

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REVIEW COMMENTS

Dune Shacks, Cape Cod National Seashore, MA

SIGNIFICANCE:

The dune shacks and the dune landscape surrounding them are eligible for the National Register as a historic district under criteria A and C because of their exceptionally significant associations with the historic development of American art, literature and theater; and for their representation of a rare, fragile property type. Additionally, the Tasha Cottage and the district are significant for historic associations with the productive life of poet Harry Kemp under criterion B. The dune shacks and the dunes themselves represent a historic cultural landscape comprised of a distinctive, significant concentration of natural and cultural resources united by their shared historic use as a summer retreat for the Provincetown colony of artists, writers, poets, actors and others. The importance of the dune shacks is embodied in their collective association with the historical development of the arts; their spartan, utilitarian form; and their unique relationship with the harsh dune environment.

The dune landscape, as the source of natural beauty and artistic inspiration, is the linchpin of the district's cultural importance; it provides the key to the district's existence and to its fragile historic character. The shacks are the surviving material artifacts that convey the significant, continued historic use of the dunes' seaside setting over time. Because of the continuous shifting conditions of the dunes and the problem of erosion, some of the dune shacks have been moved short distances to ensure their preservation. Because the shacks are part of a district and because of the expected impact of the harsh dune environment, their movement within the same general environment is acceptable and does not detract from the district's eligibility.

The dune shacks provided shelter while minimally intruding into the contemplative solitude of the environment that provided the impetus to an abundance of artistic and literary work. The shacks' unpretentious, predominantly one-room structure, their simple materials and craftsmanship, their mobility, and their lack of amenities such as electricity and running water enabled their inhabitants to experience a survivalist relationship with nature. Celebration of the Cape's natural environmental qualities is eloquently embodied in Thoreau's Cape Cod (1865) and Henry Beston's The Outermost House (1928). This same attitude was perpetuated by the inhabitants of the dune shacks as attested to in the oral history contained in Josephine Del Deo's account of "The Dune Cottages at Peaked Hill Bars" and in the multitude of letters from a variety of literary figures such as Edmund Wilson, Norman Mailer, Jack Kerouac, Hazel Hawthorne Werner, artists, historians, numerous long-time residents, members of Congress, the Provincetown Board of Selectmen, and other interested parties advocating the preservation of the dune shacks.

STAFF REPORT

DIVISION OF CULTURAL RESOURCES
NORTH ATLANTIC REGION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY

DUNE SHACKS
CAPE COD NATIONAL SEASHORE

Under the terms of Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the National Park Service inventoried 17 structures (popularly known as "Dune Shacks") along with 145 other structures within the boundary of Cape Cod National Seashore. The inventory was conducted for the North Atlantic Region, National Park Service, by a private preservation consultant, Mr. Brian Pfeiffer.

On May 25, 1988, we submitted a copy of the inventory to the Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Officer with our recommendations regarding National Register eligibility. The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) notified us on September 22 that she disagreed with our preliminary determination of ineligibility for the Dune Shacks and presented staff and consultant assessments of the structures that justified her determination of eligibility. She found the structures eligible as a district under Criteria "A" and "C" and Criteria Exceptions "B" and "G."

Following receipt of the letter summarizing the SHPO's review and conclusions, we reviewed this information independently and with our preservation consultant. Based on this review, the Division of Cultural Resources continues to believe that these buildings collectively do not meet the criteria, but that one of the cottages may be eligible individually under Criterion "B."

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE REVIEW COMMENTS

Our understanding of the historical associations of the Dune Shacks and of their architecture leads us to disagree with the SHPO's determination that the structures meet National Register criteria as a historic district.

1. Criterion A and Criterion Exception G. In regards to Criterion "A," the historical associations of the Dune Shacks presented by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and its consultants are not supported by available evidence. While Eugene O'Neill, Mabel Dodge, and Edmund Wilson frequented the dunes, the structures (Peaked Hill Life Saving Station) associated with them are no longer standing. The relationship of two of the shacks to other literary figures such as e.e. Cummings, Jack Kerouac, and Norman Mailer has not been clearly demonstrated. Recent artists who are associated with a few of the existing shacks have largely come into prominence since World War II. It is therefore unclear, due to the lack of a temporal perspective,

whether they have made a "significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history." For these reasons, the use of Criterion "A" and Exception Criterion "G" is inappropriate.

Of the 17 shacks, nine possess no known historical connections with Provincetown's art and literary colony; three are reputed to be associated with writers and artists of national prominence although no direct evidence of those connections has been presented; four have been occupied by local artists since the 1950s; and only one, Tasha Cottage, is of sufficient age to be associated with a Cape Cod writer (Harry Kemp) over fifty years ago.

Unquestionably, Provincetown has been associated with artists and writers for almost 100 years and with American drama since 1915. An understanding of the relative role played by the Dune Shacks in this phenomenon, however, is dependent upon the development of a historic context evaluating all remaining structures on the Outer Cape associated with this theme. More significant structural examples of this colony exist throughout Provincetown, and most possess stronger associations to artists and writers than do the Dune Shacks. Furthermore, the absence of any National Register buildings in Provincetown representing the art and literary movement indicates that this important historic context for the Outer Cape remains largely undeveloped.

Although Eugene O'Neill summered in a shack (now gone) between 1919 and 1924, other prominent writers, while they may have visited the Dune Shacks, have been traditionally associated with buildings elsewhere on the Cape. Norman Mailer, for example, lived at 565 Commercial Street, Provincetown, in a house that is still standing. Edmund Wilson, and his wife Mary McCarthy, lived - and worked - in Wellfleet; and Harry Kemp, in addition to the summers he spent in the Tasha Cottage, lived at 577 Commercial Street and 15 Howland Street, Provincetown, in houses that are still standing. Provincetown contains additional buildings that are associated with twentieth-century writers John Dos Passos, Sinclair Lewis, and Tennessee Williams. [See Eugene Ehrlich and Gorton Carruth, The Oxford Illustrated Literary Guide to the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.)] Major literary figures cited as having some association with the Dune Shacks are also represented elsewhere in the National Register: Edmund Wilson's home in Port Leyden, N.Y., is listed as is e.e. Cummings' home in Cambridge, Mass. Cummings is also represented through his summer home near Silver Lake, N.H., which was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1971.

2. Criterion C. In regards to Criterion "C," the 17 structures do not evince a coherent and distinct building type - they display marked differences in dimensions, roof type, construction, fenestration, and exterior sheathing as well as floorplan. In addition, the impression that the shacks are largely constructed of "reused and salvaged materials" is not borne out by a close examination of the structures. With the exception of the Tasha Cottage, all of the Dune Shacks make extensive use of uniformly new, standard materials such as white cedar shingles, plywood sheathing, and a mixture of double-hung and Anderson casement windows. In this regard, they are indistinguishable from small service structures (cottages, garages, workshops, sheds) found throughout the Cape Cod area. Because these structures are similar to other small buildings found elsewhere on the Cape,

they do not constitute a distinguishable entity or discrete architectural style and do not "illustrate how a building form has evolved almost totally in response to environmental conditions." Mr. Pfeiffer's evaluation of these structures is based on his experience gleaned in conducting the Cape Cod inventory for the North Atlantic Region and while preparing a National Register district nomination of Provincetown under contract for the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

3. Criterion Exception B. In general, we do not disagree with the SHPO's belief that the relocation of some of the shacks within the dunes has not "destroyed or even disturbed the shacks' relationship with their environment." This criterion, however, provides for the eligibility of certain moved structures only if: (1) the structure is significant primarily for its architectural value, or (2) it is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event. Neither of these exceptions appear to be true regarding the Dune Shacks. Since, in any event, the eligibility of the shacks does not hinge on this criterion, its consideration is secondary if not tertiary to the evaluation process.

