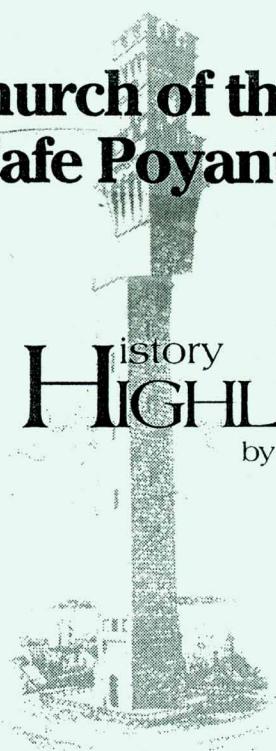


Church of the Pilgrims, Cafe Poyant and now

History HIGHLIGHTS

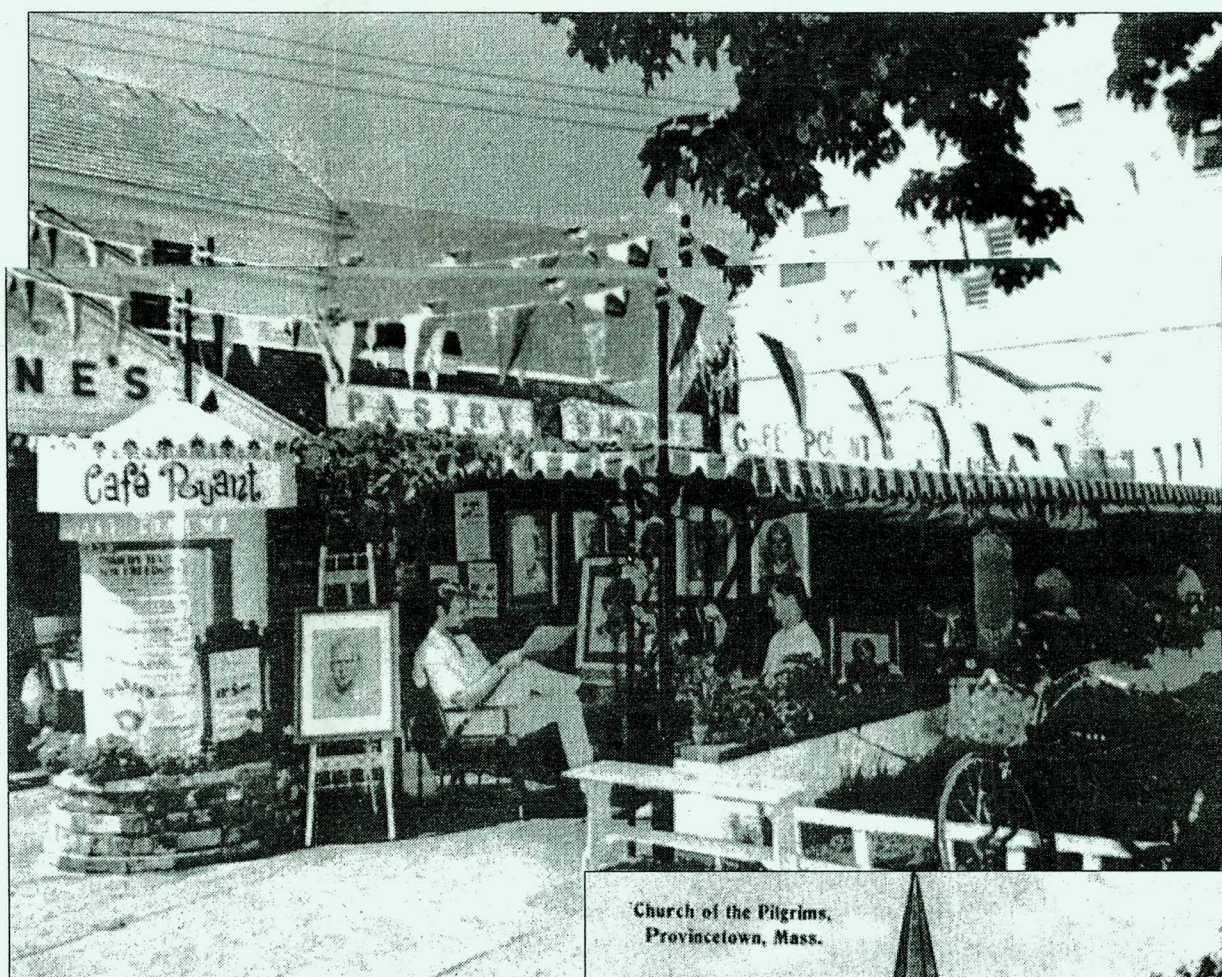
by Laurel Guadazno



Provincetown buildings have survived because they have adapted to the changing needs of the community. The building that began life as the Church of the Pilgrims, shown here in the first photo, illustrates this adaptability. We can date the photo at sometime after 1910 because you can glimpse the Pilgrim Monument, completed in 1910, behind the church.

