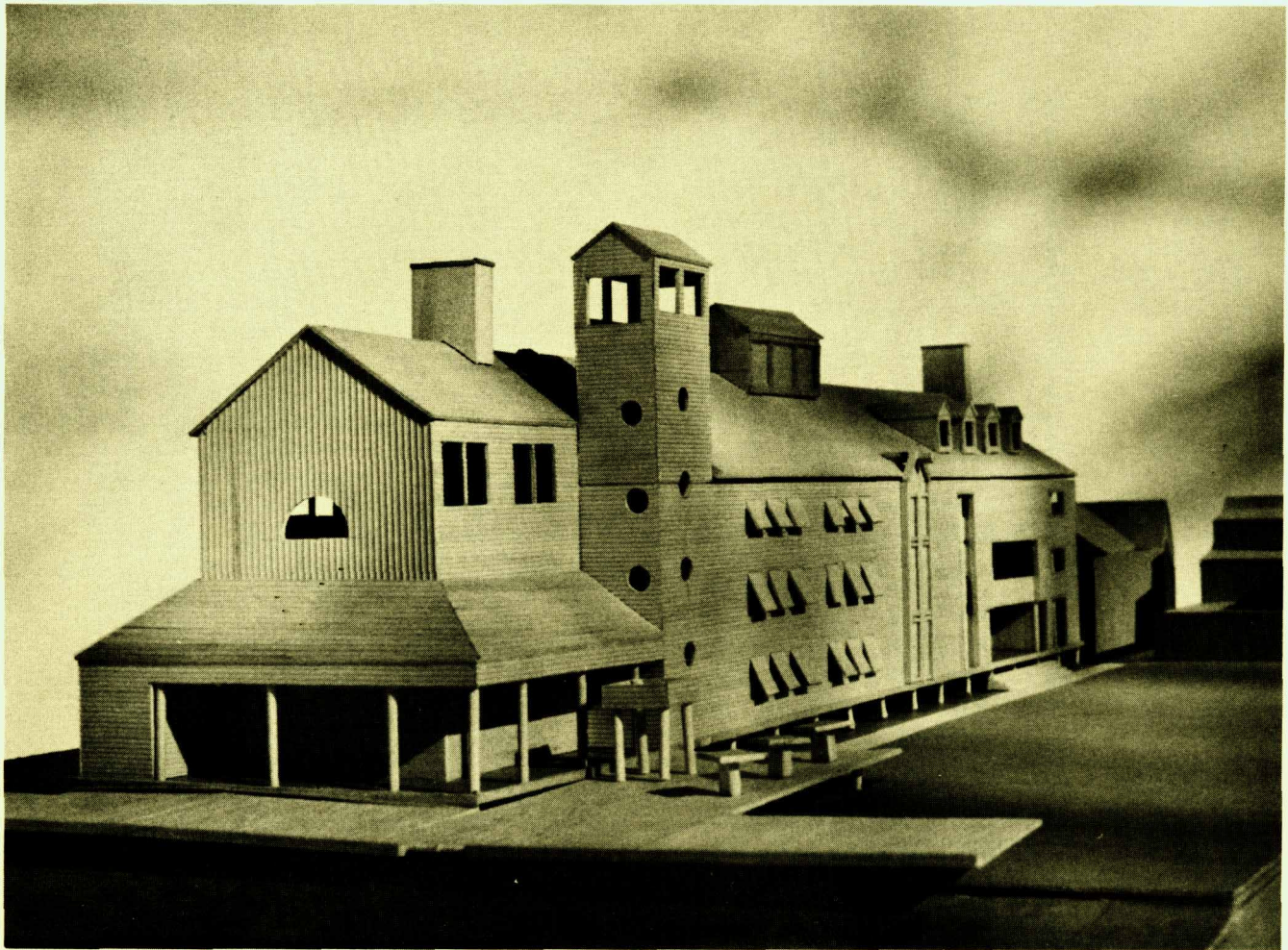


Charles Cobb



DESIGN CHARETTE: A DOCUMENTARY

Writer, Anne D. LeClaire

Photographer, Norma Holt

Project Director, Adele Heller

PROVINCETOWN PLAYHOUSE

A Publication of the Provincetown Playhouse on The Wharf, Inc.
November, 1978

Documentation of the PROVINCETOWN PLAYHOUSE
DESIGN CHARETTE was made possible through a
grant from the Massachusetts Foundation for
Humanities & Public Policy, Amherst, MA, a
program of the National Endowment for the
Humanities.

THE PROVINCETOWN PLAYHOUSE DESIGN CHARETTE: A DOCUMENTATION

Who can put a price on dreams?

For Adele Heller, the scene inside the Flagship Restaurant represents a dream come true.

Outside, it is foggy--a thick, heavy fog that does not creep into town on cat's feet, but rolls in. It blankets the massive fishing boats as they strain at their moorings in the harbor; it settles over the narrow streets lined with souvenir shops and summer cottages, penny candy stores and hot dog stands; and, eventually, it envelops the entire town, erasing her landmarks.

The lights have been turned on inside the restaurant to relieve this mist-filled darkness. The room, like the town itself, is an eclectic mixture of art and the sea--a lively collage of contrasts. For one week it is the workshop for fourteen architects representing seven New England firms. They are participating in a unique competition--an intense, eight-day, on-site workshop out of which will come the new design for the Provincetown Playhouse.

Overhead, weathered oars, buoys, harpoons--the artifacts of ships and the sea--hang from heavy beams that span the ceiling. Restaurant tables haven been shoved aside and stacked along the walls to provide space for makeshift drafting tables that are littered with rules, pencils, and squares, calculators, paper cutters, and battery-operated pencil sharpeners--the paraphernalia of the architect's trade.

Sheets of crumpled paper and tiny cardboard cut-outs lie on the floor, evidence of discarded designs and half-finished drawings. Picture postcards and tourist maps have been tacked to the walls; one space is dominated by a huge black and white poster of Eugene O'Neill.

The architects hunch over their designs, stopping occasionally for another cup of coffee or to talk with one of the Provincetown residents who have come to watch. The people--fishermen, teachers, politicians, students, artists, historians, bankers, and shopkeepers--come every day. Often numbering one hundred, they come to watch the work in progress, to ask questions, to learn and to share their knowledge of the town.

At one table, a man is talking about the tides, demonstrating how the contour of the town's shoreline has changed dramatically over the decades. He gestures with hands heavily calloused and scarred from years of pulling nets up out of the sea. He explains how the land has eroded on one shore and been built up on the other. The young architect listens, nods and jots down a note. The fisherman walks on to the next table.

Several feet away, a flamboyant and articulate couple are chatting with another architect. They give him an off-the-cuff demographic profile of the town--its social, economic, artistic, and political makeup. The man, a sculptor, points to a detail in the architect's scheme. He kneels down and peers

inside, then asks a questions about the interior.

Another team of architects working in a side alcove turns the tables on the visitors. Instead of answering questions, they ask them, quizzing the residents about the town during the offseason and how the year-round population earns a living.

Everywhere the level of enthusiasm is high.

The competition, billed as a "Design Charette", has bred keen interest in the local Cape community and nationally in both the theatrical and architectural worlds. Before it is over, it will have drawn the internationally famous to this small fishing village at the tip of Cape Cod; be proclaimed as a "noble venture"; and hailed as an exciting and innovative step in bringing architecture out of the high-rise office and to the public.

It has also sparked what Playhouse producer Adele Heller foresees as a rebirth of the town's rich artistic heritage.

"The new Provincetown Playhouse and O'Neill Archival Center could spearhead a drive which would bring the town back to the national prominence it enjoyed during the O'Neill years", she tells a visitor.

This rebirth was born in disaster, a crushing blow from which Heller thought the Playhouse would never recover.

A short walk east from the Flagship Restaurant and down Commercial St., the fog blankets the vacant ocean-front lot at the end of a narrow alley.

Two years ago, two ramshackle, wooden-shingled buildings stood here. They were the home for the Provincetown Players and a spiritual home for the 20th century drama. Although not the original Provincetown Playhouse where the works of Eugene O'Neill were first produced, it was heir to the O'Neill legend and home for his works. His plays, as well as those of both the leading dramatists of the century and unknown, aspiring authors, were staged here each year.

Then on March 25, 1977, the theatre was destroyed by fire, set by teen-aged arsonists. Mrs. Heller remembers that she and her Husband, Lester, were in Washington, D. C. that night working on the schedule for the upcoming season when they got the call telling them about the fire.

"We were wiped out", she says. "Everything was gone--the costumes, sets, lights, historical collection, everything. We didn't even have a picture of the place left."

Calls registering dismay and disbelief came in from across the country. When Tennessee Williams learned of the fire, he said, "Oh, no. I can't believe it. Hundreds of theatre people have lost their home roots. What is the extent of the damage? No. The Provincetown Playhouse was a house of dreams to young talent and who can put a price on dreams?"

Who can put a price on dreams?

Before the charred remains of the Playhouse had even been pushed away by the bulldozer blade, a new dream--unformed, unspoken--had begun to take root. It began because of the calls pouring in from people beseeching the Hellers

not to let the Playhouse, and the dreams built around it, die.

That summer, Adele and Lester Heller tried to carry on without a theatre in which to stage the shows. Responding to the crisis, the town's selectmen voted to let the producers use the Town Hall auditorium during July and August. By September, it was clear that if the Playhouse was not going to die, there would have to be a new building. It was also clear that they didn't have enough funds to finance even the design stage.

