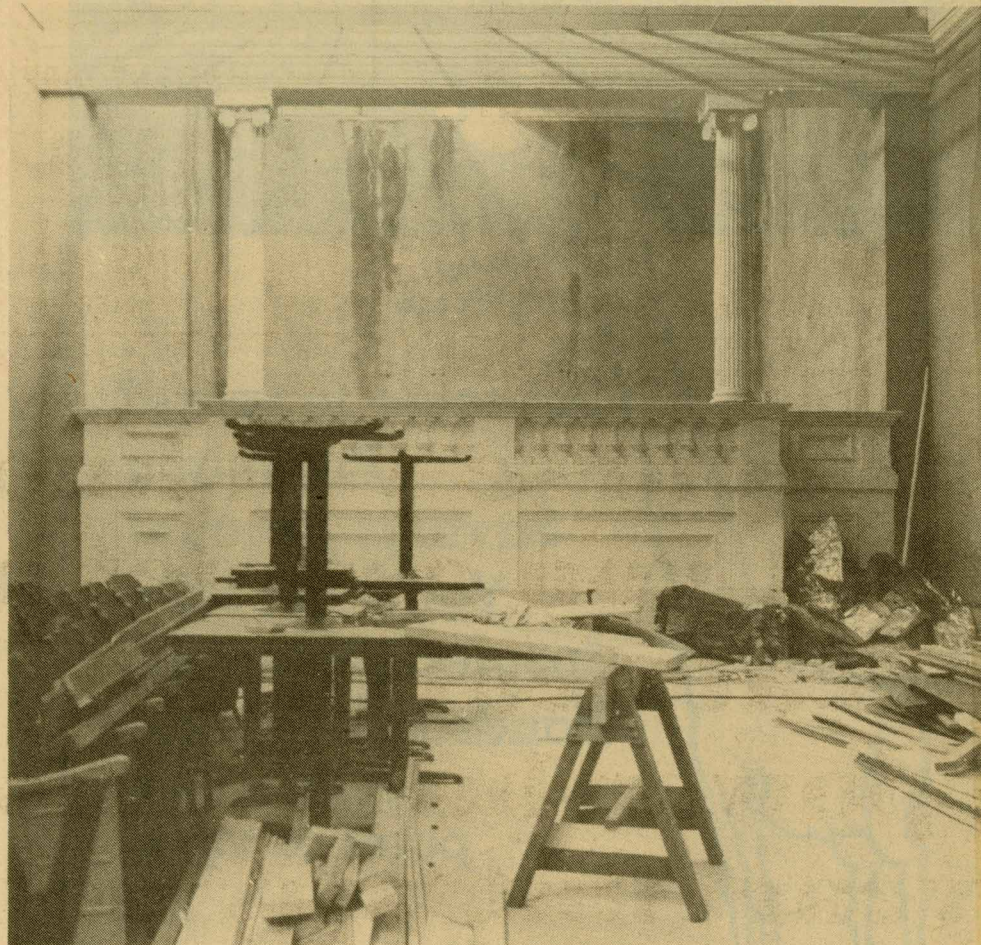
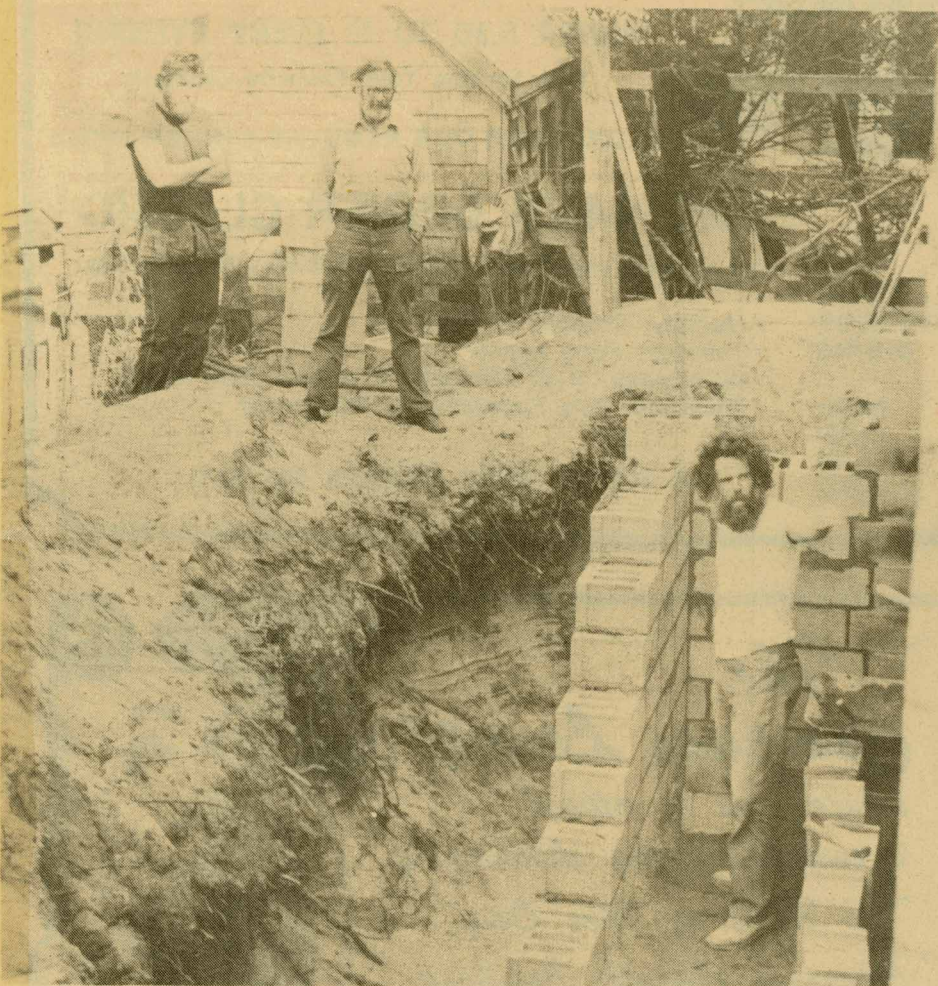


