



KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

Provincetown celebrates its 100th anniversary as an established art colony this year.

The presence of Charles Hawthorne and the establishment of the Cape Cod School of Art punctuate local, national and international history as a beginning, a turning point and a still flourishing study of art. Charles Hawthorne introduced America to the impressionist concept of painting "en plein aire," painting outdoors in the elements, unsheltered by a cloistered and safe studio.

The beaches, the wharves, the dunes and the gardens of Provincetown were soon populated by white frocked and trousered students, quietly and eagerly observing the master "Mr. Hawthorne." Large brimmed, floppy hats shaded the sun to give a clear view of the true colors of life before students pulled them inside and branded them with their stamp of control. The photographs depicting these scenes are ever-romantic and fetching. Charles Hawthorne was always "Mr. Hawthorne" except the day when Mary Brown, best baker of chocolate cake in town passed the class on the beach and saluted "Mr Hawthorne" with "Hello Charles," in answer to his "Good Morning, Mary." The next time Charles Hawthorne saw Mary Brown he mildly asserted, "Mary, you called me Charles and in front of my students." "Well", Mary Brown responded, "You called me Mary."

Henry Hensche continued to head the Cape Cod School of Art as one of Hawthorne's "soldiers" as he would tell us. He ran the school for 55 years. His wife Ada Raynor was a gifted artist also—a master of floral paintings. Today the school is active and thriving with Lois Griffel who has led it since 1985. You can see students on the shore observing light and subject and submitting it to canvas as they did 100 years ago, a bit less encumbered by bustles, petticoats and suit jackets, but just as eager to capture that truth.

The symbol for the centennial is the Hawthorne painting of "His First Voyage"—a beautiful pyramid piece of composition and the realistic color of the enlivening palette. A young man about 14 years old is having a button sewn on his jacket by his mother as two younger sisters look on. Breakfast plates are pushed aside for the task. There is still a bit of egg on the plate. The young man is holding his rain slicker, his sou'wester on the table, the uniform



His First Voyage

Charles Hawthorne

of the fisherman. He is staring off while his mother sews. Excitement trimmed with a bit of fear and unplaced thoughts of an upcoming first experience can be read on his face. A captured piece of Provincetown history.

Hawthorne painted many fishermen, blacksmiths, plumbers men, women, children—all gone now but living on canvas and in their descendants. All but one, that is. Frannie Fields, belovedly known to all as Aunt Frannie will be 92 this September 13th. Aunt Frannie resides at the Cape End Manor now and loves to receive visitors. She remembers everybody, their likes, their dislikes and knows exactly when they need coddling, pampering others, through her hard work as an excellent cook and through her gift of thoughtfulness.

Frannie Fields was born Frances Smith on September 13th, 1907 to Clara Bergeron and Chester Smith who had relocated from Harvard Square in Cambridge to Provincetown. Aunt Frannie was the youngest of six children—Eva, Albert, Chester, Jacob, and Nellie. Nellie is the older girl in the painting, face hidden behind mother Clara's head. Jacob is the young man and Aunt Frannie is the young girl in profile. They grew up as all families did, working hard fishing and staying close. In those days people were raised by fisher folk and married fisher folk; it was a homey routine of living by a fertile shore. Abundance of fish made an abundance of work and life was a string of diurnal chores and rewards. People were born, married, had children and died. Life was not a string of staccato surprises. Everyone knew everyone else; all of town was your neighbor and the media existed far

away. Within this framework Frannie matured and married Capt. John "Nonnie" Fields, a trapboat fisherman who made a steady livelihood from the sea. He was called Nonnie because his younger brother could not say "Johnny". The couple raised three children, Albert, John D. and Frances. Aunt Frannie has outlived them all.

An ambitious young woman and a gifted cook, she was a working Mom in-season, always surrounded with family help as was the natural law in those days. Frannie and her sister Eva opened Ma's Pantry, a restaurant of complete home-cooked meals. Fresh fish was supplied daily by Nonnie's trapboat. Capt.