In 1976, William Marlin, associate editor of "Architectural Record", architectural and urban design critic for the "Christian Science Monitor", and advisor to the National Endowment of the Arts, had attended a performance of Williams' "Night of the Iguana".

Impressed by the show, Marlin joined the Hellers after the final curtain. The conversation soon progressed from talk about that evening's performance to the history of the Playhouse. Before he left, Marlin casually said, "If I can ever help you out, give me a call".

"I almost forgot about it", said Heller. "After all, how often do you need an architect?"

In the summer of 1977, Adele Heller called Marlin.

His response to the problem was immediate and enthusiastic. The first step was to obtain financing. Marlin approached the National Endowment and was told, "Come up with an idea for a grant."

After dismissing the ideas of state-wide and national competitions for the design of the Playhouse, Marlin hit on the idea of a New England competition with the winning architects coming to Provincetown for several days. The jury would also come to the Cape to deliberate and make their decision.

The National Endowment gave the non-profit Provincetown Playhouse on The Wharf Inc., a \$20,000 grant to support the competition and to enable the winning firm to proceed through the stage of design development and cost estimate preparatory to final construction documents. In addition, the Playhouse was awarded a \$2,000 grant from the Massachusetts Foundation for Humanities and Public Policy to underwrite the documentation and public discussion aspects of the Design Charette.

As first conceived, the plan was to have the architects spend several days in Provincetown and then return to their home offices for the actual drawing stage.

Gradually the idea evolved to the point where the architects, two from each of the winning firms, would stay in town for the entire period of the competition. In effect, the whole design process would occur in Provincetown. It was then just a matter of time before Adele Heller (a self-described "people person") thought of including the public on the project. What had begun as a routine competition now would include the project's users, as well as clients in the design process.

Word of the Charette spread and the applications poured in. In June, the board of directors at the Playhouse chose the seven winning firms from a field of several hundred. Picked for their track record and their sensitivity to the problem of erecting a new building in a historic context, the firms, with few exceptions, were young and new. Chosen were: Turner Brooks of Starksboro, Vermont; Kennedy-Montgomery Associates, Cambridge, Mass.; Paul H. Krueger Associates, Watertown, Mass.; Morrish and Fleissig, Cambridge, Mass.; Perry, Dean, Stahl and Rogers, Boston, Mass.; James Volney Righter, New Haven, Conn.; and William Warner, Exeter, R.I.

Throughout the summer, Heller and Marlin were neck-high in the ground-work for the competition. From beginning, the two organizers were inspired by the desire to bring the architectural world and its workings closer to the public; to make Provincetown and her people a vibrant and vital part of the design process. This desire was to become the forceful spirit behind the preparations.

In Provincetown, Heller orchestrated the on-site arrangements. She obtained lodging for the participants, as well as the use of the Town Hall for the design workshops. And she wrote and mailed out stacks of publicity releases detailing each aspect of the Charette.

In New York, Marlin pulled together a prestigious jury which, in a departure from the norm and in keeping with the overall theme of bringing the process to the public, included three lay persons, all residents of Provincetown.

The panel, chaired by I.M. Pei, included Raquel Ramati of New York; Herbert McLaughlin of San Francisco; Arthur Cotton Moore of Washington, D. C.; Walter Wagner, editor of "Architectural Record"; Laurence Booth of Chicago; Josephine and Sal Del Deo and Frederic Barker of Provincetown.

The architects arrived in Provincetown on Wednesday, November 8th. That night, after a dinner at the Red Inn, they received their first briefing and a copy of Marlin's programmatic guidelines. Because it had been decided earlier that no advance material would be sent to the competitors, this was their first look at the problem.

Marlin's lengthy--twelve pages--program outlined the exercise; to build a playhouse on property measuring 47 feet by 266 feet with a height limit of 35 feet.

But the program was more than a delineation of the problem; it incorporated a feeling for the town and its artistic heritage. It called for the architects to produce a building that, while satisfying functional and symbolic constraints, would make the most of its vital and symbolic relationships to the harbor, its activities and its moods.

It dealt, not only with the basic facts and figures and the basic spatial and functional requirements, but also asked that the architects consider the "general qualities of scale, texture, humaness and symbolic value which the Playhouse would like to see interpreted in the new facility".

As requested by the theatre's board of directors, the facility

was to include the following:

1. A main theatre with maximum seating for 500 and ease of movement for the handicapped.
2. A main rehearsal room which could be converted to a 100-seat experimental mini-theatre, an all-purpose space which could be used on a year-round basis.
3. A common backstage area which could be converted to:
 - a) a classroom
 - b) a scenery shop
 - c) a costume shop
 - d) dressing rooms
 - e) men's and women's lavatories

This area would open off both the theatre and rehearsal room.

4. The lobby with a box office, adjacent to the administrative office and to public lavatories. This space, ideally, would have two fireplaces.
5. Some quarters for performers and apprentices.
6. The Eugene O'Neill Archival Center which would contain in addition to the museum, a small space for storage of materials and scholarly scrutiny of papers and other memorabilia.
7. An all-purpose, all-weather pavilion and caretaker's quarters.

In addition, the program suggested that the architects take into consideration the eventual installation of roof-top collectors for solar energy.

The first response that night was one of excitement, of meeting a formidable challenge. "It was", said one of the men, "a tidy, little problem".

But there was more than the sense of challenge. There was a collective spirit of creativity, of togetherness, of being a part of something of significance.

Despite the fact that it was, after all, a competition, that they were giving of their time, talents and energies for no remuneration, there was a strong feeling of fellowship and harmony. This spirit was so apparent that the architects discussed it and agreed to attempt to maintain it throughout the week.

That night, the participants re-read the program and then re-wrote sections of it. Because of the space limitations of the site, they decided, after consultation with the Hellers, to reduce the size of the main theatre to 399 seats. They also elected to have considerations for energy saving devices and for the solar energy collectors become optional since the winning design would enter a modification phase after being selected and such considerations could be dealt with at that time.

It was also decided that housing for apprentices and guests could be an option.

Thursday was cold and clear. The glow of Wednesday night was replaced by reality--and cold feet.

The first item on the agenda was to get set up in the Flagship Restaurant. Earlier, the competition was brief-

ly threatened when because of a re-scheduled town meeting, the Town Hall was no longer available for workshops. Then Ciro Cozzi, Provincetown restaurateur and artist, offered the waterfront rooms of his Flagship Restaurant for the Charette.

Now, instead of drafting their design in separate rooms as had been planned, the architects would be working elbow to elbow. In spirit and style, the room resembled a classroom. Instead of paranoia taking root, a sense of sharing reigned.

"I had forgotten what an incredible force shared experience is", wrote one architect in his diary that night. "There is a sense of joy in working in a group."

The creative consciousness was at such a height that that night one architect grabbed a napkin off the dinner table and began to sketch a design--something he hadn't done since his college days.

Thursday was also the first day the competitors saw the site. The shared first impression was that 47 feet looked smaller than it read on the program: a tidy little problem, indeed.

Friday was spent on the nuts and bolts of the project and getting to know the town. Most of the teams revisited the site. They wandered around the town, soaking in the feeling, walking down the long wharf to watch the members of fishing fleets unload the day's catch. Notebooks in hand, cameras strapped around necks, they walked up and down the town's narrow

alleys and streets, studying the buildings, boats and shops, talking with the people.

By Saturday, most had arrived at their basic design.

"I think I have a system that works", wrote Fleissig in his diary.

Saturday was also the day of the first open house. Later Heller admitted that she hadn't known what to expect. She had no way of knowing if the people would come out to see what was going on at the Flagship, if the public was curious, or even cared, about the design process. The architects, too, wondered what the reaction would be.

In a single word, it was big. From the first day, this aspect of the Charette was a total success. The people were curious. They came-- and they stayed. Some came from as far away as Boston, others from Falmouth, a town seventy miles west. There was seldom fewer than one hundred people there. They were all ages, all backgrounds. Children came with their parents. Other architects arrived. Fishermen, still dressed in work clothes, wandered in. Members of the town's political world and artistic colony stopped by to chat. The desire of the coordinators to bring architecture to the public had become a reality...and a success.

From Sunday until Friday, when the competition ended with the arrival of the jurists, the world outside of the Flagship, except for walks to the store or the site, almost ceased to exist for the architects. Reality was the room and the work.

As the days passed, sheets of discarded paper piled up on the floor. The men didn't even leave the room for lunch, but gathered at one end before the huge fireplace where they ate soup and sandwiches which had been brought in.

These lunch breaks took on the aspect of mini-bull sessions. While munching on the sandwiches, they would talk about architecture, about what they had discovered about the town, and about various problems of the overall program.

The men immersed themselves in the town and the project. Surely, they could not have had a better place for soaking up atmosphere than their workroom. The room was located in a building that thrust out over the water. It was bordered on three sides by the ocean.

"This is a dynamite place to work", said Boston architect Bob Kennedy. "We couldn't be any more aware of the waterfront than we are here. We'd have to be in a boat anchored out, to have it any better."

By the middle of the week, they were telling time, not by their watches, but by the tides.

They enthused about the advantages of being on-site to anyone who would listen.

As Bill Warner said, "I go out to soak up history and get the feeling of the place at least once a day. Being on the site is the only way to get the feeling of a place."

"You are constantly being reminded of the subtleties", remarked

Tad Stahl. "When you can feel the effect of the tides on the pilings beneath the boards you are standing on, you don't underestimate its power. It is unique because you have the opportunity to re-examine the site and above all, to talk to the people who will be using the facility. Architecture has never been closer to the people than during this competition. It is a great opportunity for both sides."