A Congregational church located next to Town Hall, the Church of the Pilgrims was completed in 1843. Very little information exists about the members who built this church except for the names of the various ministers who served the congregation. The first sermon was preached here on September 13, 1843 by the Reverend Mr. White. The Congregationalist church began in England and as a result of the immigration of the Pilgrims and later the Puritans it became the predominant religion in New England and Provincetown for many years. The Congregationalists were a strict group. They required precise adherence to church tenets, and discipline was exercised by the congregation itself. The Methodists were more lenient, and when they began to come to town, many members of the Congregational Church asked to leave the congregation. A bitter rivalry ensued and, at one point, Provincetown even voted not to allow a Methodist meeting house to be built in town. The lure must have proved irresistible, however, because the congregation seems to have dwindled and disappeared.

Later in the century, the church was converted to commercial uses as shown in the second photograph. Gene Poyant opened a popular bakery in front of the church. The success of Gene's Pastry shop led Gene Poyant and his wife Lillian to open the popular Cafe Poyant in 1960. It was the

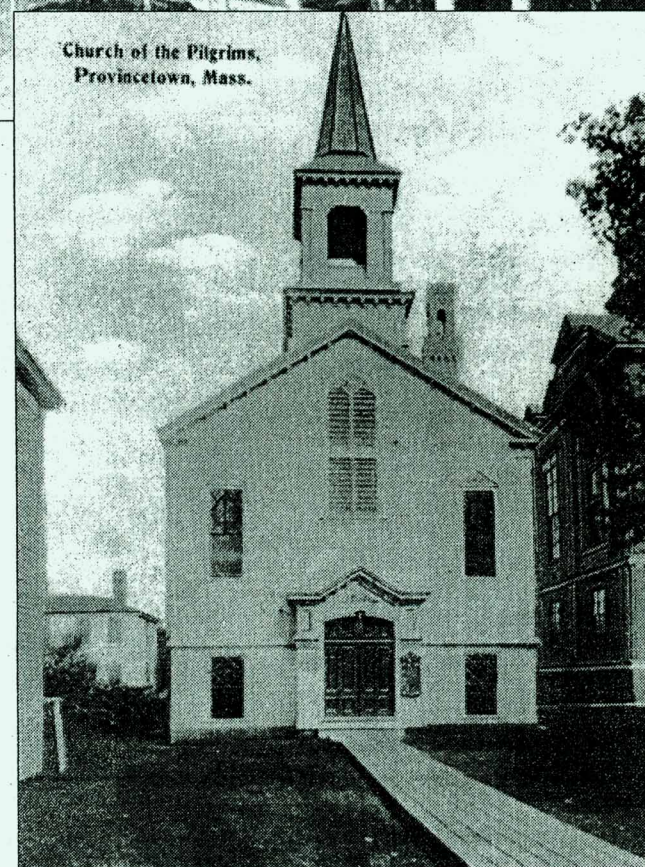


Gene's Bakery, Cafe Poyant and Art Cinema, circa 1965.

town's first outdoor cafe and was known for providing a Parisian ambiance on Commercial Street. Mr. Poyant and his wife also owned the Art Cinema movie theater adjoining the cafe located in the church building. The portrait artist in front of the cafe is Harvey Dodd.

Today, a storefront addition occupies the sight of the former Cafe Poyant and obscures much of the original detailing of the church facade. The original long, narrow windows of the church remain on the side of the building facing Town Hall, and the interior of the building is much the same as it was when it was a movie theater. The communion service from the Church of the Pilgrims and a photograph of the interior of the church are on display at the Pilgrim Monument & Provincetown Museum.

[Laurel Guadazno is Visitor Services Manager for the Pilgrim Monument & Provincetown Museum. She also writes "History Highlights," heard regularly on WOMR, 92.1 FM.]