4. Similarity to Another Historic District. In her letter of September 22, the Massachusetts SHPO suggested that similar properties in Barnstable were already listed in the National Register. After reviewing the Barnstable Multiple Resource Area nomination (specifically the Sandy Neck Cultural Resources District, the component of the nomination with which the SHPO compares the Dune Shacks), we believe marked differences exist between the Sandy Neck structures and the Dune Shacks. The buildings that make up the Cottage Colony of the Sandy Neck District are generally older and exhibit a similarity in design not present among the Dune Shacks. Moreover, they constitute a cohesive district with clear physical relationships to one another. The Dune Shacks, on the other hand, were sited and moved randomly without regard to their physical or visual affinity to each other.

CONCLUSIONS

While our examination of the available evidence for assessing the National Register eligibility of these structures leads us to question the logic of creating a historic district, we believe one of the shacks, the Tasha Cottage, meets National Register Criterion "B" due to its long-term occupation and use for creative work by locally prominent author Harry Kemp. Four others (Cohen, Margo, Ofsevit, and Wells) may eventually become eligible under this criterion given the passage of time and a clearer perspective on the significance of the artists associated with them.

Therefore, we recommend that the Tasha Cottage be determined eligible and that a decision on the Cohen, Margo, Ofsevit, and Wells cottages be deferred. (The fifty-year limit will be achieved for these structures in roughly fifteen years.) Finally, we suggest that current information is not detailed enough to permit a finding of eligibility for the Braaton, Euphoria, and Thalassa cottages.

We continue to believe that the remaining dune shacks (Adams, Armstrong, Champlin, Chanel, Fearing (Bessay), Fleurant, Fowler, Jones, and Schmid) are not eligible individually or collectively.

CAPE COD NATIONAL SEASHORE

DUNE SHACKS

<u>PROPERTY</u>	<u>DATE OF CONSTRUCTION AND NOTES*</u>
Adams Cottage (A)	c.1935: no art or literary associations
Armstrong Cottage (B)	1950: no art or literary associations; moved in 1983
Braaton Cottage (C)	c.1931: reportedly used by writers and artists; no specific associations
Champlin Cottage (D)	1938: no art or literary associations
Chanel Beach Cottage (E)	1976: no art or literary associations
Jean Miller Cohen Cottage (F)	1940: occupied at times by artists Jean Cohen, John Grillo, Marcia Marcus, and Jan Muller after 1955; moved in 1978
Euphoria Cottage (G)	1950s-1960s: owned by author Hazel Hawthorne Werner; reportedly visited by writers Edmund Wilson, e.e. Cummings, and Norman Mailer; and artists Peter Blume, Edwin Dickenson, and Claire Leighton since 1950; evidence supporting relationship to cottage is vague
Fearing (Bessay) Cottage (H)	1930s: no art or literary associations
Leo Fleurant Cottage (I)	1938-1939: no art or literary associations; moved in 1978
Fowler Cottage (J)	1949: no art or literary associations
Jones Cottage (K)	1936: no art or literary associations
Margo Cottage (L)	1960s: occupied by artists Boris Margo and Jan Gelb since 1960s
Ofsevit Cottage (M)	c.1929: recently occupied by artists Frank Milby and Barbara Baker; reportedly occupied by Harry Kemp between 1929 and 1931

Schmid Cottage (N)

c.1931: no art or literary associations

Rose Tasha Cottage (O)

1925?: associated with Harry Kemp who lived here between c.1932 and 1960.

Thalassa Cottage (P)

1931: owned by author Hazel Hawthorne Werner; reportedly visited by writers Edmund Wilson, e.e. Cummings, and Norman Mailer; and artists Peter Blume, Edwin Dickenson, and Claire Leighton since the late 1930s; evidence supporting relationship to cottage is vague

Wells Cottage (Q)

c.1935: owned by artist Ray Wells since late 1930s; Wells has been a locally active artist since the early 1950s

*This information was taken from research reports prepared by consultants for the National Park Service and the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

We have enclosed the following material which is referred to in this memorandum:

1. Inventory forms for each of the Dune Shack structures.
2. The Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Officer's letter of September 22, 1988, (including the SHPO's staff report, reports by Candace Jenkins and Michael Steinitz).
3. Brian Pfeiffer's letter of October 31, 1988.
4. U.S.G.S. maps; Provincetown and North Truro quadrangles.



MEDIA ADVISORY

MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Robin Scott, Public Information Officer, MHC
(617) 727-8470
Susan Pye, Director of Communications, SOS
(617) 727-9126

Date: January 20, 1989

Area of Interest: Dune Shacks

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE RECOMMENDS AGAINST DUNE SHACK ELIGIBILITY

Connolly and MHC Promise Fight for Preservation of Shacks

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has received a formal response from the National Park Service (NPS) that announced their recommendation against the eligibility of the Dune Shacks for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The matter is being adjudicated by the Keeper of the National Register, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

Secretary Connolly, Chairman of the Massachusetts Historical Commission said, "I do not accept the opinion of the Park Service that the Dune Shacks lack historic value. I am concerned that the NPS failed to recognize the cultural and historic significance of these properties. Our intent is to pursue this listing with the Keeper and to see to it that the shacks are listed in the National Register of Historic Places."

The staff of the MHC also expressed their concern that the National Park Service **has not recognized** the cultural and historic significance of these properties. Without National Register eligibility, the National Park Service will be under no obligation to protect these 18 cottages. In similar cases, **without this designated protection by the Keeper**, properties have been **demolished**.

The MHC is **committed to preserving the Dune Shacks**, which are an important resource of the Cape Cod National Seashore, an historic and culturally **significant part of our Commonwealth**. The staff will review the National Park Service comments, and will **send a formal response** to the Keeper in Washington D.C.



Board of Selectmen

PROVINCETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02657

April 28, 1989

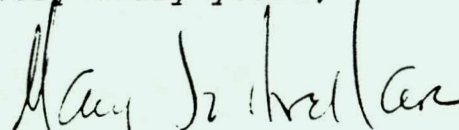
Secretary of State Michael J. Connolly
State House
Room 115
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Dear Mr. Connolly:

The Provincetown Board of Selectmen wishes to thank you for your support of the Dune Shacks and their eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

Enclosed please find a copy of our letter to the Keeper of the National Register reaffirming our stand in the matter.

Very truly yours,


Mary-Jo Avellar, Chairman

copies: Board of Selectmen
William A. McNulty, Town Manager
James Bradley, Commissioner, Mass. Historical Commission

MJA/gs



Board of Selectmen

PROVINCETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02657

April 28, 1989

Mr. Jerry Rogers
Keeper of the National Register
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013

Dear Mr. Rogers:

The Provincetown Board of Selectmen reaffirms its very strong opposition to the National Park Service recommendation against the eligibility of Dune Shacks for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

It is our firm belief that these Dune Shacks have integral historical value to not only the Town and the Commonwealth, but to the rest of the country as well. We urge the National Park Service to reconsider its position in this matter.

Very truly yours,

Mary-Jo Avellar, Chairman

copies: Board of Selectmen
William A. McNulty, Town Manager
James Bradley, Commissioner, Mass. Historical Commission
Secretary of State Michael J. Connolly
Beth Savage, Dept. of the Interior

MJA/gs

Although the proposed Provincetown Historic District and other individual buildings in the town are historically related to Provincetown's development as a late 19th and 20th-century art and literary colony and to particular significant individuals, the dunes and the dune shacks represent the isolated seaside hinterland which also served as an important retreat for inspiration and the creation of artistic and literary work by members of that same community. Art schools such as the Cape Cod School of Art, established in 1899 by Charles Hawthorne, and the Summer School of Painting, established in 1900 by Ambrose Webster, as well as other organizations such as the Provincetown Players (1916), the Beachcombers Club (1916), and the Sixes and Sevens Coffeehouse (1920), were drawn to the Cape's natural beauty and the promotion of the arts in Provincetown. Major luminaries such as playwright Eugene O'Neill, socialite Mabel Dodge, and radical journalist John Reed attracted an everchanging constellation of literati, socialites, bohemians, actors, writers, and artists to the dunes at Provincetown for artistic inspiration and creative interaction.