"There is surprisingly little paranoia", commented Jim Righter. "The challenge of the site is a great equalizer. Here, despite our various backgrounds, we are on equal footing and the project is much like an assignment for class."

"There is also a tendency", he continued, "to be more daring, to push yourself further than you might normally and, I think in large part, this can be attributed to the unique spirit of the competition."

At times the room was quiet, the only sound was that of classical music coming from a portable radio. At other times, humor dominated the scene, particularly when the architects worked until two and four in the morning. And as the week wore on, the hours became later and the pressure built.

"It has been like a combination of a thesis and M*A*S*H", commented Charles Rogers.

Each day, bits and pieces of the town's color and history was brought back to the room. The architects picked up tourist maps

at the drugstore and postcards at a souvenir shop. At the market next door, two teams found and brought back a paper place mat depicting the town in the later 1800's. Later, they admitted the sketch had served as definite inspiration.

One team took color slides to be used in their presentation before the jury; another took a series of photographs of the harbor and shoreline as it looked from the water.

"The town acts as constant reinforcement for our scheme", said one draftsman after he returned from a walk. "You forget you lose touch with a place, its potential and its problems, when you are removed from it and working in an office with other distractions and other projects", remarked another.

"It is nice to get lost in the design process here and be able to carry it through", said Kennedy.

The advantages of being at the site and away from the office outweighed the disadvantages, the greatest of which was sleep.

Thursday, the last day of the open houses, the designs were nearly complete and displayed great diversity of interpretation. Each reflected the town and the people and, as Marlin had written in the program, the relationship to the harbor.

The Stahl-Rogers team saw the Playhouse as a monumental building. They were clearly influenced by the towering Provincetown Monument. A massive granite

building, their design went into the ground for one level as well as extending out into the ocean where a walkway ended in an O'Neill monument--the stage setting for "Bound East for Cardiff".

Turner Brooks and his associate, Ross Anderson, came up with a scheme that one critic later termed "lovely, lighthearted and festive". It resembled, with its curved and balanced front end facing the ocean, a river boat.

Krueger, instead of being influenced by the present buildings in town and the prints of the town a century ago, looked to the future. He reflected the festive feeling of joy that he felt going to the theatre should mean in his design of a white Corbusian building.

Righter, charmed by the town's many monuments, stately homes and museums, choose a long Victorian building with a formal entrance on the alley as his design.

In the eyes of Morrish, Fleissig and Robinson, the town was a collection of ships and shacks. Consequently, they were the authors of a traditional, multi-level building which resembled a collection of fishing shacks. Inside, the theatre complex was open and relied heavily on O'Neill symbolism.

William Warner's design, obviously influenced by the print he had found in a small market next door that depicted the waterfront as it was a century ago, resembled a warehouse. Perhaps more than any other scheme, it dealt with the nuts and bolts of the operation

of a theatre and offered enormous versatility for stage settings as well as containing appeal for the theatre-going public. In addition to a book store, Warner chose to include the optional items: housing for apprentices and guest stars.

Kennedy and Montgomery also looked to the print of Provincetown in 1863 for inspiration and came up with a 1980's conception of a warehouse, a poetic statement that seemed to flow to the sea.

Friday afternoon, as the jurists were flying and driving into town from all across the country, the architects, exhausted and exhilarated, were putting the finishing lines on their designs.

Also driving to the town was Helen Hayes. Miss Hayes was coming to speak at the ceremony which would be held on Sunday. She was coming, she said, because as a young girl-- "and needing all the inspiration I could get"--her mother took her to a performance of the Provincetown Players in New York in 1918. Just as Tennessee Williams had, Miss Hayes saw the Playhouse as a vital place, a home of dreams.

From the moment of their arrival, the members of the jury, too, became excited about the charette's concept, of the possibility of bringing architecture to the public, of making the people a part of the process.

"This is something very important", said Pei. "This experiment will set a standard for the entire nation."

Saturday morning the panel of jurists were briefed by Marlin. They reviewed the program and were keyed to special problems of the site.

After the orientation, they toured the town, driving from one end to the other, across to the south shore, through part of the Cape Cod National Seashore, and then back into town and to the site.

The presentations began after lunch. Each team of architects was given forty-five minutes to present their scheme to the jury and to answer questions.

Both the competitors and the jurists welcomed the opportunity that the question and answer period presented--another departure from the normal conditions of a competition.

The jury recessed for dinner, then returned to deliberate. It was not a clear-cut decision. At the first vote, another plan went. More discussion, than another plan rejected. More discussion and then the jurists took another vote. This time, they voted to bring back for discussion one of the plans previously turned down.

And so it went for hours. Discussion, a vote, a decision. More discussion, another decision. By midnight, the field had been reduced to three schemes. By one in the morning, it was down to two. They deliberated and argued--sometimes hotly--for another hour. By two a.m., the decision had

had been made and the exhausted jurists went to bed.

Sunday was a clear, beautiful fall day. Everywhere, people seemed struck by a spirit of celebration. The competition, the arrival of Hayes and Pei, were the topic of discussion everywhere, over coffee in restaurants, and in the streets.

Heller had chosen the Universalist Church as the location for the ceremony. It was packed. The crowds who had been streaming into the Flagship all week to watch the drawing process had now turned out to hear which architectural firm would win. By now they had come to regard the Playhouse as their own.

In his introductory remarks, Marlin said, "The past seven days have been marked by an intensity and integrity I have rarely seen. The seven firms have taken the public into their confidence and into account to a unique, unprecedented degree".

Pei spoke, followed by Miss Hayes. Barbara Gelb, co-author of an O'Neill biography, spoke, bringing alive the magic and mystique, as well as the humor, of the O'Neill years.

Roy Knight, chairman, Architecture, Planning and Design Program, NEA, told the audience that the Charette was one of the most successful projects the NEA had ever funded.

And with tears of happiness in her eyes and a vision of the dream come true, Adele Heller spoke.

William Warner's scheme was the winner. His design, perhaps the most traditional and unspectacular--a long wharf-like building that ended in a fishing shack which would house the O'Neill archives--fit the town.

"What I really did is a living warehouse", he said. "Provincetown was the birthplace of the American fishing industry. At one time, it had more than 100 piers, long wharves with pitched roofs. The first Playhouse was such a building."

There was a reception following the ceremony and the festive spirit prevailed. All the architects were congratulated by the townspeople. As Marlin said, "They were all winners".

Then they returned to the Flagship to pack up their supplies, to head back to the offices they had left a week ago. The incredible and shared experience was over. But as Righter said, "I will remember this week for the rest of my life".

"He is right", said another. "I don't understand it, but there was something special here. A spirit has touched us all."

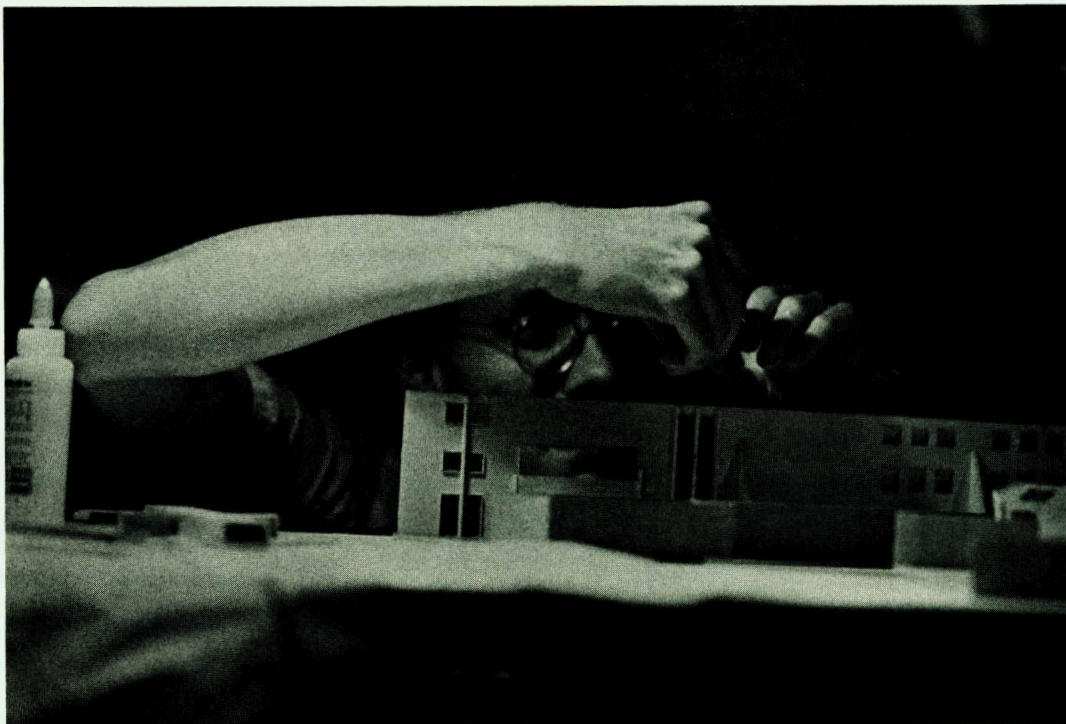
Some said it was the spirit of Eugene O'Neill.

