

Provincetown native paints the landscapes she loves

Bonnie Steele McGhee's new work shows in Truro

By Ann Wood

BANNER STAFF

When Provincetown native Bonnie Steele McGhee moved back to the area in 1989, she traded her make-up brushes for paint brushes. She says that painting canvases isn't all that different from painting faces, which she did for more than three decades as a buyer of cosmetics.

"I have a good eye for color," McGhee says, adding that that's what made her a cosmetic whiz. But doing all those faces for all those years hasn't led her to paint portraits as one might suppose — she prefers painting landscapes from photographs she has taken. The Outer Cape environment — its dunes, sunsets and beaches — is the subject she considers "dearest to my heart."

McGhee will show around 22 of these landscapes, most of which were made with water-soluble oil paint, in an exhibition that opens with a reception from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday at the Truro Council on Age Gallery, Route 6, North Truro. This show runs through the month of March.

McGhee, a fourth generation Provincetown native (and sister of Assistant Harbormaster Duane Steele), now lives and paints in North Truro. But as a child she lived in Provincetown, where she saw many more artists painting on the streets than she does now. Those artists interested her, but not as much as the materials they used.

"My favorite things were always paints and coloring books at Christmas time," she says.

McGhee graduated from Provincetown High School and started painting when she was around 17 years old. Although she was accepted into Mass. College of Art she ultimately attended Cape Cod Community College. The self-taught artist says she won't take art lessons now because she's afraid it will influence her distinct style.

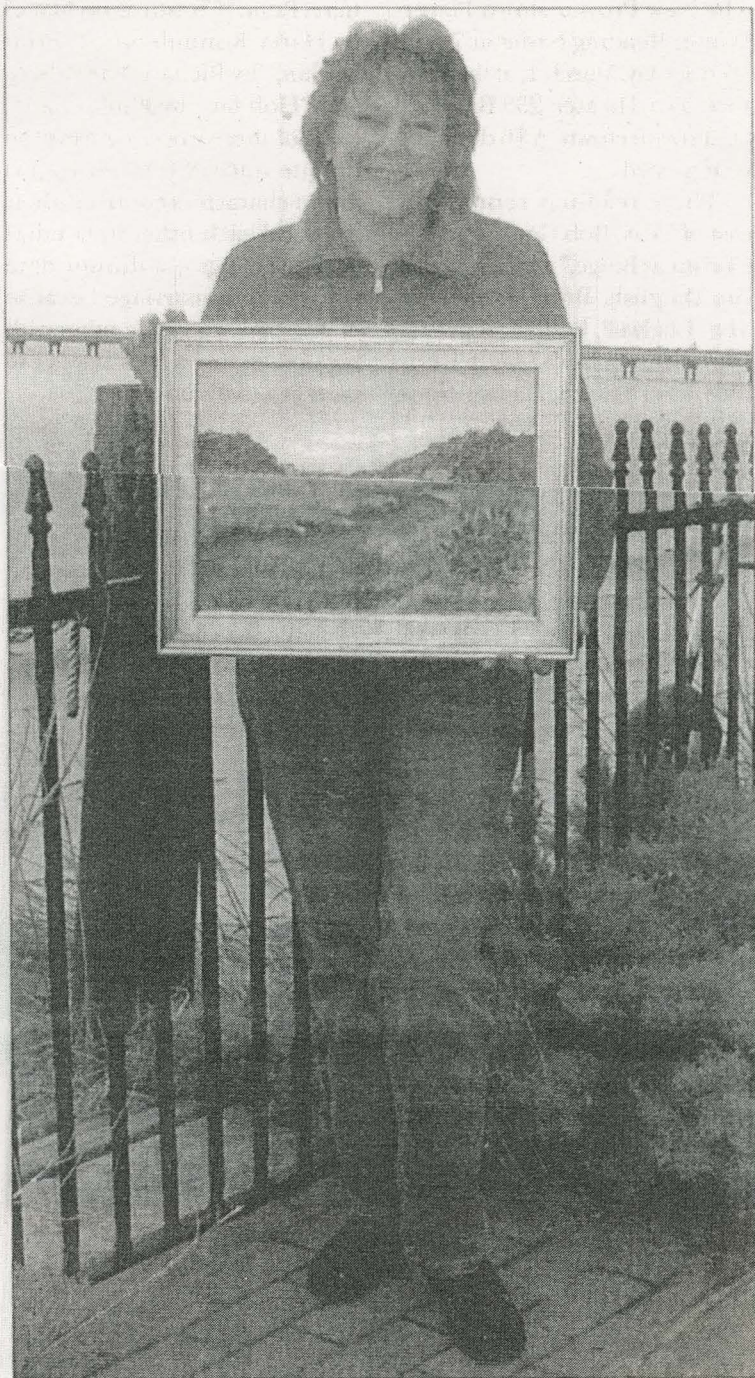


PHOTO ANN WOOD

Bonnie Steele McGhee with one of her paintings of the Pamet River. She's showing it off in Provincetown, even though the painting captures a spot in Truro.

"Up until now it's been more of a pastime to me," she says. "I think I've gotten better at it and I feel more encouraged by it. People tell me it's good and I had more time this year. I think it's a combination of reasons [that has made me more serious about painting]."

McGhee sold three paintings last year and has shown her work at the Provincetown Public Library, Seamen's Savings Bank and various restaurants throughout Cape Cod. She was working

last summer as a Provincetown town parking attendant when she decided to put her name in for a possible exhibition in the Truro Council on Aging Gallery. At that time she had completed only seven paintings. McGhee had forgotten about the possibility of having a show until she got the call.

"So I've been working hard. I have about 22 paintings now. But it's been fun. It's good therapy," she says.

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