Eugene O' Neill is one of the well-known writers clearly associated with the dunes. In his work diaries archived in manuscript collections at Yale University, O'Neill lists dates and places where plays were written including works penned at the dunes at Peaked Hill: Anna Christie (1920), The Emperor Jones (1920), Diff'rent (1920), The Fountain (1921), The Hairy Ape (1921), Marco Millions (1923), and All God's Chillun Got Wings (1923). Despite the destruction of the old lifesaving station associated with Eugene O'Neill in the 1931 hurricane, the cultural tradition of dune habitation has been continued by subsequent generations of creative persons. Following the destruction of the O'Neill property several shacks were constructed in the 1930s, 40s and 50s to meet the demand for dune living accommodations.

Although it may not be possible to document direct association of well-known figures with each individual shack, sources do document the long association of the artistic community with the district and with the dune shacks from O'Neill's occupation to the present. Critic Edmund Wilson's The Thirties chronicles his visits to the dunes and to the abode of Eugene O' Neill, the abandoned lifesaving station previously converted to a residence by socialite Mabel Dodge. The book, transcribed from Wilson's journals, provides anecdotes about the impact of the seaside environment and mentions several individuals who shared the experience of life in a stark dune shack by the sea. It is clear from this account and others that the dunes and the dune shacks, as the sole remaining material cultural artifacts representative of this pattern of historical use and cultural symbolism, were frequented not by isolated individuals, but rather by a collection of varied artists united by the dynamic process of artistic creation. Some persons mentioned specifically in Wilson's accounts are: John Dos Passos and his wife, Katy; George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell, founders of the Provincetown Players; bohemian poet Harry Kemp; artist Niles Spencer; watercolorists William and Lucy L'Engle; writer Mary Heaton Vorse; local bookseller Frank Shay, publisher of early O'Neill, Edna Millay, and Susan Glaspell works; and Hazel Hawthorne Ufford (later to become Werner), relative of artist Charles Hawthorne and one of the grand dames of the dunes.

To: Alison Blake
Cape Cod Times

Re: Dune Cottage Registration

The Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, in designating the dune cottages at Peaked Hill and environs as National Registered properties, has clearly recognized that the human spirit is an integral part of the human habitation, and this identification is the heart and soul of a democratic society. We can all be proud and grateful for this perception.

The registration of the constellation of dune cottages represents the preservation of one of the most unique cultural entities in the United States, in my opinion, not alone because of the richness of an historic past beginning with the fishermen's huts on the great outer beach discovered by Henry David Thoreau as he put "all America behind him," and still manifest today in the dune dwellings, but because of the on-going, continuous enrichment of the American dream which the dune residences embody: the freedom to imagine and invent new worlds.

The registration of the cottages, however, is only the first part of the preservation process. The recognition of unique status must now be followed by the unequivocal resolution of ownership. The Department of the Interior should consider clearing the unclear tangle of legalities in which the cottage owners find themselves and identify the dune dwellings as improved properties immune from condemnation. in the manner that the majority of privately owned dwellings within the National Park which existed before 1959 are presently considered. The Bessay cottage, for instance, has been under litigation for 21 years. It is time for the situation to be resolved on behalf of a workable and fair accord. By granting improved property status with rights of inheritance to heirs and assigns, the National Seashore dilemma of caretakership is resolved and the burden of maintenance placed on the cottage owners. The advantage to both the Park Service and the property owner would be mutual. The Keeper of the National Register has cleared the way for this resolution with a far-sighted and informed decision.

Josephine Del Deo

May 13-1989

Shack Attack? from the Cape Codder 3/29/94

Peaked Hill Put Out By Seashore Plan

By K.C. Myers

Seventy-two people are rejoicing this week after winning "the lottery."

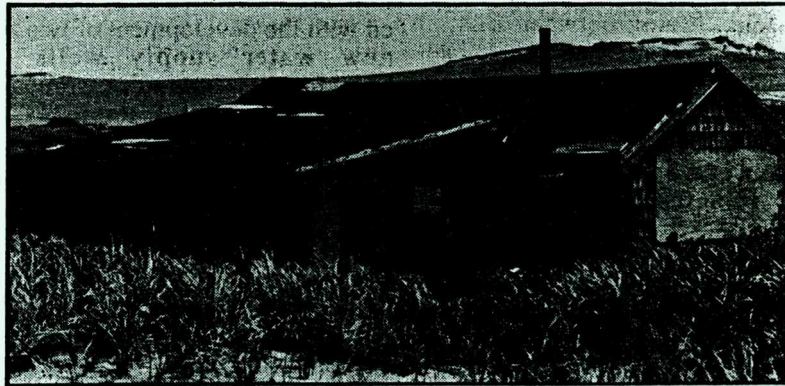
This lottery selects lucky members of Peaked Hill Trust who will get one week of back-to-nature isolation on Provincetown's outer beach in one of four dune shacks. Of the nonprofit organization's membership, 240 applied for the privilege this year.

Soon even fewer may have this opportunity. Peaked Hill Trust is losing access to its shacks because the owners who have life-tenancy agreements with the Cape Cod National Seashore are aging.

Hazel Hawthorne Werner, owner of two of the Peaked Hill shacks, is in her early 90s, said Julie Schecter, president of Peaked Hill. Boris Margo, another owner who has a life-tenancy agreement, is in his late 80s. The time-limited ownership on the fourth shack expires in about 2003, said Ms. Schecter.

Thursday afternoon, members of Peaked Hill took the Seashore to task over its selection procedure that led to three other shacks being leased to private families. Peaked Hill applied this fall to lease all three and was turned down flat. The organization fears the same treatment when it comes time for the four others now in Peaked Hill control to be leased.

"We put together a very good proposal and we didn't acquire a



The Watson-Schmid Cottage in North Truro is now under the care of Gary Isaacson and Laurie Schecter. The shack was uninhabited for 10 years before the Cape Cod National Seashore leased it to Mr. Isaacson and Ms. Schecter.

Staff Photo by Joyce Johnson

lease," said Ms. Schecter. "Unless the Seashore's policy changes, the general public will no longer have access to the dune shacks."

Based on eight years of what they describe as good environmental management and solid maintenance of the four shacks under their guard, Peaked Hill members believe they have more than demonstrated their competence at maintaining the shacks, Ms. Schecter said. About \$10,000 went into the rebuilding of one shack with great care taken to maintain its historic character, she said.

While Peaked Hill wrote a good proposal, said Seashore Superintendent Andrew Ringgold, the other three that won were better. He said the three shacks just leased all need a lot of maintenance and one must be moved. Experience in construction and management of properties was stressed in selecting the lessees, he said, as was evidence of the financial resources to carry out the work.