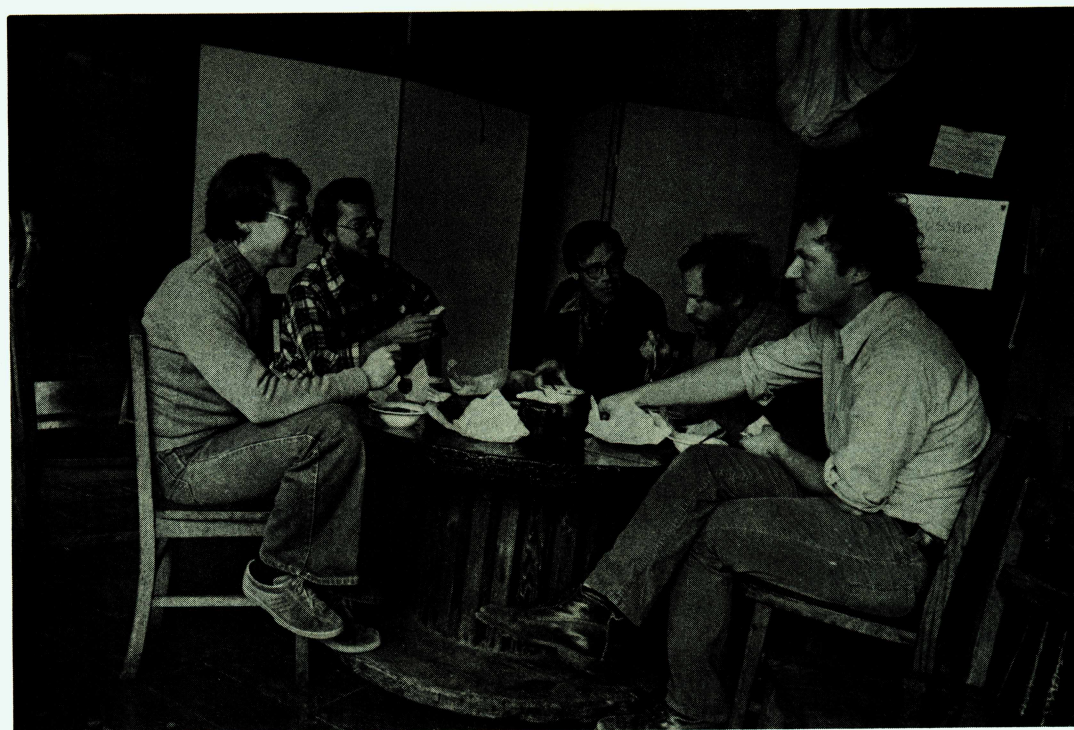
- END -

PROVINCETOWN PLAYHOUSE

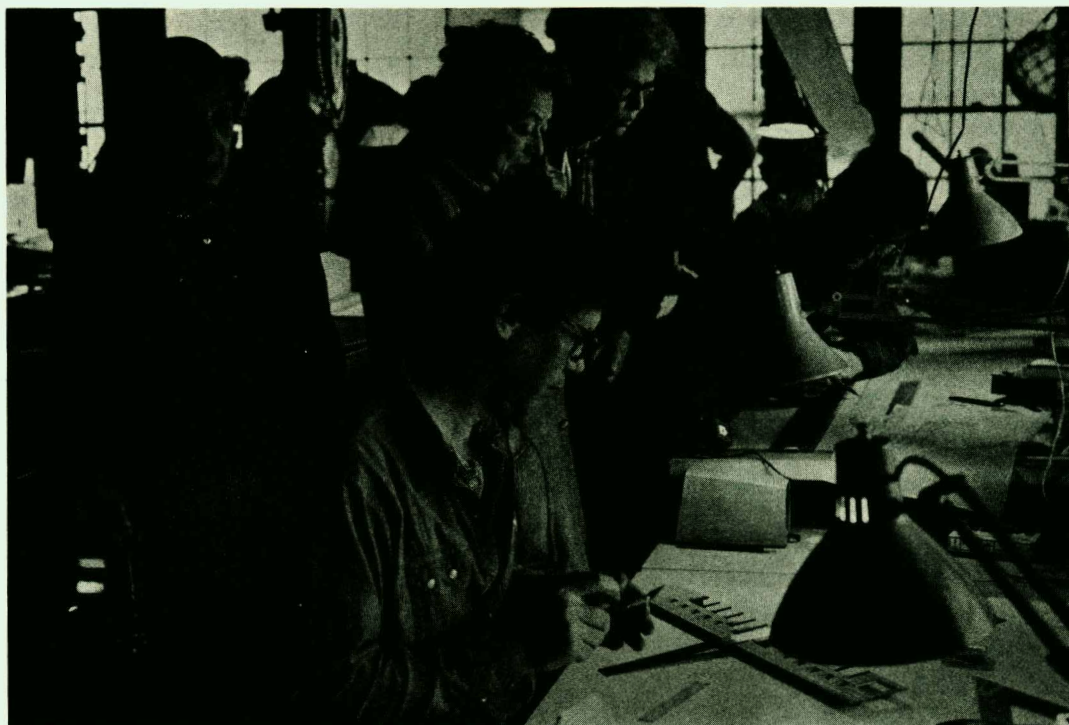
Provincetown, MA. 02657

Architects Working On Designs





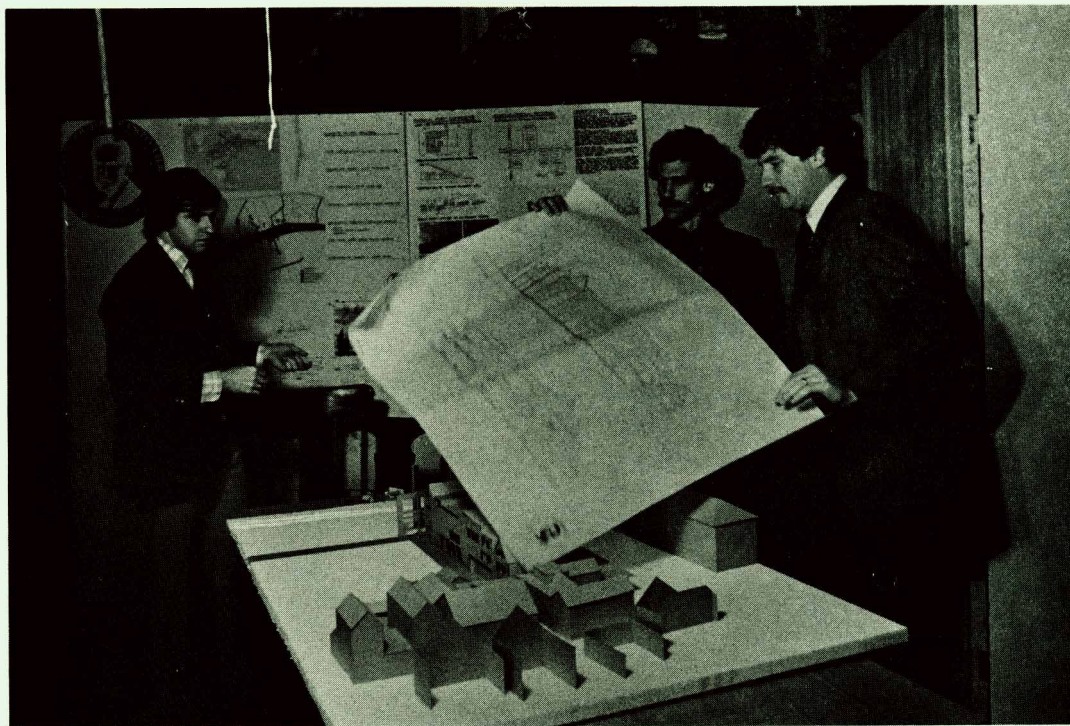
Community Open House



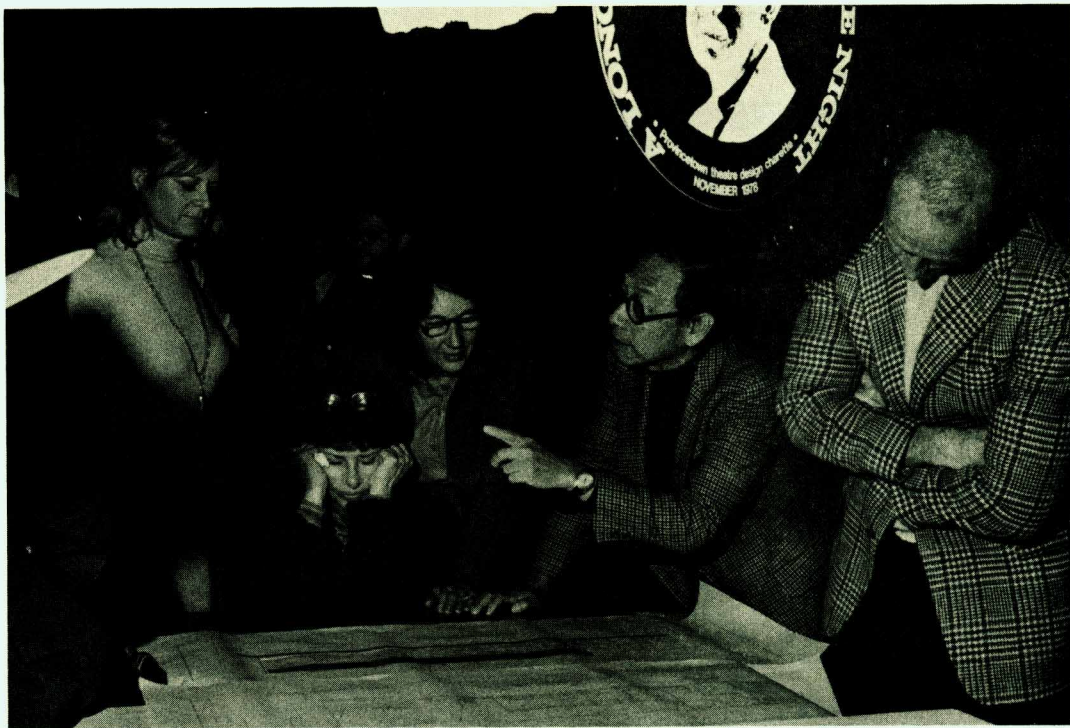
Orientation of Jury



Architects Present Designs To Jury



The Jury Deliberates



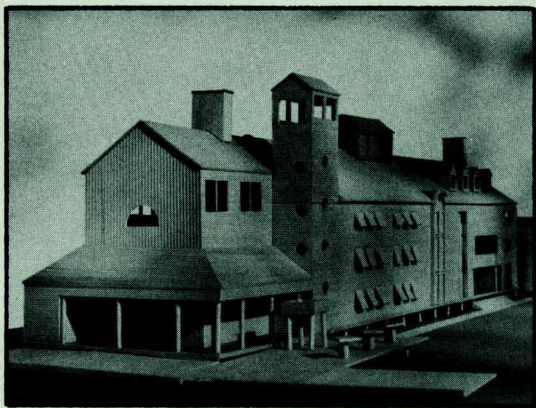
I.M. PEI and Miss Hayes at Ceremony
Announcing Winning Design



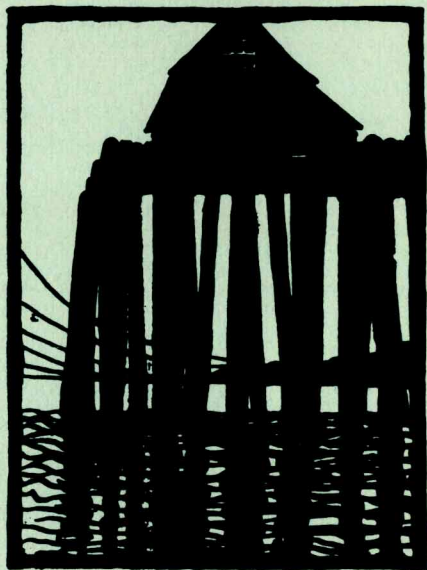
The Winner: William Warner



Provincetown Playhouse On The Wharf



ADELE HELLER
Producing Director



It was more than sixty years ago, in an isolated fishing village at the tip-end of Cape Cod, that modern American theatre was born.

In the summer of 1915, there was a spirited and unusually talented group of writers and artists in Provincetown, among whom were: George Cook, Susan Glaspell, the Wilbur Steeles, Mary Heaton Vorse, John Reed, Hutchins Hapgood, Neith Boyce, the William Zorachs, Robert Edmund Jones, Bror Nordfeldt and "Teddy" Ballantine. The group emerged during a period of time in our cultural history when a new grass roots movement in the creative arts was sweeping across the land.

The Provincetowners were dissatisfied with the pervasive commercialism and stage conventions of that time, so they combined their various talents to write, act, stage and produce their own plays for their own pleasure.

They first performed in a beachside cottage belonging to the Hapgoods at the East End of town. The results were so successful that a theatre was improvised from an old fishing shed at the end of a pier owned by Mary Heaton Vorse. A short time later, the group became known as the Provincetown Players.

The following summer a young unknown came to Provincetown carrying his rejected plays in an old box marked "Magic Yeast". On July 28, 1916, with the Players' production of his first play, "Bound East for Cardiff", Eugene O'Neill began his career — and the course of American theatre was changed.

The Provincetown Playhouse is third in a succession of wharf theatres beginning with the original one founded by the Players. The first was gutted by fire, the second collapsed into the sea during the winter hurricane of 1940.

Aware of the contribution made by theatre to Provincetown and the creative arts, contemporaries of O'Neill, led by artist Heinrich Pfeiffer, began a search for a theatre company to continue the tradition set forth by the Players.

In Boston at that time, the New England Repertory Company was performing in works by O'Neill, Glaspell and others in the Provincetown group as well as plays by European avant-garde playwrights. Edwin Pettet and Virginia

Thoms, founders and directors of the company, and Catherine Huntington, one of its prominent members, were invited to open a theatre in Provincetown on an old whaling wharf owned by Pfeiffer. The invitation was accepted and the Provincetown Playhouse began making theatre history in 1940. No other theatre has produced more of O'Neill's plays than the Provincetown Playhouse.

In 1973, the theatre changed hands. The new directors converted the Playhouse into a resident Equity company devoted to first-class productions of plays drawn widely from the dramatic literature—particularly O'Neill and other important plays from America's past as well as to experimenting with new plays that might contribute to America's theatrical future. The Provincetown-O'Neill New Play Project was designed as a playwright-in-residence program to encourage the development of new works of merit by American playwrights of talent and consequence or by previously unproduced playwrights—a concept that follows directly in the Provincetown-O'Neill tradition.

