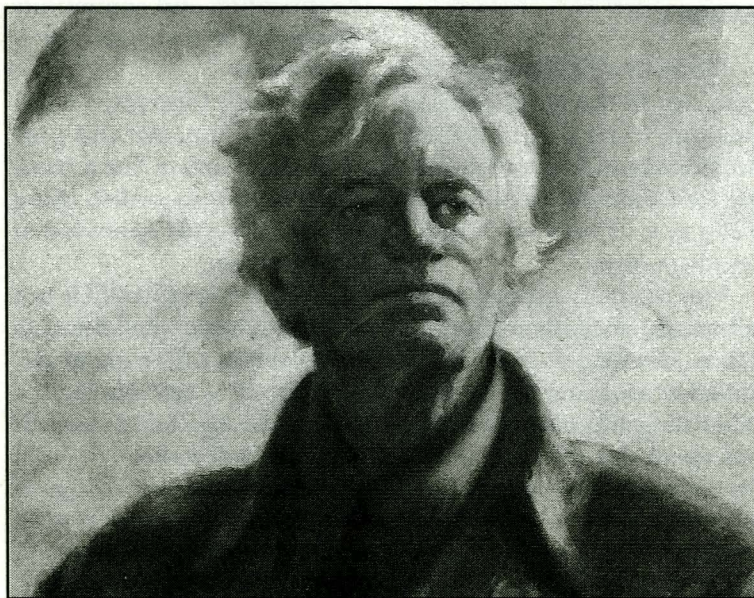
BANNER STAFF

PROVINCETOWN — When you walk into the Provincetown Library, you are not just surrounded by a cavernous space full of inviting volumes of great works but a sense of peace pervades as well. It is not only the introspection of the quiet that seduces but an extensive art collection that speaks to the visitor as they tiptoe from one masterpiece to another, the works united with the specific subject matter that accompanies the section.

“We have tried to have the works relate to the theme of the room,” says Peggy Prichett, co-chair of the town’s art commission, who has been on the commission for nine years.

“We want people to come in to see the art,” adds Debra DeJonker-Berry, library director.

With the marriage of painted works and written works in mind, the co-curators of the collection, Prichett and Steve Borkowski, art commission chair of five years, have hung three large and colorful Oliver Chaffee paintings in



A portrait of Harry Kemp, “Poet of the Dunes,” by S. Edmund Oppenheim, hangs in the poet’s corner of Provincetown Public Library.

the children’s section. Abstract depictions rendered with a heavy hand on the brush, the paintings are images of animals frolicking in nature. According to Prichett and Borkowski, the children are intrigued with the works, often staring at them, so engaging is the subject matter to the little ones. Another painting by Chaffee hangs in a stairwell that can ac-

commodate the size.

In the poet’s corner hangs a portrait of Harry Kemp, “Poet of the Dunes,” painted by S. Edmund Oppenheim, and in one of the reading rooms hang four works that have been reproduced as posters for sale at Town Hall. Each painting is a depiction of the four seasons. Marjorie Windust Halpers’ untitled work depicts au-

turnn, while Vollian Burr Rann’s “Spring Landscape East End” (of Provincetown) is his version of spring in the fishing village. Ambrose Webster’s “Summer Garden” is a colorful floral, and Ross Moffett’s “Provincetown in Winter” is a painting of boats at the wharf covered by a heavy blanket of snow. Proceeds from the sale of these posters, at \$10 each, benefit the commission whose mission is to ultimately restore, conserve and reframe the town collection that numbers at approximately 400 works of art.

A special piece by Gerrit Beneker, painted in 1917, “The Net Mender,” was featured at an exhibition last year at the Cahoon Museum when they held a “Treasures from the [Cape] Towns” show. Interestingly, DeJonker-Berry says one day Beneker’s daughter, a Chatham resident, happened upon the library and was pleasantly shocked to encounter one of her father’s paintings. “My God, that’s my father’s painting,” DeJonker-Berry says the daughter said of the discovery.

Another interesting discovery

at the library is a life-sized half-scale model of the Rose Dorothea, winner of the Lipton Cup in 1907. Unfortunately, a German submarine in WW I sank her, but with the generosity and dedication of local boat builder Francis “Flyer” Santos, along with David Ditacchio and Richard Meads, she lives on. It took the men 10 years to build this model that is now displayed on the second floor of the building that used to be a Methodist church and the former Provincetown Heritage Museum. Strategically placed at the bow of the ship is a portrait of “Flyer” done by Gladys Maynard. The cup, according to Borkowski, was stolen at one point and buried in the sand. Now recovered, it’s on display on the first floor.

All artwork in the exhibition was generously donated and either created by local artists or given to the commission by collectors. Each is an example of the heritage of the community and all works speak to the history.

“We try to highlight the maritime and local history with this collection,” says Borkowski.

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