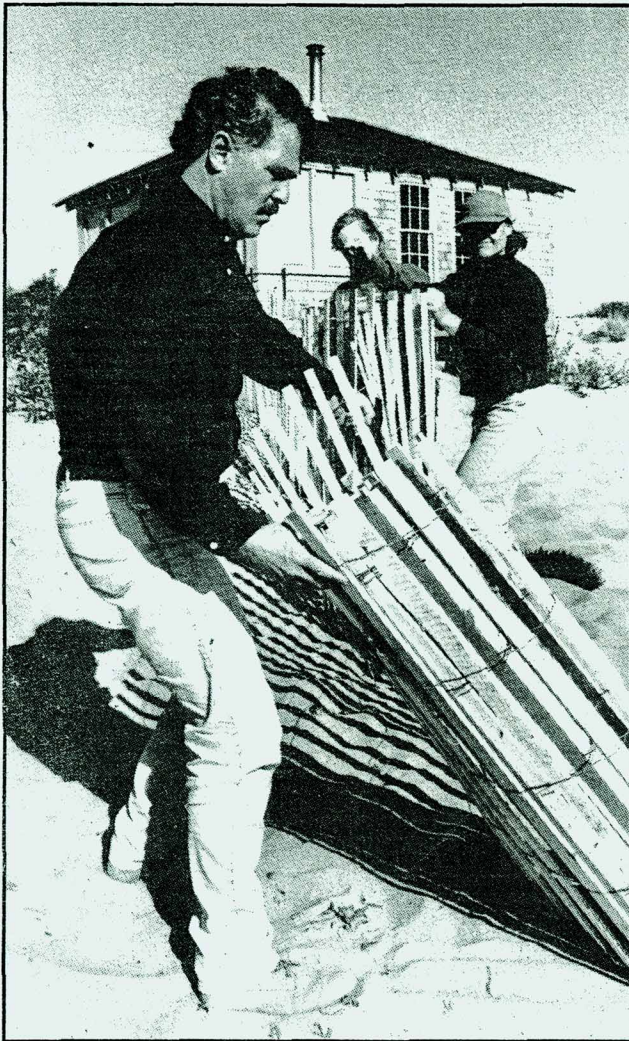
better for the environment. Peaked Hill drives winners of the lottery out to a shack and then picks them up at the end of their one-week stay. Unless they are members of the rescue squad, users themselves are not allowed vehicles. Many other measures are taken by Peaked Hill to assure that the users do not harm the fragile sand dune environment, she said.

Private families would not necessarily maintain that type of control, she said.

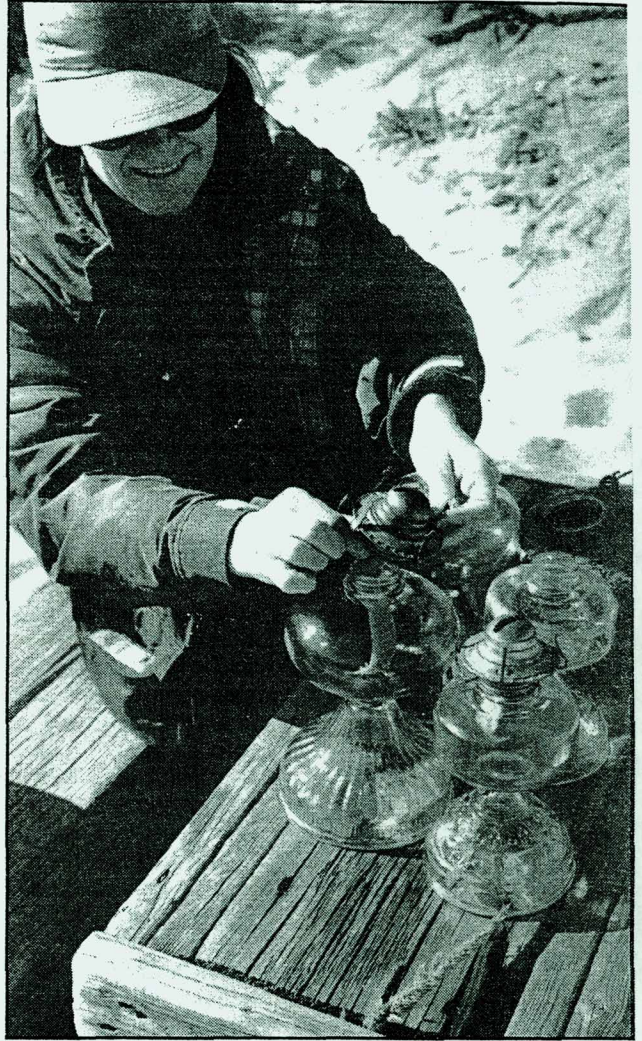
Mr. Ringgold said the single-family use was not the pivotal issue in awarding the lease to private families. He said Peaked Hill was not turned down for one specific reason.

There is also nothing in the future specifically preventing the organization from obtaining a lease to the other shacks as they become available, said Mr. Ringgold.

"When we ask the Park directly if they have anything against us, they say quite the opposite," said Ms. Schecter.



Neil Paster, his wife Michelle Tetreault and Dr. Janet Whalen struggle to install snow fencing to stop drifting sand around Zara's shack.



Michelle Tetreault cleans kerosene lamps at Thalassa before storing them for the winter.

Volunteers Close Shacks for Winter

By Joyce Johnson

The weather cooperated this past weekend as members of the Peaked Hill Trust closed for the winter four dune shacks under their care.

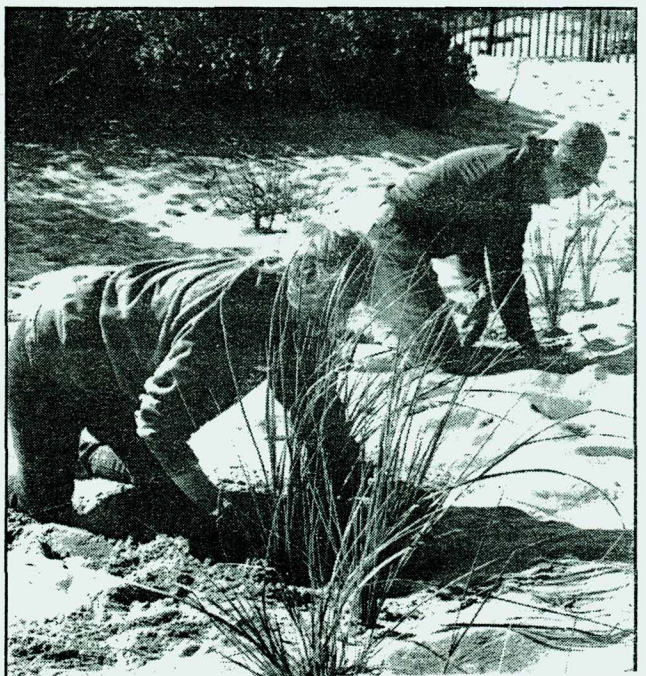
The trust is a nonprofit organization founded in 1986 to save the historic shacks from planned removal by the Cape Cod National Seashore, which takes ownership as leases expire.