Two other programs were developed: the Professional Theatre Training Program combines instruction and active participation in theatre. Twenty apprentices from all over the country participate each season. The Eugene O'Neill Theatre Museum was established in 1974, dedicated to the life, art and times of the Provincetown Players and Eugene O'Neill.

On March 25, 1977, the Provincetown Playhouse was torched by arsonists. Everything necessary to mount a production was destroyed. Photographs, books and museum equipment were lost or damaged.

When news of the fire was heard, the response from people and organizations all over the country encouraged the continuance of the life of the theatre. A grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities made it possible to restore and replace photographs damaged or lost from the museum; the Selectmen of Provincetown offered the Town Hall — rent free — as a space for the theatre. In November, 1978, supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Massachusetts Foundation for Humanities and Public Policy, an architectural competition took place in Provincetown to design the new Provincetown Playhouse and Eugene O'Neill Archival Center.

Seven New England architectural firms participated in the Design Charrette. The winning design by William Warner of Exeter, Rhode Island, was chosen by a jury of nationally prominent architects, headed by I.M. Pei.

The Provincetown Playhouse is both an artistic and a community resource, a concept and a facility. The New Play program not only reaffirms Provincetown's place as a spawning ground for new plays, but, together with the

Eugene O'Neill Archival Center and the annual O'Neill productions, serves as a living tribute to the example of the Provincetown Players and Eugene O'Neill.

I love life. But I don't
love life because it is
pretty. Prettiness is only
clothes-deep. I am a truer
lover than that. I love it
naked. There is beauty
to me even in its
ugliness. In fact, I
deny the ugliness
entirely, for its vices
are often nobler than its
virtues, and nearly always
closer to a revelation.

Eugene O'Neill
1888-1953

This article was made possible through a grant from the Division of Research Grants, National Endowment for the Humanities, a Federal agency.



Town of Provincetown

MASSACHUSETTS 02657
(617) 487-3900

January 19, 1979

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The design Charette for the Provincetown Playhouse which took place from November 11 - 19, 1978 was an extremely worthwhile project, certainly for the Town and its citizens and to all appearances to the participants.

Obviously the participants had to learn a great deal about the community, its people, and their aspirations in order to design a building which would fulfill the purpose intended for it. The many citizens who watched the project develop also learned a great deal about the community, both by reflection from what the participants were learning and by a more intensive and detailed examination of the role of the theater in the community.

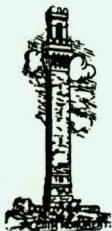
I was struck by the enthusiasm which the project generated among residents of the Town at all levels, as well as visitors who came by reason of special interest in the theater in Provincetown. I believe that both the Town and the theater benefited from an enriched understanding of the essential interaction between the theater and the human community.

Sincerely yours,

Charles K. Cobb

Charles K. Cobb
Town Manager

CKC:mc



Original Sent To:
487-1841 - Estelle Alberto

395 Commercial St.

Provincetown, MA 02657

First Landing Place of the Pilgrims



Mr. Cobb:

Re: Charette: Jan. 16, 1979

(Representing Adele Heller)

Estelle Alberts, Called:

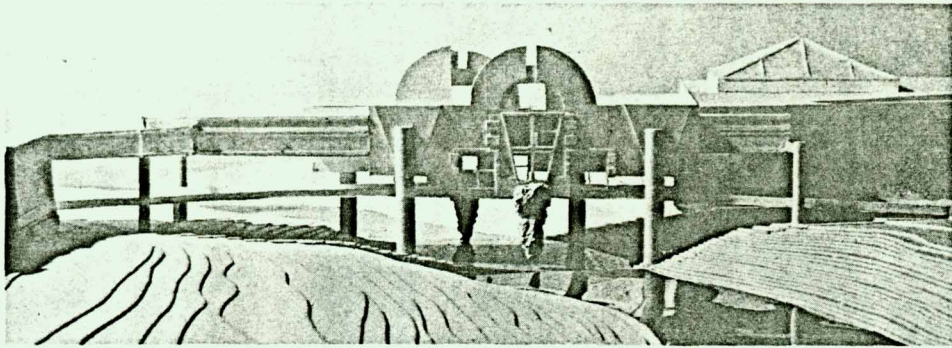
487-1841 - She needs a letter from you
to send on to Humanities foundation, etc.

