Her mother died when she was young and her father being a sea-captain, she was brought up by an aunt. The uncle was known as Jimmy-on-the-Hill. Remembering her own youth, she herself brought up many motherless children and acted as a parent to many of the art students.

She loved food and was a wonderful cook, especially fish-dishes and pies—she weighed around 250 pounds and was "proud of it". She was jovial, loud and salty. If a student stayed away, she would look him up and find what was the trouble. If he said the reason was that he could not pay, she would yell, "Damn it to hell, you don't need any money to eat in my place". She would heap as much food on the table as the student could possibly eat. If she thought that he was having trouble making both ends meet, she would put enough on the table so he could put some in a paper bag and take it home with him. Bill Boogar says that she was a god-send; without her help his first few years here would have been absolutely impossible.

She was also interested in all the love affairs between the students and was usually the confidante of both sides. She would loudly discuss their personal affairs with them in front of anybody else. She felt that it was fitting for young people to be interested in each other, and proper for them to do something about their interest.

If you were at all persnicketty and raised an eyebrow either at her talk or the general rough-and-ready atmosphere, she would serve you such bad food that you would never come there again. If she liked you—and she liked most—she would remember your favorite dish and have it for you when you came back to town or for any special occasion. For Bill Boogar she would make cod tongues and cheeks in a heavy tomato gravy. For Hawthorne himself it was roast pork and apple pie.

She thought artists were wonderful and Charles Hawthorne was god. He had one of the Days studios, over the lumber-yard. At first, it was the No. 1, and then the Days built the large No. 10 studio for him—the one at present occupied by Bruce McKain. He would sometimes stop at Nellie's for lunch. At such times, she would pay no attention to anyone until Hawthorne had finished. As soon as he left, she'd begin to feed the others and discuss their love affairs once more in her very loud voice.

She was the center of artist's life in Provincetown. Many times, they threw huge parties for her and she'd lead the Beachcomber's Ball. (Rann remembers the big party for her the artists threw in 1920 on Mary Heaton's old wharf in front of what is now Dos Passos. George Sensini, the first skipper of the Beachcombers, was the master of ceremonies and gave a toast to Nellie, she makes wonderful jelly. . . and talked for about 30 minutes, finding all sorts of rhymes, but refusing to say belly which everyone was expecting.)

She closed her restaurant a year or two after Hawthorne died in 1930. She died in 1939.

She was good at hooked rugs. She had her eye on various garments. Every time my wife passed wearing a certain dress, she would holler out, "Don't you dare give that away. I need it for my hooked rug." Her husband, Tony Barnes, still has one of her rugs. The designs depicts a light-house.

Tony is in his eighties now and still lives at 33 Pearl Street. He is retired, though he still does occasional trucking. He remembers how good a doctor she was. Fishermen would get hooks in their hands; their flesh would swell up and turn black. The doctors would say, "You have to go to the hospital"—or—"I'll have to amputate that finger". They'd say, "I'll go to Nellie." She had a salve of her own. "It could draw nails," says Tony. And in a couple of days everything would be all right. There was a Cabral girl from Truro whose leg had been kicked by a horse, and the leg wouldn't get better. So Nellie ripped the cast off, put her salve on, and in a couple of days out came a splinter from her ankle-bone. A few days later, she was walking. The doctors always wanted to know what she put in the salve, but she wouldn't tell them. (Tony still has a bit of that salve in his house.)

He is very proud of Nellie; how she was always jolly; how she used to feed the poor; how she'd say, "You got no home; all right, I'll give you a bed". He is especially proud of how all the artists were crazy about her. "I remember," he says, "Two hundred of them in that field—came from all over the world—and all crazy about Nellie. Artists were real artists then. Not like them that you got nowadays."

He remembers Nellie the way she looked when she was younger. As a result of this, he says the Hawthorne picture really does not look like her.

All others say it does, including the present Mrs Barnes. She is proud of Nellie too. She says, "People say, if Nellie didn't give so much away, you would be a millionaire now. But we do have enough—the house without any mortgage—and she did so much good to anybody who was needy . . She has a bed in heaven."

ARTIST TO THE RESCUE

A story is told of an impressionist artist who sat in a choice spot in old Provinctown, sketching nature's beauties, when he suddenly saw a burglar escaping from a nearby building. Slapping a new canvas hurriedly on to his easel, he quickly made his impressionistic sketch of the burglar and handed it to the police.

Then the police got busy. Guided by the artist's sketch, the law promptly rounded up two hundred men, a horse, a hearse, a pair of old boots and a can opener.

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1927

AN ART CLASS AT WORK, PROVINCETOWN, CAPE COD, MASS.

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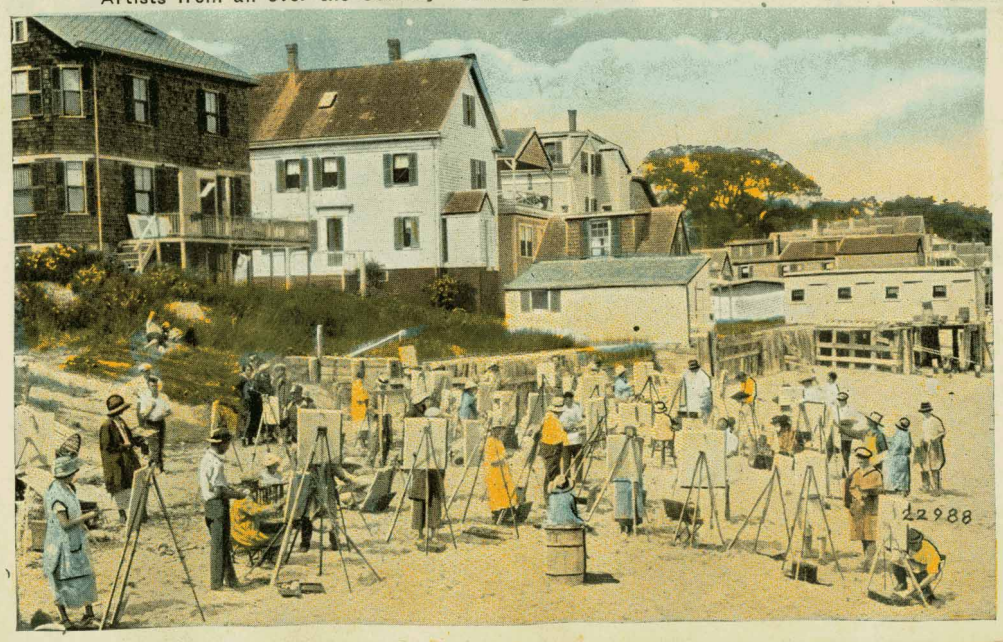
Artists from all over the Country Painting on the Beach, Provincetown, Mass. 1928



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