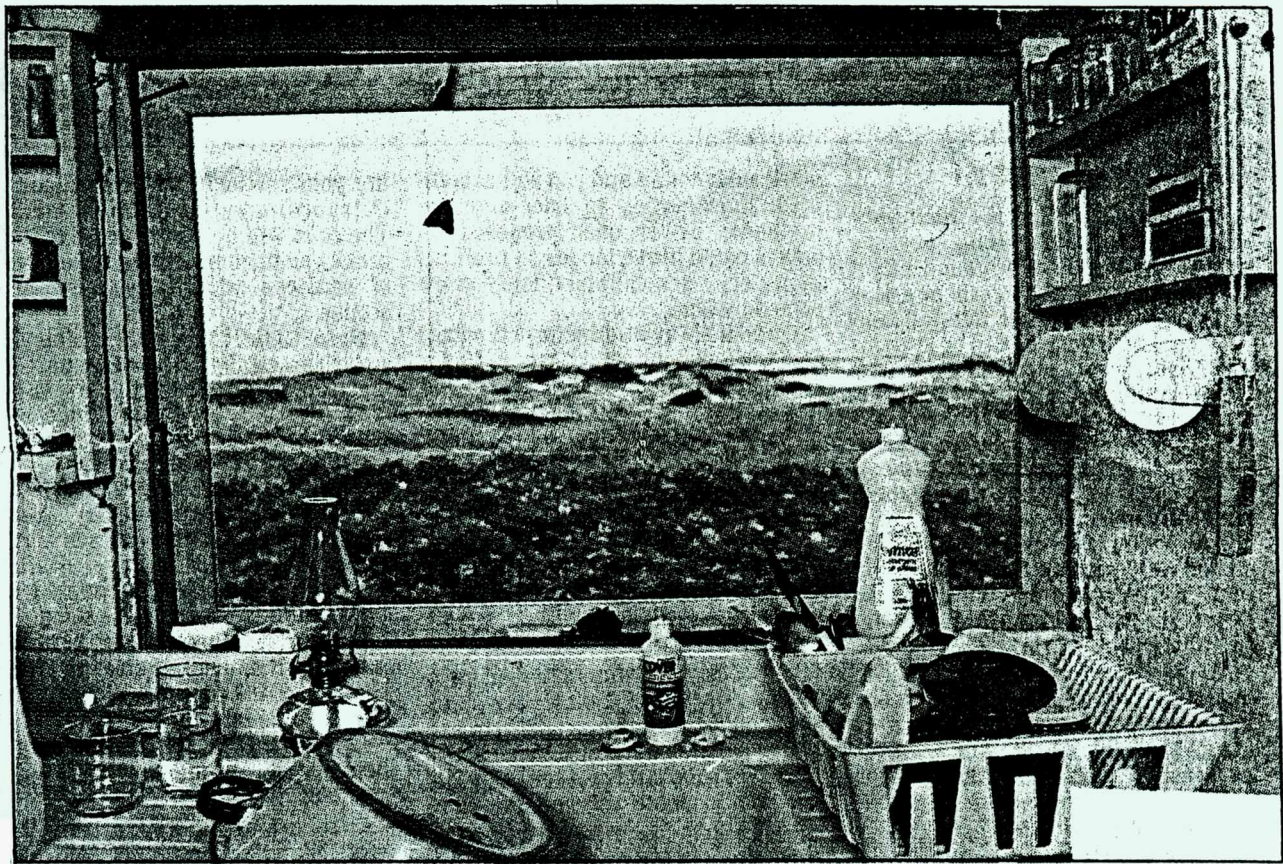
The quaint, hand built shacks have attained national stature mostly because they have been the seasonal residences of many famous artists and writers including playwright Eugene O'Neill, novelist Norman Mailer and painter Jackson Pollock.

Eighteen weather-beaten shacks, out of an original 25 or more, still nestle among the Peaked Hill dunes from Pilgrim Lake in Truro to Race Point in Provincetown.

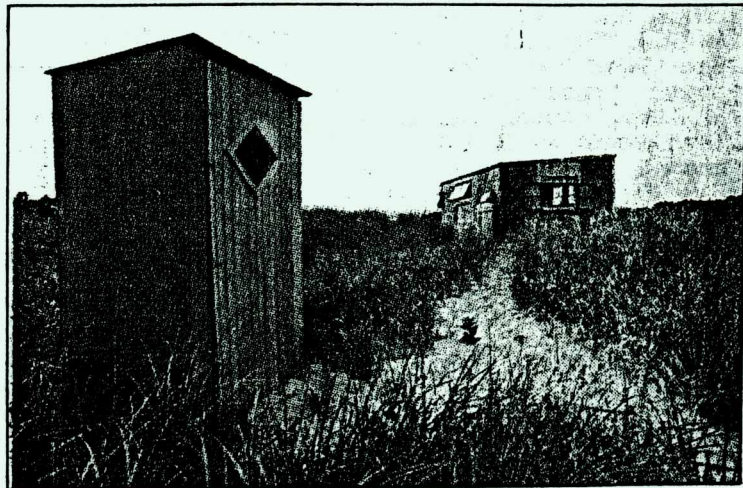
In 1989 the area was declared an historic district and the shacks became eligible for inclusion in the National Register, with the Seashore mandated to preserve them.

To accomplish this without incurring additional expense, the Seashore developed an historic leasing policy for the shacks. The first round of implementing the policy is expected to be completed in a few weeks, with leases issued to three of the 19 applicants who responded and to the Seashore's request for...





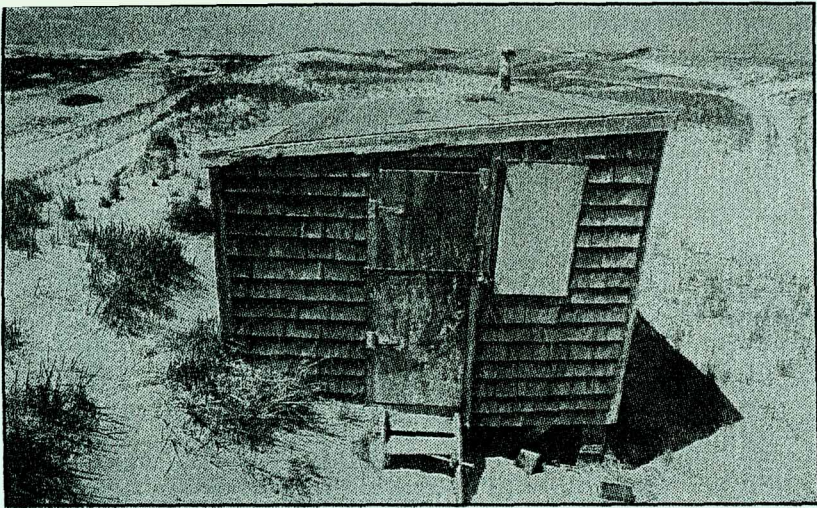
From the screened window over the sink, a panoramic view of the dunes is fringed with beach plum.



One of the more rustic elements of the dune-shack experience, the outdoor privy, is part of the romance — and reality — of life a mile out in the dunes of the Provincelands.

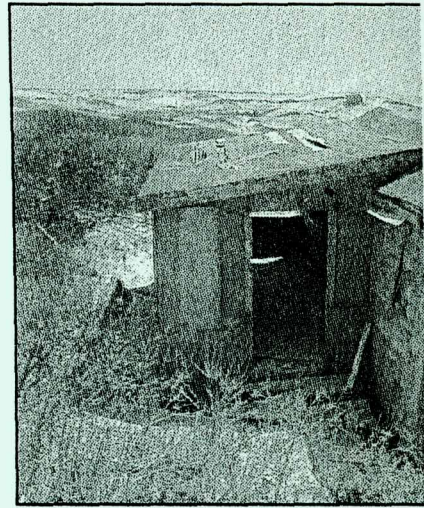
It is just a short walk, up from the beach, past the pump, to the door of the Gelb-Margo.