To whom it May Concern:

1. Was Charette worth the time?
2. What was learned?
3. What value it had in
terms of the Community.

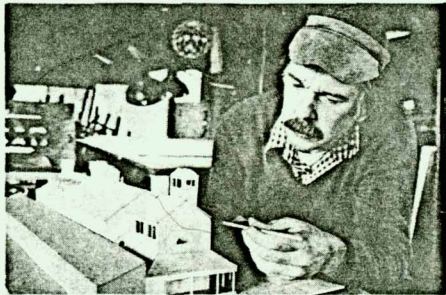
These are questions - needed to be answered
by you - so she says - in letter form.

Marcy



Model of Fargo-Moorehead Cultural Bridge.

Everett Studios



Warner with model of Provincetown Playhouse.

Ira Wymann, New York Times

How to choose your architect

The criteria governing the selection of architects for large-scale public design projects are nebulous in the extreme. The upshot is commonly the result of luck, merit, reputation, and politicking, haphazardly weighted. Two very different and unique methods to involve the community in the architectural selection and design process were recently demonstrated in Fargo, ND and Moorehead, Mn (see p. 76), and in Provincetown, Ma. Both commissions are for the design of a community cultural center: the \$10-million-plus Fargo-Moorehead Cultural Center Bridge and the \$1-million Provincetown Playhouse.

As the economics indicate, the projects are of different orders of magnitude. But they share a distinction in that the community was very closely involved in the architectural selection process. Comparing the two procedures points up the ways in which each reflects the clients' view of the role of the cultural institution in relation to the town.

The twin cities of Fargo, ND, and Moorehead, Mn wanted a nationally recognized architect to "put Fargo on the map in the art history book" with a design for a huge cultural center. They picked Michael Graves, but *how* is as fascinating as *who*.

The joint city task force hired consultant Bradley Morrison of Arts Development Associates of Minneapolis and N.Y. and Foss Engelstad Foss of Fargo to work with a committee of community representatives in making the choice. They drew up a master list of 120 well-known architects and prepared a background report on each. They then grouped these according to the six theoretical categories used by Charles Jencks in *Architecture 2000*. After a somewhat clumsy division and ranking of the 120 within these categories, they ended up with 16 architects, cutting that down to five after a lengthy visual presentation and analysis. These five were then interviewed by the task force as a whole. Although Morrison and FEF structured the choice by continuously clarifying expectations and criteria, it was the task force that made the decision, based on the architectural education they had acquired through this six-month crash course in modern architectural practice and theory.

The selection of an architect for the new Provincetown Playhouse took place under very different conditions. The Design Charette, an eight-day design competition (Nov. 11-19) among seven New England architectural firms, was organized by William Marlin, associate editor of *Architectural Record*, as a participatory procedure, in which the community would have the opportunity to understand the design process. The architects involved in the drawing marathon, which was open to the public every afternoon, felt that being on site for eight days let them learn from and about Provincetown and each other in a unique fashion.

"It wasn't so much the people who came and commented that influenced us," said William Warner, whose design won the contest. "It was the dis-

coveries we made about the historical background, the weather, the topography of the place." Warner describes his design as "a big wharfshed. . . . As it said on the placemats at the Flagship Restaurant (where the Design Charette was held), Provincetown was the birthplace of the American fishing industry." Warner's design was selected by the jury, chaired by I.M. Pei, precisely for its close association with local architecture and history.

Juror Raquel Ramati of Urban Design Group said of Design Charette, "It doesn't assure better results, in terms of the design, but it is an exciting prototype as an educational selection process. Normally the choice of an architect for such projects is made through connections or on the basis of his previous work, but here the community had a chance to see how the architect worked with their problem. It works well in small towns, where 'who represents the community' isn't so problematic."

Because they were truly participatory, the selection processes used in Fargo-Moorehead and Provincetown for their respective cultural centers reflect the towns' self-images. The expanding city looks forward to 2000, the small town back to its past.

January 1979

Progressive Architecture

11/20/78

Charette in Provincetown

ARCHITECTURE By ROBERT CAMPBELL

The "design charette" that took place in Provincetown this week could be a harbinger of a far more exciting relationship between architects and their public than anything that's existed since the heyday of the New York skyscraper.

A "charette" is architects' slang for a last-minute, round-the-clock push to get a set of drawings done. It describes precisely what happened at the Flagship Restaurant on Commercial street in Provincetown from Nov. 8 through Nov. 17.

Seven architectural firms from around New England, most young and little known, crowded into the restaurant to produce seven designs in a competition to see who would get the commission to design a new Provincetown Playhouse, to replace the old one burned down by teenage arsonists in 1977.

For an hour each day of the charette, anyone who wanted could enter the restaurant to watch the competing architects at work. Hundreds of people did. Many found favorites whom they rooted for as the work progressed toward the judging that took place on Saturday.

As the week wore on, the floor grew knee-deep in discarded sketches. In the cramped quarters, the architects got to know each other's designs as well as they knew their own. By working in the midst of the town that would be the new Playhouse site, they couldn't help soaking up influences from around them. One architect's building developed a surprising resemblance to a photograph of the Provincetown ferryboat that hung on the

Flagship's wall. Another, the eventual winner, admitted he turned for inspiration to a drawing of Provincetown in the 1860s he saw next door in Bryant's Market.

Visitors made plenty of suggestions, too, enough so that one beleaguered competitor put up a mocking sign: "Don't Feed the Animals."

As Roy Knight of the National Endowment for the Arts, main backer of the event, was later to say, the charette made architecture public property. "How else," Knight said, "can an architecture be creative except by bringing it into community life?"

As the competitors worked, an impressive panel of jurors was boarding airplanes in distant cities: I.M. Pei of New York, the jury's chairman; Raquel Ramati of New York; Herbert McLaughlin of San Francisco; Arthur Cotten Moore of Washington; Walter Wagner, editor of "Architectural Record"; Laurence Booth of Chicago. Three Provincetown residents, nonarchitects, also were on the jury.

The jury huddled until 2:30 a.m. Sunday morning arguing heatedly.

Sunday, more than 400 people jammed the Universalist Church, to hear Pei announce that the winner was William

Warner of Exeter, R.I. Pei said the jury had used two standards in judging: The new building must "respect the scale and form of Provincetown" and it must "be a great space for theater."

After Pei's announcement no less a person than Helen Hayes took the podium to deliver an all-pro, knockout speech about the Provincetown Players, whom she'd seen in Greenwich Village in 1916, and about Eugene O'Neill, whose first work was performed in Provincetown.

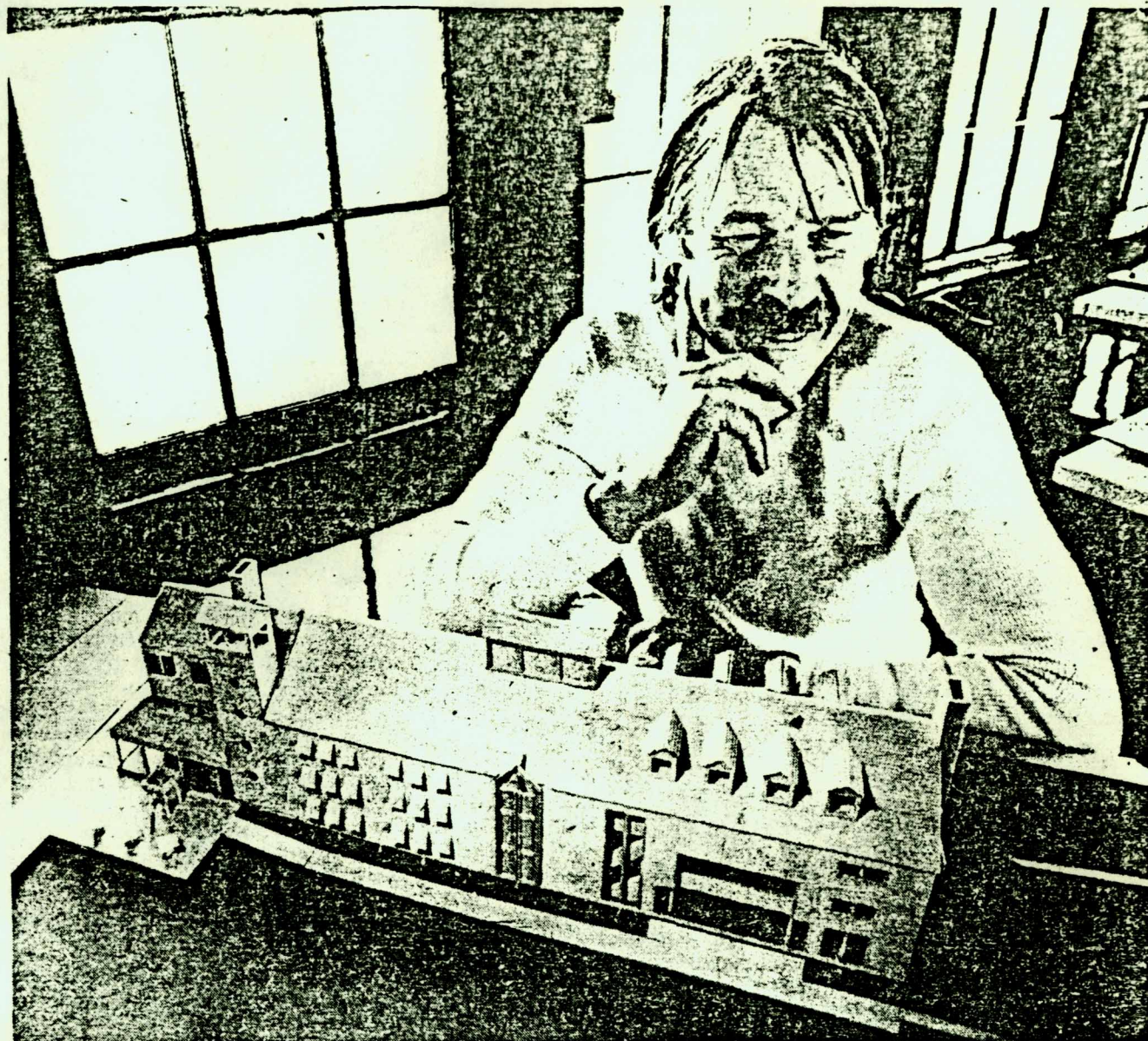
The Provincetown charette was a nearly unique event. It was only the second design competition anyone could remember in which the work was actually done in public.