## 'The Job Is Almost Unmanageable'

# The Making Of An Arts Center



Contractor Jonathan Birnbaum with owner Jules Brenner and mason Conrad Malicoat. (Above) an interior view of the new 250-seat theater.

The "Gone With the Wind" of construction projects this spring is the former Chrysler Museum building renovation. The structure is to house the new Center for the Arts in Provincetown scheduled to open on July 4.

Facelifting a 114-year-old building is no small thing and the task becomes Herculean when there are only three months to do it in.

The project, whose estimated cost will be \$70,000, employs a ten-man crew plus two plumbers, an excavating contractor, a fire stair engineer, painting contractors, and a mason.

The renovation is run by contractors Jonathan and Mark Birnbaum. The brothers Birnbaum own and operate Cape Tip Construction. In addition to shaping up the building, the Birnbaums face the difficult problem of turning a museum into a 250-seat theater.

"From the point of view of complexity, the job is almost unmanageable," Jonathan Birnbaum said.

To complete the external work, a labyrinth of scaffolding was erected scaling the 40-foot-high and 60-foot-long side of the uilding.

Birnbaum explains that each job is magnified by the size of the structure itself. So far the west side has been prepared for painting, new windows installed, new gutters, and half the roof repaired.

In back, a kitchen building has been constructed to serve the planned cafe-restaurant (the Center is trying to get a seasonal beer and wine license for the summer cafe). Inside, walls have been removed and the floors are being restored to accomodate the ground floor gallery rentals and the restaurant. Upstairs will be the theater and workshops.

Inspiration for the Center came from the new owners, Jules Brenner and Fred Jungmann. They've planned an ambitious

schedule which includes theater productions, seminars, and courses throughout the summer.

The building was constructed in 1860—the same year that Melville was writing Moby Dick—and cost a mere \$25,000 to build.

Birnbaum estimates that at today's prices the building would cost more than a million dollars to construct. But at this point renovation is job enough. The ten crew members in their hard hats are working seven days a week, ten hours a day.

