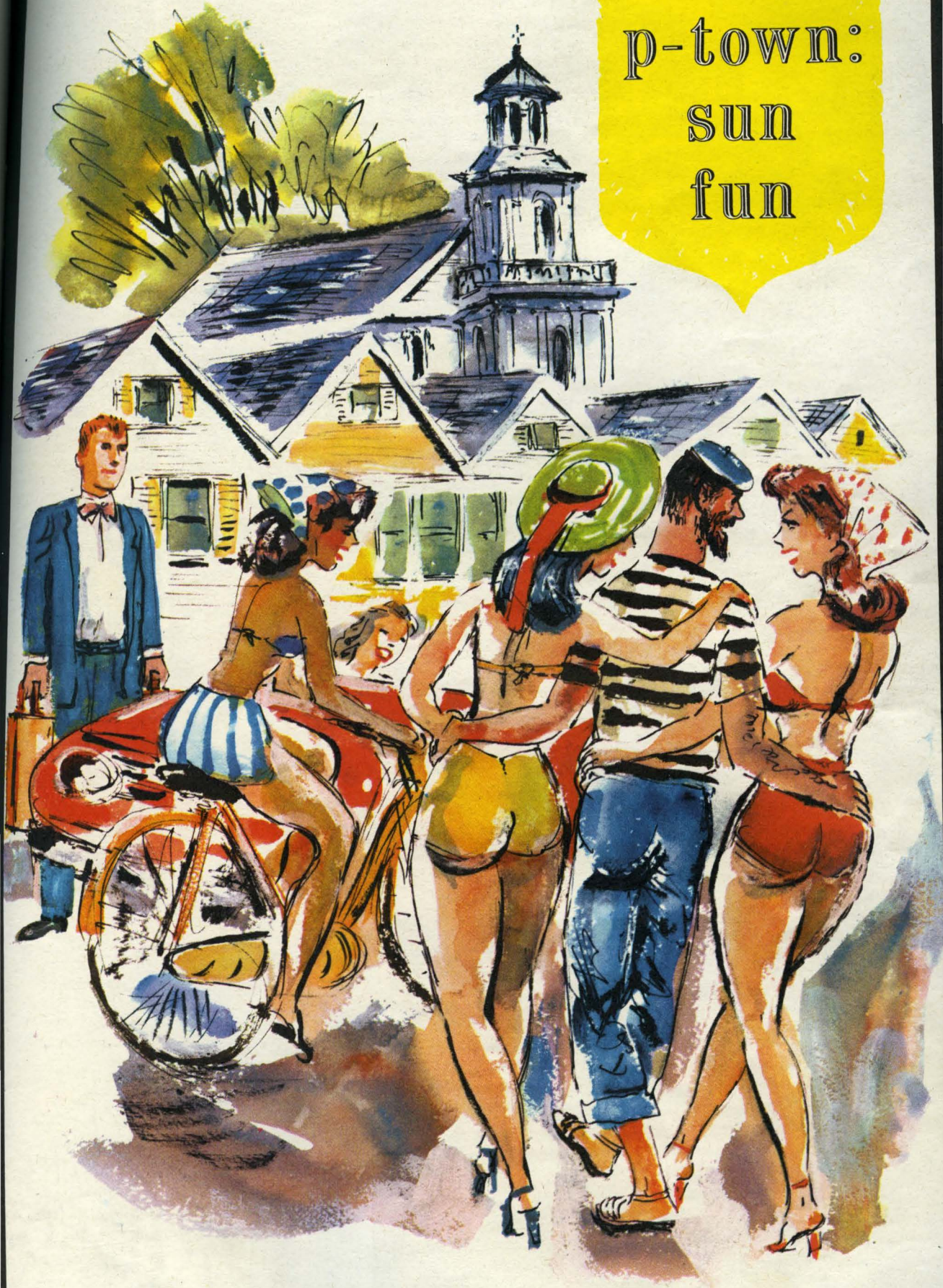
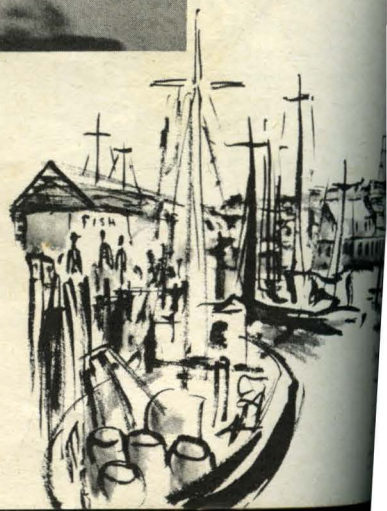


p-town:
sun
fun





In P-town attire that would be a scandal in most resorts never draws a second look. Well, almost never. At right, the fisherman and the caddy are symbols of the old and new.



unprovincial provincetown

Where the East Coast's least inhibited characters enjoy a season in the sun

by Adam Lennard

IF you're trying to get away from the mad, hectic pace of too many parties, too much fun—don't come to Provincetown. Stay further inland on Cape Cod at more familistic places like Chatham, Hyannis, or Wellfleet. There you can color your meerschaum or sublimate your physicality by rubbing down the legs of an antique maple candle-stand. For by the time you reach Provincetown, you're at the end of the Cape—and it really is the end. At any rate, this tiny vacation spot is no place for a guy to hide away and curl up with a good book. There are more animated things to curl up with. So if you're an austere, anti-social type, better drop off at Walden Pond.