Times photos by Tory Read

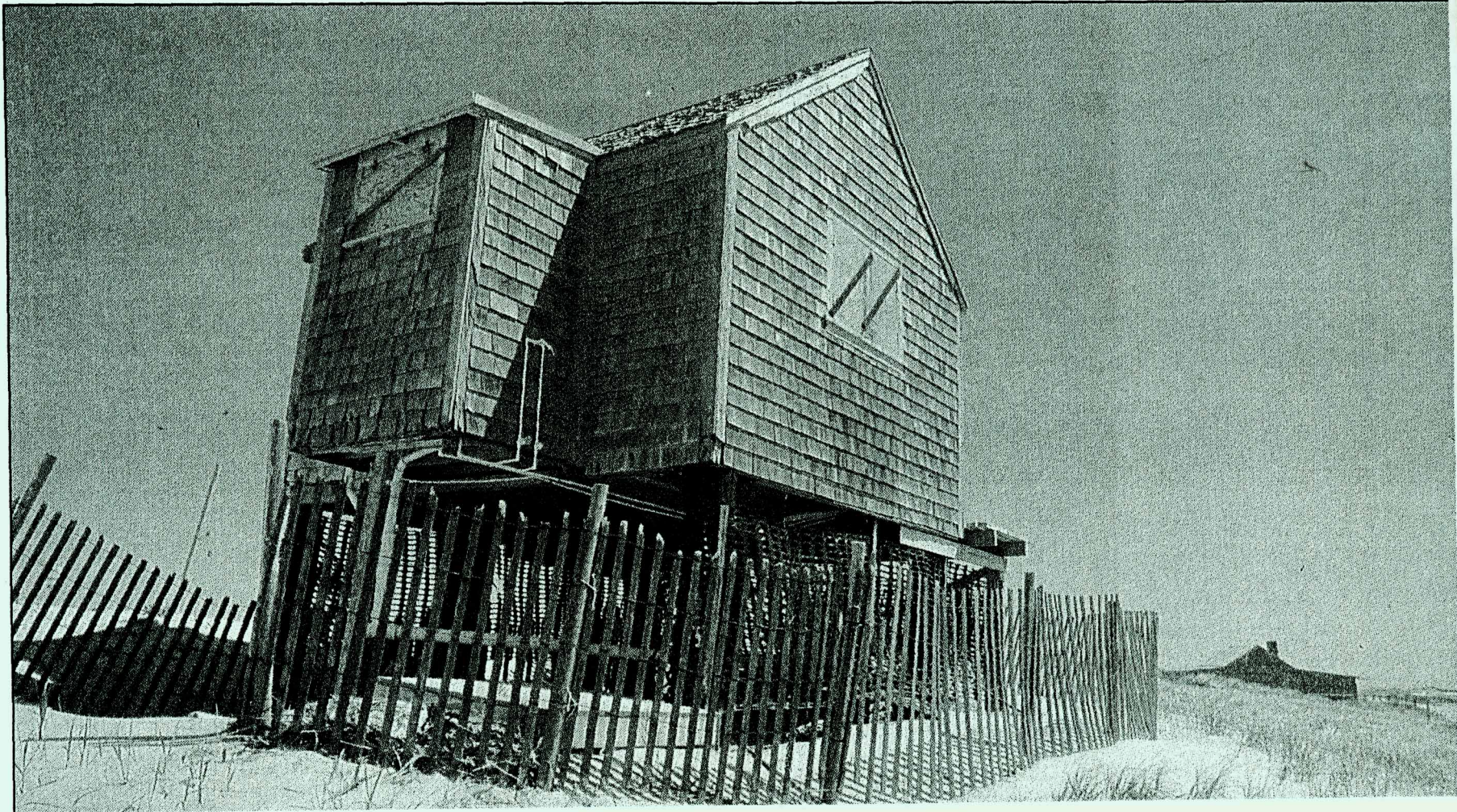


■ The Jones Cottage is one of the smallest in the Province Lands.

OUT IN THE DUNES



■ The Watson-Schmid Cottage away



Cape & Islands

No quitter: Shack owner resumes

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOSTON — Capping a legal battle that began in 1967, a woman went to federal appeals court yesterday to fight the National Park Service's plans to demolish her rustic cottage in the dunes of the Cape Cod National Seashore.

Grace E. Bessay says her Provincetown shack is a historical relic, one of a cluster of primitive beach cabins that for a century have been used as creative retreats by artists, poets, writers and celebrated bohemians, including Jack Kerouac and Eugene O'Neill.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission

has recommended that Miss Bessay's shack and 17 others belong on the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Park Service says it has identified shacks visited by notable artists, but Miss Bessay's cottage wasn't among them.

It says cottages frequented by Eugene O'Neill, Mabel Dodge and Edmund Wilson are no longer standing, and there is no proof that the likes of e.e. cummings, Kerouac and Norman Mailer spent time in the rickety buildings that still cling to the isolated dunes.

The government's lawyer says the case before the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals turns not on its literary merits but on arcane matters of squatters' rights, the definition of

a dwelling and tangled questions of titles.

The government condemned the shack in 1967 — Miss Bessay says illegally — but lawsuits prevented its demolition. Most neighbors, meanwhile, have given up and many reached agreements that will allow their cottages to be demolished after their deaths, she said.

The case is the oldest still pending in federal court, according to one of Miss Bessay's lawyers, William P. Homans, who said at least one of the original judges has died.

Miss Bessay, who winters in Cambridge, says she is in her mid-60s but won't be specific.

"I have aged, I must say, by all this litiga-

CAPE COD TIMES, FRIDAY, MAY 5, 1989

PAGE 3

22-year court battle

tion," she said. "Some days I feel like I'm 110."

She said this legal battle and an earlier, unsuccessful fight to keep two other dune cottages in Truro, have consumed "about half of my life, one way or another — but I am a preservationist and a conservationist, God help me."

The government's attorney, David Shilton, argued that Miss Bessay does not have clear title to her property, which she inherited from a friend in 1981.

Furthermore, he said, the shack does not have the modern electricity, sewage lines or running water that would qualify it as the type of home that Congress intended to pre-

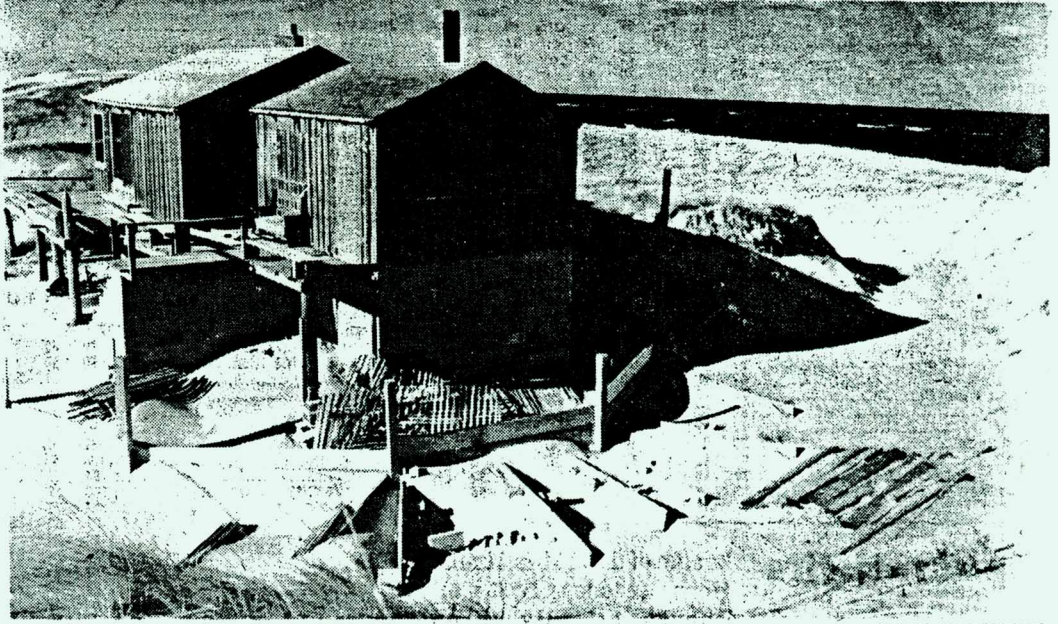
serve when it created the national seashore in 1961.

Miss Bessay said that is exactly why artists and nature-lovers like it.

"I don't want a generator banging away and making smells of gasoline," she said. Living in a dune shack, she said, means "getting your water by hand pumps, which is a pleasure. It isn't a burden, it's a pleasure. And kerosene lamps for light, that is also a pleasure."

"If I were an Amish person or a Menonite, everyone would think it was wonderful," she said. "And it is."

Jeffrey Axelrod, her attorney, expects a decision in the next two months.



TIMES FILE PHOTO

A dune shack overlooks the ocean in Provincetown.

8/4/88. Cape Cod Times

Bureaucracy may doom Cape-tip dune shacks

"I am of the opinion that the Peaked Hill cottages are not at all 'inharmonious with the Park landscape,' but actual museum-like adjuncts to the real meaning of the Park. The cottages are definitely a part of the 'response to Place,' just as you would not remove old adobe buildings from a park in the American southwest."

— From a 1963 letter from author Jack Kerouac to Hazel Hawthorne Werner, owner of two dune shacks in the Provincelands.