Nonnie ran the trapboat "Charlotte" and had his trap shed where Pepe's Wharf is now. Ma's Pantry stood where "Wild Rice" now stands. When the Bonnie Doone Restaurant opened, (where Mussel Beach is now) the sisters closed the pantry and Aunt Frannie went to work for the Cabrals, helping them open the restaurant. Manny Cabral brought an instantly successful dish up from Florida with him—stuffed shrimp. By the late 50's Frannie went back into business for herself. She opened the Coffee Locker next door to the Portuguese Bakery. Capt'n Nonnie once again provided the snapping fresh fish.

Mackerel dinner—99¢; Steak—\$1.25. Malcolm Newman, Primo and all the other starving artists ate there. Frannie was coddling and pampering again, a natural outcome of her talent as a cook.

During all this wielding of delicious, affordable meals, the Veteran's Memorial School opened and Aunt Frannie was the first and only choice as head of the kitchen and cafeteria. Anybody who was a student, teacher, custodian or visitor from the mid 50's to the early 70's had the good luck to be in Frannie's caring web. I taught kindergarten at the end of Fannie's school career and Wednesdays were my favorite. Chicken soup and chicken salad sandwiches. Others opted for the baked beans, Aunt Frannie knew each and every child by name, their likes, their dislikes, their food sensitivities and so many caring details of their lives. She knew who couldn't afford the 25¢ for lunch and so discreetly slipped them through. "Hear Dahlin" with an extra scoop of mashed potatoes. She knew each child's name—yes—and "Dahlin" was always attached. Constant unconditional love. Everybody thrived on it along with the nourishing food.

Aunt Frannie was quite saddened by the death of her husband in 1972. Shortly after that loss, she stopped working at the school. But idleness was never for Aunt Frannie, so off to Gene Poyant's Bakery she went for the season. Baking, serving, counter, Aunt Frannie did all of it. She and Angie Patrick were a great pair of workers. Gene Poyant could take frequent breaks with all that capability around him.

With all these distinct cooking careers, Aunt Frannie also supplied the pies for countless "Chicken Pie Supper" fundraisers. The churches, the schools, the civic organizations, all would call on Aunt Frannie to supply the bait and magnet to raise money for their worthy cause—the chicken pie beyond compare.

When I first reminded Aunt Frannie of the Hawthorne painting, her remark was "That homely picture?" I stayed silent. "My hair was so straight, Nellie had beautiful hair". Vanity at 92... there's hope for all of us. Vanity is a generator of life interest and self concern. We both laughed. "It's a beautiful picture!" Aunt Frannie replied, "We all went together to Mr. Hawthorne's picture studio in the East End near Burch's Market. He was a lovely person and made it pleasant for everybody."

"Were you excited or proud or nervous sitting for Charles Hawthorne?"

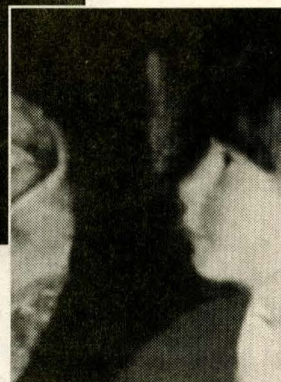
"Well, it was work and we took it in stride. The picture was down stairs in Town Hall in the Caucus Room the first time I saw it

completed. It was there for years and years. People would say to me, 'I saw your picture in Town Hall today'."

The next day when I visited Aunt Frannie, I had a gift for her—the Chamber of Commerce presented me with a framed copy of "His First Voyage" for her. It was at the Chamber's Annual Election and Dinner. Many in the room remembered well the care and meals that tucked them through grade school. Now that they know Frannie likes company, she'll have plenty of it. Frannie had relatives present too and two of the youngest, Evelyn Shaw and Amanda Meads, piped up as they served salad and bread, "That's my great grandmother!" Aunt Frannie's legacy goes on.

When she first looked at "His First Voyage" again after so many years she was visibly moved and pleased. "It is a lovely painting. Oh so many years ago and still so real. It's lovely, just lovely. Please thank everybody for me."

I will Aunt Frannie and thank you.



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