"This experiment will set a standard for the nation," Pei said, and indeed it may do that. Certainly, it made the process of designing a new building far more involving, more of an event than it usually can be.

The charette was the idea of William Marlin, an editor of "Architectural Record" and architecture critic for the Christian Science Monitor. When the former theater burned, Marlin and its owners, Adele and Lester Heller, conceived the idea and sold it to the National Endowment. Marlin wrote a lengthy program to define the functions and character of the building-to-be which was to include an O'Neill archive, apartments and other uses besides the theater itself. The program was emphatic about the need for the new Playhouse to fit in Provincetown. The resulting seven designs interpreted that rule diversely and were, as competitions so often are, a fascinating cross section of the state of the art of architecture.

Some competitors opted for a pitched roof, romantic motif No. 1 kind of building, hoping to imitate old Provincetown; others clearly felt that a cultural icon of national status, like the Playhouse, demanded an image more potent than a fishing shack.

Turner Brooks and Ross Anderson of Vermont were the authors of the ferryboat scheme, a lovely, lighthearted and festive design. Paul Krueger of Watertown avoided imitation and designed, instead, a white right-angled Corbusian



William Warner of Exeter, R.I., with his winning design Provincetown theater.

(Globe photo by Stan Grossfeld)

building that ended in a flag tower at sea. Righter and Burr, of New Haven, had the trendiest building, clearly "Post-Modern." It looked like a squat Victorian church with an Egyptian eclectic air, with much of the lower part of its apparently heavy stone wall disconcertingly omitted and a plan that showed little of the modish assurance of the exterior.

All the architects, in fact (Perry Dean Stahl and Rogers of Boston; Morrish/Fleissig/Robinson of Cambridge; and Kennedy/Montgomery of Boston were the others), produced engaging and competent designs. Overall quality was astonishing given the short time allowed.

The winning entry by William Warner was in many ways the most conservative. Warner seemed to have put more effort than anyone else into sorting out the com-

plex functions in a clean, professional way, designing a usable, buildable, pleasing, unspectacular building. His exterior was a simple, finger-wharf bulk with bits of warehouse detail stuck on it, ending in what looked like a fishing shack but was, in fact, the O'Neill archive and lounge.

"What I really did is a living warehouse," Warner said later. "Provincetown was the birthplace of the American fishing industry. It had more than 100 piers at one time, long wharfs with pitched roofs; the first Playhouse was in such a building."

Warner will now, from the same grant that supported the competition, carry his design forward in detail while fund-raising for construction goes on.

A couple of details about the competition deserve some question. None of the

competitors I talked to seemed to know how they had been selected. Several heard about the competition through word-of-mouth, then applied to be considered. One was simply invited, to enter. The competition was not widely advertised and the decision as to who would compete was apparently at the whim of the organizers.

The other detail is the fact that, except for expenses, no one was paid. Architects who must spend man-weeks of work in such an effort should, perhaps, be compensated.

Those are quibbles. The Provincetown charette deserves national attention and emulation. In a time when architects are searching for ways to reach out and communicate with the public, no better method has yet been invented.

TOWN MANAGERS OFFICE
250 COMMERCIAL ST.
PROVINCETOWN MASS. 02657
ATT RACHEL WHELE
SPEC.

8/14/78
11/14/78

Design chosen for Playhouse's rebirth

By ANNE LeCLAIRE
Special Writer

PROVINCETOWN — In a ceremony signaling a hoped-for rebirth of theater here, nationally known architect, I.M. Pei yesterday afternoon announced that a Rhode Island architect has been named to design the new Provincetown Playhouse on the Wharf and the Eugene O'Neill Archival Center.

The announcement of the selection of William Warner of Exeter, R.I., was made before a crowd of 500 that included the unknown and the world-famous in the ceremony at the Universalist Church.

Making a rare appearance, her first in Provincetown, first lady of the American stage Helen Hayes told the assembled crowd, "History, drama, architecture and Provincetown will all be enriched by your venture here."

The winning design, drawn up in an intense, eight-day, on-site competition unique in American architec-

ture, is of a long, barn-like structure with simple lines and shingled siding.

The estimated \$1 million theater-center is to be on the site of the old playhouse, destroyed by fire in 1977, across the street from the church. It is scheduled to open by the summer of 1980.

Some 60 years ago, this small fishing village gave birth to a spirit that changed American theater. O'Neill's first play, "Bound East for Cardiff," was staged here at the old Provincetown Playhouse and the Provincetown Players, performing in New York in the winter season, launched what later developed into off-Broadway. O'Neill lived and wrote several more of his works here.

Adele Heller, who with her husband Lester is owner and producer of the playhouse, said the chosen design is "sympathetic, traditional, and in keeping with the theater and the town."

Pei, head of the jury of five architects and three Provincetown residents that made the selection, said, "Something important has happened here. It will

change the future of our architectural processes."

The tiny, frail, white-haired Miss Hayes stood before the audience and shared with listeners her experience as a 17-year-old girl whose lifelong love of the theater was kindled by the plays of Eugne O'Neill as they were performed in the winter of 1917 in New York by the Provincetown Players.

"I was very young and needed all the inspiration I could get," she said. "My mother, by scrimping on our survival budget, managed to buy season tickets and that year I saw the birth of O'Neill's plays. It was a pure and exciting art form and had a lasting and, I hope, good effect on my life."

"I have never been here before but I have a sense of homecoming," she said. "I have walked your beaches, smelled your air, seen the sea. It is a renewal and I wish now I had my life to live again."

Others who spoke at the ceremony were Barbara Gelb, co-author with her husband of an O'Neill

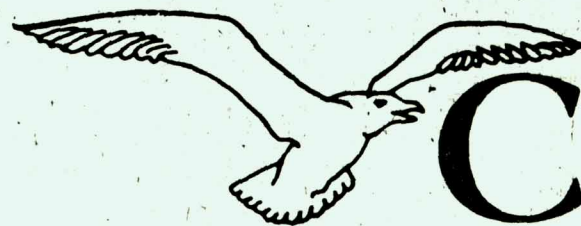
(Continued on Page 2)



I.M. PEI



HELEN HAYES



Cape Cod Times

THE CAPE AND ISLANDS' OWN DAILY NEWSPAPER

Hyannis, Massachusetts 02601, Monday, November 20, 1978

28 Pages

20c

V-1 42 No. 277

... Playhouse

(Continued from Page 1)
biography; Provincetown
Town Manager Charles
Cobb; and Roy Knight,
chairman of the architec-
ture, planning and design
program of the National En-
dowment for the Arts. The
endowment had funded the
competition with a \$20,000
grant.

"I don't understand it,"
said a young architect from
Cambridge, one of the com-
petitors, "but there is a
mystical feeling here and I
will remember this for the
rest of my life."

Some said it was the spirit
of O'Neill. Others said it was
the spirit of the community,
often bitterly divided in the
past, that had been united by
the vision of their village as
once again a national focal
point for the arts.

Some people who had op-
posed the Hellers' project
and who had said the Hellers
did not understand their
town because they are not
year-round residents, listen-
ed with tears in their eyes
when, at the close of the
ceremony, Adele Heller
said, "I love theater and I
love Provincetown." And

afterwards, they went up to
her and offered their help.

And later, on the streets,
in the restaurants and in the
church, people were echoing
what one local artist said:
"This is a wonderful thing
for Provincetown. The eyes
of the country are again
focused here and on the
beauty that is our town."

Warner, head of a small,
17-year-old firm, was chosen
from a field of seven par-
ticipants in the Design
Charette competition.

For a week, the competing
architects had worked in one
room of the Flagship
Restaurant. They had im-
mersed themselves in the
town and its history. They
learned to tell the time by
the tides. They worked into
the early morning, gaining
energy, they said, from the
sea and shared creativity.
Most of all, they talked to
the townspeople. And the
people of the town talked to
them.

Each day, from four to
five in the afternoon,
residents had streamed in to
watch the work in progress,
to question, suggest, learn
and, sometimes, teach.

1221 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10020
Telephone 212/997- 4242

Playhouse

EDITORIAL OFFICES

6 December 1978

Dear Fred,

Thank you so very much for the copy of your letter of the 27th to Mr. and Mrs. Lester Heller regarding the preliminary, conceptual scheme that was chosen, as designed by architect William Warner, for the Provincetown Playhouse-on-the-Wharf and Eugene O'Neill Archival Center.

Allow me to reassure you -- as the conscientious, objective, forward-looking public official I know you to be -- that all of the architectural teams participating in this nationally acclaimed process were made plainly aware of the letter and spirit of local laws, put clearly in mind of State strictures, and told that variances, if any, must be minimal in number and nature. Within these constraints, and aware of local sensibilities about appeals for variances -- even those within the most meritorious context -- the architects were asked to demonstrate their conceptual spirit, aesthetic conviction, and technical thoroughness.