By ALLISON BLAKE
STAFF WRITER

PROVINCETOWN — One can see that the White House is historic. But how about 18 summer cottages, fashioned from bits of flotsam and jetsam, where myriad major and minor artists and writers have lived during the last 70 years?

Within the next two weeks, the Massachusetts Historical Commission expects to decide if it agrees with a report that concludes the "dune shacks" at the windswept tip of Cape Cod fail to meet the criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

If the shacks are not placed on the register, their fate is in question. Although some cottage owners hold leases from the Cape Cod National Seashore that are valid into the next century,

all of the dwellings are slated for eventual destruction, to return the dunes to the wild.

In a 1963 letter, writer Jack Kerouac confirmed that artists at the vanguard of the Abstract Expressionist movement, Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock, spent time in the shacks. Playwright Eugene O'Neill owned a shack, the former Peaked Hill life-saving station, that washed into the sea more than 50 years ago.

A report by the Boston-based Architectural Conservation Trust, commissioned by the Seashore, says writers e.e. cummings, Edmund Wilson, and long-time Provincetown summer resident Norman Mailer likely have worked in one of two dune shacks owned by Hazel Hawthorne Werner, the recipient of Kerouac's letter.

Kerouac's letter confirmed that he wrote a portion of his landmark book, "On the Road," in one of her cottages during the summer of 1950.

But, still, the report finds that the cottage "does not meet the National Register listing criteria due to its altered, undistinguished design and lack of direct association with events or persons significant in our past."

"I'm very concerned that the shacks are going to get lost because of bureaucratic insensitivity," says artist, newspaper reporter and

...Shacks

From Page 1

long-time dune dweller Joyce Johnson. "When you start coming down with criteria, you're missing the point: the point being that there is an aesthetic value out there that doesn't fit into a criteria."

At least two private organizations and one public agency hope that the shacks may be saved. In fact, that hope brought one private group, the Peaked Hill Trust, into existence.

The Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission supports saving the cottages, and the private Citizens Concerned for Seacoast Management two years ago asked state legislators to pass a resolution to save the cottages.

A state historic commission official agreed last week that his agency's decision will likely be "pivotal" to the shacks' future. But avenues to preserve them are limited, because the shacks are on federal land, says Jim Bradley, director of the commission's Division of Preservation Planning.

"If these were in Chatham, outside the seashore, the community could protect them by putting them inside a historic district," says Bradley.

But the Cape director of the state's Coastal Zone Management office says the state must not ignore the shacks' importance to the state's own heritage.

"If they say they're not (historic), I would think we can all sit down with the National Seashore and work out the preservation, maintenance, and use of a select number of buildings that are important to a way of life in the Provincelands," says Jack Clarke.

The Peaked Hill Trust is prepared to ask Congress to save the shacks, says Director Julie Schecter. "We're not exactly set up for doing this, but, if necessary, we will pursue that course. We would prefer to keep it local, but this is a national resource," she says.

David B. H. Martin, chairman of the seashore advisory commission, says he believes park officials could interpret existing laws to save the shacks, because the park was originally set up as a "multi-use area."

Seashore superintendant Herbert Olsen says the park will decide how to proceed in "areas of agreement" with the state historic commission after the state commission makes its ruling.

Although not all of the cottages are alike, many are built on stilts, and are served by hand-pumped water and gas stoves. Some are relatively modern, with big picture windows looking out across the bare Atlantic seascape. Others are built only of materials that have washed ashore.

The fight to save the cottages started over two years ago, after the Seashore razed the cottage "Dune Charlie" Schmid had occupied year-round for years. The action was in keeping with lifetime or multi-year lease agreements made by shack owners when the park came into being in the early 1960s.

But some say they will lie down in front of a bulldozer before they allow another cottage to be razed.

"I lived 'in the moment' there," says Genevieve Shuster, a Provincetown resident who lived two summers in the dunes and has visited many times over the last 12 years. "To live in the moment in town: you get so busy, you don't remember your body or the air or the sky or sun. You just go.

"I was much more thankful for what I had. You pump water. You sweep sand, every day. You learn to put the dishes upside-down so the sand doesn't get in them," says Ms. Shuster, who lived there with her daughter, Pallila, now 11.

Artists still find inspiration at dune shacks

PROVINCETOWN — The dune shacks remain a dynamic place for the creative.

So a number of artists and writers who have spent time there have submitted work about the dune shacks to a journal. Included are the works of two Pulitzer-Prize-winning poets.

"We wanted to show that contemporary artists are creating out there; it's not just something that started during the early 1900s," says sculptor Joyce Johnson, a founder of the Peaked Hill Trust, which is dedicated to preserving the dune shacks.

Among the contributors are artists Jim Peters, Bill Fritts, Pat deGroot, Ms. Johnson, and Arne Manos. Writers include Pulitzer winners Stanley Kunitz and Mary Oliver, plus writers Hazel Hawthorne Werner, Miriam Hapgood DeWitt, Josephine Del Deo and Kathy Shorr.

All of the works are directly related to the dunes, either because they were created there or because they are about the sandy world of ocean-side isolation.

"We're just trying to memorialize the shacks in some way, in case they do go down," says Ms. Johnson.

The Peaked Hill Journal, which will publish the works in September, will be dedicated to the late Dr. Barbara Mayo, a founder of the trust, a founder of the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown and member of the Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission. Mrs. Mayo died in May.

"Right before she died, Barbara said one of her greatest joys was to try to preserve the dune shacks," said trust member and dune dweller

Hazel Hawthorne Werner's novel The Salt House was written and published while she was in residence on the dunes in the 1930s. The circle of literary and artist friends who frequented her two dune shacks, Thalassa and Euphoria, included Wilson, Glaspell, Dos Passos, e.e. cummings, Clare Leighton, Edwin Dickinson, Franz Kline, and Jack Kerouac, among others.

William Brevda's biography of poet Harry Kemp entitled Harry Kemp: The Last Bohemian (1986) documents the poet's intensely personal relationship with the dune environment throughout his life. Kemp, known as the "Poet of the Dunes," wove references to the dunes throughout his poetry and other writings created primarily while he was in residence at the dunes. Numerous references can be found in the texts of such works as Love Among the Cape Enders, Tramping on Life, More Miles, "Great Night," "Poet's Song," "Aurian Dunes," "Dune-Reverant," Poet of the Dunes: Songs of the Dunes and the Outer Shore, With Others in Varying Modes and Moods, and his unpublished autobiographical novel, "Time of the Moon: A Tale of the Dunes," to name but a few of his works. Kemp felt such an affinity for the dunes and his experiences there that he specifically requested that upon his death that half of his ashes be scattered over the dunes and the other half be scattered over Greenwich Village. Writer, artist, poet Jan Gelb, spent most of her summers in a dune shack built by her husband, artist Boris Margo, conceiving and executing works from 1935 until her death in 1977. She too had her ashes scattered among the dunes.

The period of significance for the Dune Shacks extends to the less than fifty year period, but the district meets criteria exception G for exceptional significance. Documentation supports their exceptional importance as a unique resource type associated with long-standing traditional use by American and expatriate European artists, poets, journalists, celebrated bohemians, socialites and the like. A logical termination date for the district's period of significance is 1960. The rationale is twofold: in 1960 the Cape Cod National Seashore was created, and the year also marks the date of Harry Kemp's death in the dunes. It may be true that not enough time has passed to allow for a historical perspective on the significant achievements of some individual artists associated with the district in the less than fifty year period. However, there does exist sufficient documentation on the importance of the district to Provincetown's history as a haven for the artistic community and the role of this group of artists and their work, both in Provincetown and the dunes, to demonstrate the shacks' exceptional cultural significance for associations with the continued use of the district by recognized artists under criterion A.

