

Provincetown Advocate,

Thursday, November 13, 1975

The \$150,000 ten-year bonding to purchase the Center Methodist Church, and create a historical town museum, which needed two-thirds approval as a bonding, passed 146-13 after an emotional appeal from Josephine Del Deo, its prime advocate. The last article of the warrants, its passage capped the evening with applause.

# Heritage Museum Gets Landmark Designation

Plans moved ahead this week for the former Center Methodist Church, which the town voted to purchase two weeks ago for an historical museum.

The building has been granted a listing in the National Register of Historic Places, according to Cyril Patrick, president of the Provincetown Historical Association, who said he was notified of the designation Saturday by a phone call from Washington, D.C.

The listing makes the building eligible for certain federal grants. Josephine Del Deo, chairman of the museum's trustees, told the Provincetown selectmen Monday night a National Park Service purchase grant would immediately be sought.

Del Deo also told the board of her group's choice of a new name for the building, which had served in recent years as the Chrysler Art Museum and the

Center for the Arts in Provincetown. The trustees have chosen to call it the Provincetown Heritage Museum.

Town Manager Gardner Benson estimated the town was still 90 days away from acquiring the building. There is so far only a verbal agreement to purchase between the trustees and the First National Bank of Cape Cod, Del Deo said. The bank owns the building as the result of a mortgage foreclosure on the Center for the Arts.

Del Deo said the only official action yet taken is the Town Meeting vote and \$135,000 bond appropriation.

### Unpaid Taxes

Benson raised the question of \$7500 in unpaid taxes on the property, saying he had heard of bank inquiries about a possible abatement. "They want to net \$135,000," he said.

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Both Del Deo and Patrick expressed surprise at the tax issue. Del Deo said she did not want to cause the town any additional expense. Patrick said three-and-a-half hours of negotiation had brought the price down to \$135,000. "My assumption was: that's the asking price. We negotiated in good faith."

"Time will tell how good that faith is," Benson replied. He said he would advise against an abatement, because the building enjoyed the availability of all town services while the taxes accrued.

Patrick said Tuesday he expected no trouble over the tax question. "The bank will pay," he said, after talking with John Roderick in the Provincetown branch. Roderick was not available for comment Tuesday.

Patrick said the bank had put \$28,000 into the building already and would lose most of that at the bargain sale price to the town. He said he and other committee members had agreed not to contest the bank's bid to build a Snail Road branch, which has been the subject of a variance and zoning controversy for several years.

Del Deo told the selectmen of a fire department request to inspect the building. "Of course we plan to comply

with everything the fire department requires," she said.

The library will not use the museum as a temporary quarters during its own renovation (see story, page 13) because a shelving contract to locate the books in the Tonw Hall auditorium has already been signed and the shelving ordered. But historical artifacts, appraised at \$6000, from the library will be stored in the museum during the renovation, and some will remain there on permanent loan, Del Deo announced.

Projects to clean up the grounds and refurbish the bell in the former church's steeple were also detailed. Patrick said the bank had granted permission to enter the building to make measurements in preparation for exhibits.

- February 12, 1976 -

## Town signs museum agreement

The Provincetown selectmen signed the purchase and sales agreement for the Provincetown Heritage Museum with the First National Bank of Cape Cod Monday, ending weeks of tough negotiating over the sale price of \$135,000.

The trustees of the museum had sought the money from the voters at the last special town meeting, but a disagreement with the bank erupted over the payment of about \$7500 in back taxes.

Josephine Del Deo, who led the drive to acquire the former Methodist Church, saving it from almost certain commercial development, insisted on the sale price as agreed with the voters.

The closing date for the sale was set at March 15. The bank has agreed to pay the taxes and other costs, leaving the net cost

to the town at \$135,000.

Selectman Dickie Henrique was reluctant to sign the agreement without reading it first. He said the other members of the board hadn't read it either. They said later they had read it.

He complained about Town Counsel Edward Veara handling the sale, because Veara was the bank's lawyer as well. But a bank official said the bank did not use a lawyer, trusting Veara as attorney for the town.

Selectman Warren Alexander accused Henrique of "nit-picking." "This is not nit-picking," Henrique said. "It's \$135,000 of the taxpayers' money. We should take 10 minutes to study it before you sign it."

- March 25, 1976 -

## Heritage museum bought; \$6000 article is withdrawn

By Peter Warren

Provincetown officially purchased the Heritage Museum from the First National Bank of Cape Cod last week for \$135,000.

The bank paid more than \$6000 in back taxes and the fee for registering the transfer in the county deeds office. The sale culminates a brief but effective campaign to buy the building, which once housed the Center Methodist Church and the art collection of Walter Chrysler, before it could have been converted into a shop complex or tourist trap.

Trustees of the museum announced their tentative plans to open by mid-June. The trustees have also withdrawn an article for \$6000 for a smoke detection system already in the April warrant. The article will be offered again in October.

Josephine Del Deo, a museum trustee, said the article does not represent the reversal of a pledge not to ask the town for a penny beyond the purchase price. She said the smoke detection system represents a capital improvement which the finance committee said must be

approved by the town. Mrs. Del Deo said the museum would reimburse the town for all capital improvements.

The trustees also announced the museum last week received a Department of Interior acquisition grant for \$5300 through the state historical commission. The matching grant goes immediately toward offsetting the bonding.

Mrs. Del Deo said the initial grant was important since it places the museum on the yearly grant schedule and means the town would probably receive some funding every year.

Trustees of the museum have already begun interior clean-up for the opening. In addition the Provincetown Historical Association has given a grant for a habitat display. It will be prepared by Drs. Charles and Barbara Mayo, local environmental scientists, and Romolo Del Deo.

Mrs. Del Deo asked that contributions for support of the museum be made through the local historical association.

The group has tax deductible status, but more important, she said, the funds would immediately be available for museum projects without being encumbered in the town's yearly budget system.