Church of the Pilgrims, circa 1920.

HOOKING BACK

by Clive Driver

A much recycled building

Because Provincetown, unlike most other East Coast seaports, never had a major 19th century fire, most of its buildings still survive, although very few in their original use and form. Some, indeed, have been recycled so many times that they are now virtually unrecognizable.

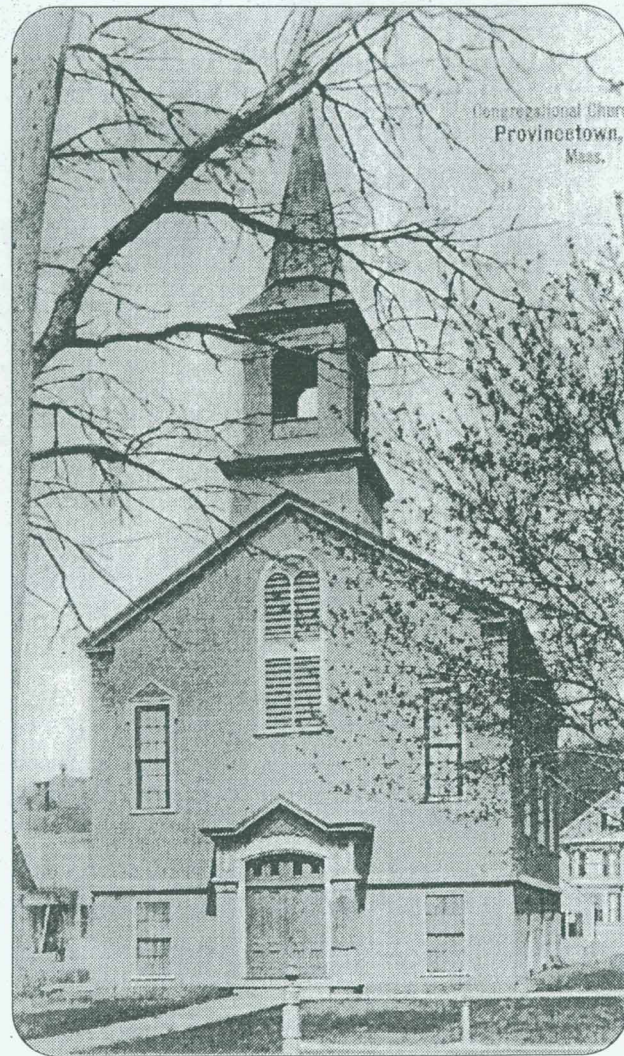
The Congregational Meeting House, the Church of the Pilgrims, is such an example. It was built in 1843 on a lot just west of where the present Town Hall would be built, and was the fourth Congregational church in town. The first and second stood near the oldest cemetery, between Court and Winthrop streets, in an area still known as Meeting House Plain. The third, the White Oak Meeting House, stood on Prince Street, on the site

now occupied by St. Peter's Rectory. In the early days, the town and the parish functioned together as one entity. The meeting house, therefore, was the religious, political, and social center of the town.

All of that changed with the advent of Methodism. Gradually, many Congregationalists defected to the Methodists, and, in fact, in 1830, the White Oak Meeting House was closed for lack of support. This proved to be only a temporary setback, however, as another congregation was organized in 1841, and two years later the Church of the Pilgrims opened its doors, symbolically having used in its construction some of the white oak timbers from its predecessor. This incarnation lasted well over a hundred years, the highlight being

the prominent part played by the church in the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims in 1920. Once again, though, the congregation dwindled away, and in 1947 the building was sold to private parties. It had been hoped that the Provincetown Civic Association would be able to buy it for use as a youth and adult community center, but the selling price of \$17,000 was out of reach.

The building began a new lease on life in being put to a wide variety of uses. In 1951, it was leased to Burt Lane who made renovations for its use as an experimental summer theater. Two years later, the steeple was removed, which further helped the building to hide its former identity. Shortly thereafter, buildings were constructed in the front yard to house Gene Poyant's bakery, and Jim's Lunch, while the main building now housed the Art Cinema, and Martha Jackson's Art Gallery 256. Monte Rome's Metro Cinema then took over the main building, lasted for a few years, and was replaced by the present tenant, the Euro Island Grill, Cafe and Night Club.



The Church of the Pilgrims, 258 Commercial St.