The essay on the history of the Provincetown art colony by Dorothy Gees Seckler provided in Provincetown Painters: 1890s-1970s (1977), edited by Ronald A. Kuchta, documents this broad pattern of historical development within the context of a handful of comparable art colonies in Europe and the United States. The appendix of this book lists numerous artists who have painted in the Provincetown vicinity, as documented by a variety of sources including books, periodicals, museum records and oral history. Of the 283 artists listed, the vast majority worked in the Provincetown area in the 1920s, 30s, 40s and 50s. They run the gamut from relative unknowns to well-known artists and include such names as: Blanche Lazell, Bruce McKain, John Grillo, Philip Mallicoat, Ross Moffett, Frederick J. Waugh, Ben Shahn, Jan

Muller, Marcia Marcus, and Marguerite and William Zorach, to name but a few. Specific dune shacks are linked with several of these individual artists; however, the district is significant for the shacks' collective use by the artistic community. Representative paintings illustrating the direct influence of the dunes and the shacks include: "The Shack" by Loren MacIver (1934), "Dunes at Sunset" by Morris Kantor (1939), and "Cabin Behind Herman Tasha's" by Wolf Kahn (1953).

BOUNDARY:

The boundary for the Dune Shacks at Peaked Hill Bars Historic District encompasses approximately 1500 acres and is described as: the shoreline to the north, the crest of the second dune line away from the shore south of the second jeep trail delineated on the accompanying USGS map, the viewshed line of the cluster of shacks F, A, I and D on the west, and the crest of the first dune ridge to the east of shack B. These boundaries are demarcated on the attached map of the area.

This boundary encompasses all of the dune shacks and the area incorporating the entirety of the historically significant cultural landscape and associated important viewsheds as seen from the dune shacks. This boundary is supported by the written documentation and by the attached Geographic Information Systems viewshed analysis. We recognize the shifting characteristics of the dune landscape; for this reason, this boundary is a close approximation. In light of dune movement the boundary may move in some locations some degree, but the basic principles underlying its justification shall remain constant. Allowing for this movement, the boundary shall continue to include the dune shacks and the extent of the landscape to the crest of the second dune ridge, wherever that may occur.

Prepared by: Beth L. Savage
Architectural Historian
May 1989



* M E M O R A N D U M *

TO: Parties interested in the Dune Shacks of Cape Cod
FROM: *JB* Jim Bradley, Director of Preservation Planning
DATE: September 20, 1988
RE: Massachusetts Historical Commission's decision on
National Register eligibility

The Massachusetts Historical Commission held its monthly Commission meeting on September 14, 1988 at the Codman Estate in Lincoln, Massachusetts. During the meeting, the Commission voted unanimously in favor of National Register eligibility for the 18 dune shacks located on the outer cape, along the Cape Cod National Seashore. In the Commission's opinion, the dune shacks appear eligible as a district, fulfilling National Register Criteria A and C.

The National Park Service has announced that it will seek an opinion from the Keeper of the National Register in the Park Service's Washington, D.C. office. The Massachusetts Historical Commission expects that the Keeper of the National Register will make a decision within 45 days of receipt of the Park Service's request.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission appreciates your interest in the preservation of the dune shacks, and thanks you for all of your time and efforts.

JB/kh

LEGAL NOTICE
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE
MICHAEL J. CONNOLLY, SECRETARY
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET, BOSTON, MA 02116

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Massachusetts Historical Commission will hold a public hearing on Friday, August 26, 1988 at 1:00 at the Town Hall in Provincetown, MA. The purpose of the hearing is to receive public comments concerning the historic and cultural value of the structures located in Provincetown and Truro known as the "Dune Shacks".

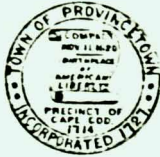
Interested parties will be given the opportunity to present testimony orally or in writing at the public hearing. Those individuals giving oral testimony are encouraged to provide a written copy of their testimony. Written testimony will be accepted within fourteen (14) days after the public hearing and should be mailed to Valarie A. Talmage, Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission, 80 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116



Massachusetts Historical Commission
Public Hearing on the Dune Shacks
Provincetown Town Hall, Provincetown, MA
August 26, 1988 1:00 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Welcome and review of public hearing procedures
-Secretary of State, Michael J. Connolly
2. Summary on the National Register and background on the Dune Shacks
-Betsy Friedberg, Massachusetts Historical Commission
3. Comments from the National Park Service
4. Testimony from elected officials
5. Testimony from agency representatives
6. Testimony from the general public
7. Closing Comments
-Secretary of State, Michael J. Connolly



Board of Selectmen

PROVINCETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02657

July 15, 1988

Mr. James Bradley
Massachusetts Historical Commission
80 Boylston Street, Room 310
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Dear Mr. Bradley:

The Provincetown Board of Selectmen is deeply concerned with the preservation of the dune shacks located within the National Seashore Park and indeed their historic value and furthermore, their utmost importance to the heritage of Provincetown and this country.

We urge the Massachusetts Historical Commission to give landmark status to all the existing cottages, as they represent a way of life vital to Cape Cod and one to be preserved for many years hence. Throughout the decades, they have nationally been a source of inspiration for artists and writers, as they vitally are today. Nobel Prize winner, Eugene O'Neill lived there as did writer, Harry Kemp, "the Poet of the Dunes," whose shack still stands on the property.

The Town of Provincetown further resolves that the Massachusetts Historical Commission, along with the National Seashore Park Service and the Department of Interior, immediately cease action to destroy the dune shacks and that all further action be to find the solution to insure their continuance. We wholeheartedly support that not one more shack be razed.

Very truly yours,

Paul A. Christo

Paul A. Christo
Chairman

cc: Mr. Herbert Olsen, Cape Cod National Seashore
Mr. Donald Hodel, Secretary, Department of Interior
Honorable Edward M. Kennedy, U.S. Senator
Honorable Paul Doane, State Senator
Honorable Howard Cahoon, State Representative
Honorable Gerry Studds, Congressman
Provincetown Historical Commission

PC/as

Dune Cottage Status - December 12, 1985

NPS Assigned Number	Map	Name/Identification	Status	Remarks
04-8713 ①	201-4	Lawrence McCreedy & Robert Abramson	Stipulation	Term of use expires 12/28/93
04-1051 ②	202-4	Leo Fleurant	USA	Life Estate - Deceased
04-1006 ③	202-4	David Adams	In litigation	
04-1053 ④	202-4	Nathaniel Champlin	Quiet Title Action	Ownership claimed on about 8 Acres
04-8618 ⑤	202-4	Conrad Malicoat	Private Property	Homesite 3.0 Acres
08-1049 ⑥	201-8	Hazel Hawthorne Werner	Stipulation	Life Estate - Indefinite
08-1040 ⑦	201-8	Boris Margo	Stipulation	Life Estate - Indefinite
08-1043 ⑧	201-8	Rose Tasha	Stipulation	Term of use expires 03/25/2005
08-1041 ⑨	201-8	Irving Offsevit	Stipulation	Term of use expires 01/16/98
08-1044 ⑩	201-8	Stanley Fower	Stipulation	Life Estate - Indefinite
08-1050	201-8	Abandoned Boat House	USA	Building collapsed
08-1045 ⑪	201-8	Grace Bessay (Andrew Fuller)	In litigation	(Located on Tract 08-1036)
08-1047 ⑫	201-8	Jeanne Chanel	Stipulation	Life Estate - Indefinite
08-1042 ⑬	201-8	Hazel Hawthorne Werner	Stipulation	Life Estate - Indefinite
08-8655 ⑭	201-8	Theodore Bratten	Disclaimer	Under Special Use Permit
08-8654 ⑮	201-8	Charles Schmid	USA	-
08-8653 ⑯	203-8	Nicholas Wells	Stipulation	Life Estate - Indefinite
08-8644 ⑰	204-8	Randolph Jones	Stipulation	Life Estate - Indefinite
08-8647 ⑱	203-10	David Armstrong	Stipulation	Life Estate - Indefinite

Tr. # 8P-1036