During the design-development stage, coming up, Mr. Warner's scheme will be refined, taking into full account the concerns you have enunciated. Appeals for variances, if any, will be informed by intense preparatory consultation with all pertinent local and State authorities.

It is hoped that you perceive that this profoundly public, open-to-view conceptual stage would not have been conducted as it was if, in fact, the organizers and owners had intended to spring a structural surprise, in the form of massive, intrusive violations, on the Town's citizenry and officials.



6 December 1978

Page Two

It is further hoped that you and others will welcome requests for advice and information in coming months, as indeed we welcome your observations -- the result, a symbol of Provincetown's unique cultural heritage, and a source of support for Provincetown's cultural, social, and economic enhancement.

Finally, I shall be preparing, as you have most likely read, a major series of articles about Provincetown's cultural experiences, civic attitudes, political impulses, economic objectives, social issues, and environmental character. The nature of your letter impels me, more than ever, to seek your perception and opinion, thus better insuring that these articles -- pegged upon the regeneration of the Playhouse -- accurately confide to the nation the quality of civic concern that obtains today in your extraordinary community.

*Best regards, and with all good wishes
for the New Year,*

William Marlin



WM:dp

Frederick Klein
Building Inspector
Town Hall
Provincetown, MA

6 December 1978

Page Three

cc: Mr. & Mrs. Lester Heller
Charles Cobb, Town Manager ✓
William Warner, Architect

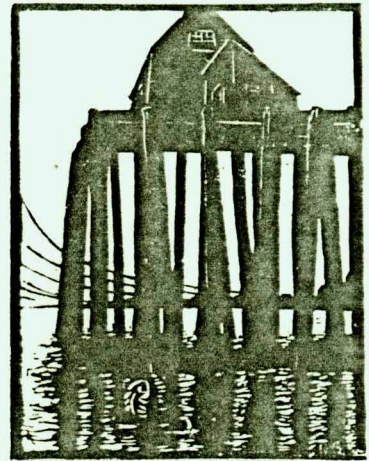
P.S. Please note copies are being sent to the following:

Dwayne P. Landreth, Town Counsel
Wilbur Cook, Fire Chief
Eileen Andrews, Health Agent
William Ingraham, Wiring Inspector
Sidney Banford, Chairman, Zoning Board of Appeals
Mary Jo Avellar, Chairman, Board of Selectmen
Verne VerHulst, Chairman, Planning Board
Nathan Malchman, Traffic Study Committee
Charles Mayo, III, Chairman, Conservation Commission

Thank you again for your great interest in this initiative.

YK

JAN 13 1983



Provincetown Playhouse on the Wharf/2 Gosnold Street/Provincetown, MA 02657/617/487/0955

Mary-Jo Avellar, Chairperson
Board of Selectmen
Provincetown, MA 02657

January 12, 1983

Dear Mary-Jo Avellar,

I write to request use of the Town Hall for Provincetown Playhouse on the Wharf, Inc., to produce a season of plays during the summer of 1983.

Because of the economic situation for the past few years, we have not been able to progress as rapidly as we had hoped to, in restoring the theatre. We now feel it is essential for the life of the Provincetown Playhouse, to start producing again in Provincetown even though we don't have our own building yet.

The Provincetown Playhouse shall continue to serve as a living tribute to the example of the Provincetown Players and Eugene O'Neill. We have been honored by an invitation to produce a full season of O'Neill plays, as major participants in the forthcoming international Eugene O'Neill centennial Celebration in 1988.

The responsiveness of the Board of Selectmen who volunteered use of the Town Hall as a theatre after the Provincetown Playhouse was destroyed, was greatly appreciated and will always be remembered. We thank you for your continued interest in the Provincetown Playhouse.

Sincerely

A. Heller

Adele R. Heller
PRODUCING DIRECTOR

Miriam Hapgood Dewitt

Miriam Hapgood Dewitt
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Letters

Harbor giveaway

Selectman Bryant and others have made us feel that an opinion against giving Town Hall away to victims of a fire is tantamount to an attack on Motherhood and the American Flag. That's taking deplorable advantage of our public sympathies.

Many suffer losses in fires and stand tall through the anguish. All who do deserve our admiration and our compassion.

What we have witnessed is the pulling out of every stop in an organ recital of funeral sound to deafen reason.

Let us all now look again. A building was lost — not a life — not the honored memory of a tradition, not a work of art but a fire trap! It was not even a building Eugene O'Neill ever set foot in so far as history records. (Or Mary Heaton Vorse either.) It may be replaced by something we don't want sticking out in our harbor, and we may allow it because who dares raise an eyebrow in the face of all those tears?

Our Selectmen, pushed to the wall by Mr. Bryant, voted as if the very ghost of O'Neill and Vorse rose to demand exclusive use of Town Hall, the buildings of the public school and anything else we might be touched enough to give away . . . in the name of grief . . . in the name of art.

Well, in the name of Common Sense, let us compose ourselves. One longs for O'Neill to come to life to set his pen to an unsettling tragi-comedy about such a political performance as this.

Before we also give away the harbor, let's take a close look at what we could be letting ourselves in for after the smoke clears.

ELIZABETH FOSS-MAYO
• Provincetown

4-27-78

Provincetown Playhouse

ON THE WHARF
April 19, 1978

Mary Jo Avellar, Chairperson
Board of Selectmen
Town Hall
Provincetown
MASSACHUSETTS 02657

Please file

Dear Ms. Avellar,

Having read an article on the Playhouse in the April 13th issue of the *ADVOCATE*, I am writing to clarify a situation which hopefully, in turn, will forestall any additional time and paperwork on the part of the Selectmen.

This is to inform you that the first step has already been taken in re trying to work out a mutually beneficial arrangement for joint use of space by the winter group and the Playhouse in the new facility.

On March 16th (following a lengthy phone conversation on the subject in January,) we received a proposal for joint use of the Playhouse. Responding to the proposal in a letter dated March 19th, we stated that the Playhouse was extremely interested in maximal use of the facility. And with this in focus, suggested that the next step would be in-depth discussions late June or early July in Provincetown.

We are surprised that this information was not brought to your attention at the meeting of the Selectmen on April 10. Particularly surprising, is that one of the vocal people at the meeting, according to the newspaper, is the very same person who communicated with us subsequent to my letter in response to the proposal, expressing a very positive attitude towards the proposed discussions in regard to joint use of the facility -- even adding some suggestions of his own.

I hope that this letter will be of some help to you.

Thank you for your continued interest in the Provincetown Playhouse.

Sincerely

A. Heller

Adele R. Heller

2912 Wilton Avenue
Silver Spring
MARYLAND 20910

PHONE: 301/588-1450



MR. COBB

BUILDING INSPECTOR

PROVINCETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02657

November 27, 1978

Mr. & Mrs. Lester Heller
29 12 Wilton Avenue
Silver Springs, Maryland

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Heller,

This letter from a Building Inspector prior to receiving plans for a project is highly unusual, however, the announcement of the selection of a design for the Provincetown Playhouse brought forth evidence that the proposed plan does not comply with certain provisions of the Town's By-Laws and the State Building Code.

For this reason, I take this opportunity, while the plans for the Playhouse are still in the preliminary stages, to express my concern and the concern of other Town Boards and officials. The Town and this department are anxious to work with those people involved with the project to bring it to a proper conclusion.

Might I suggest that Mr. Warner contact this office and the State Building Inspector, Thomas Carr, to be positive that the plans conform to our Town By-Laws and the State Building Code.

It is hoped that the plans can unite a proper building with the proposed site, without the need of variances which would conflict with the Town's policies toward other property owners.

Respectfully,

Frederick Klein,
Building Inspector

FK/cr

cc: William Warner
William Marlin
Thomas Carr
Charles Cobb ✓
Town Counsel
Board of Selectmen
Fire Chief
Health Agent
Wiring Inspector
Zoning Board of Appeals
Planning Board
Conservation Commission
Water Commission
Traffic Study Committee

Beginnings 1915: THE CULTURAL MOMENT

March 15, 1987

Town Manager and
Board of Selectmen
Provincetown Town Hall
Provincetown, MA 02657



Provincetown Playhouse
P.O. Box 477
Provincetown, MA 02657
617.487.0955

To the Town Manager and the Board of Selectmen, Provincetown:

I am writing to let you know that Provincetown Playhouse -- in conjunction with the University of Massachusetts/Boston -- will sponsor a major conference June 14-17, 1987, at the Provincetown Inn and the Provincetown Art Association. We expect several hundred participants at the conference, which is being supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, a Federal agency, and the Massachusetts Foundation for Humanities and Public Policy, a program of NEH. The publicity will draw national attention.

Support from NEH for a conference of this magnitude is quite an honor, since the agency gets thousands of requests each year, but in recent years has funded only a limited number of projects.

The conference is entitled "Beginnings 1915: the Cultural Moment," and will focus on the decade after the turn of the century, and how the cultural ferment which took place here gave birth to the art theatre movement in America.

Many groups are working to make this conference a success. Among them are the Art Association which will have two exhibits during the conference, the Historical Association, and descendants of the original Players who will contribute historical materials.

The conference will include panel discussions with nationally prominent speakers; four plays of the first season staged by the Provincetown Players; a lobsterbake, and other events of interest.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely

Adele Heller, Project Director

Co-sponsored by
Provincetown Playhouse
and the University of
Massachusetts-Boston