Flinging out from the tipmost corner of Cape Cod, just across the water from Boston, Provincetown has little in common with Henry James' native ground. That sophisticated writer wrote a good many stories about Boston's artistic life. Any resemblance to the artists (and models) at Provincetown is not only coincidental: it's impossible.

P-town, as it is familiarly called, swarms with artists—palette practitioners bare-faced and bearded, male and female, young and old, good and bad. Many talented and distinguished painters and sculptors think of P-town as their own special baliwick, like Hans Hoffman, Karl Knatha, Chiam Gross, and other famous names whose works you've seen in the most important museums and richest private collections in the country. Some of them set up their easels and classes outdoors, and you can watch them while they work. Quite a fascinating spectator sport, particularly if the model happens to be a beauty. You're always running across young lady students whose highly representational forms, in shorts and halters, are often prettier than the abstractions they are working on. Chances are, no one will mind your attentive observation in the least.

Watching the *demoiselles* go by is a P-town pastime. Perhaps nowhere in America can you see such a variety of figures in such a variety of daring, inventive, even outlandish clothes. Females in skin-tight lastex pants or slit-at-the-side jeans. Females in shorts—all kinds of shorts, especially the short short *short* shorts. The toppings range from peek-a-boo blouses to frankly-it's-a-cleavage, and the halters come in lace, satin, loosely woven mesh, even burlap for an occasional refugee from Manhattan's Actors Studio.

What is the lurid lure of P-town? Why do people keep coming



back every season even though they complain, "It's not like the pristine days. It's become too commercialized."

Undoubtedly, part of the attraction is the freedom feeling you get from the marvelous meandering coastline and the heady tang of the sea. Who doesn't want to be at least a part-time rover? But, there are interesting shorelines as well. Turn in any direction and you're faced with a view as colorful as any picture postcard company could dream up. Fishing nets, fishing boats and Portuguese fishermen. The fishermen's wives and daughters, dark, lusty, proud-shouldered, sun-and-wind bronzed from living all year in a seacoast town. There are also the beaches, shining silver at low tide and white as snow in the moonlight. And most breath-taking of all, the undulating curve of the beckoning dunes.

There's nothing monotonous about P-town. There's more derring-do per square inch than any other place offers to the mile. The whole town is a mere two blocks wide, but what a confabulation is packed into Commercial and Bradford Streets! There's a jostling camaraderie about everything, whether you're off on a shopping jaunt or a moonlight sail.

The Town Wharf is a central meeting place. Here you can see the fishermen setting out in their trawlers, seiners and draggers; coming back with their netted haul and lobster pots. Unattached sweet young things never seem to tire of this wooden walk with its coils of tarry rope, water-soaked kegs and briny atmosphere. So if you like the atmosphere of unattached sweet young things, this is the place to head for.

With introductions past, you can suggest a historical tour to her. The Town Hall and Museum both offer art treasures, sea-faring trophies like Sir Thomas Lipton's silver cup, ship models, whaling mementoes, Indian relics, ancestral glass-ware and dim dark halls. Or you might climb the Pilgrim



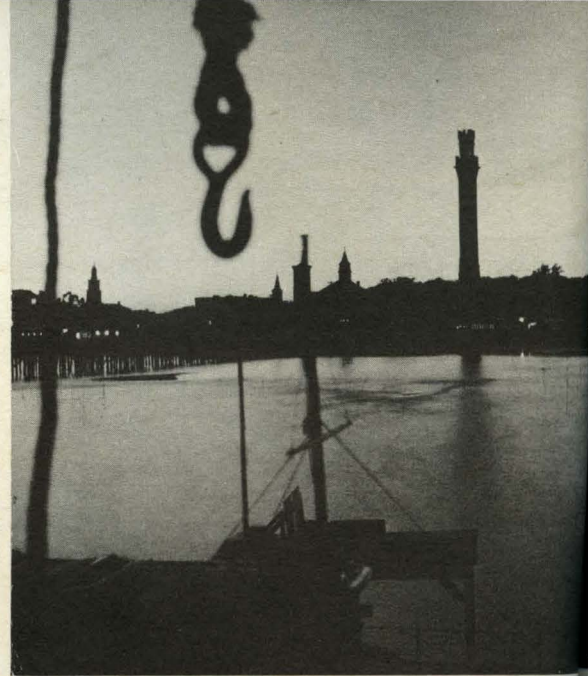


Monument; there's spectacular viewing from the top of the gray granite tower.

Another convenient meeting and nodding spot is the Coffee Mill run by old-timer Harl Cook. You can have coffee with cinnamon bark or sloshed with Viennese whipped cream, or with a twist of lemon peel. Host Cook is so broad-minded he'll even serve it to you with plain American cream and sugar if you want to be really different.

The likeliest get-in-the-swim center is New Beach, just a ten-minute bicycle round from town, past gardens of poppies and hydrangeas and prim white picket fences. The bathing at New Beach is free and easy. If you wave to people, they'll wave right back and possibly invite you to join the party. Chinese checker and scrabble boards and chess sets are out in full force on the sand,





Above, Pilgrim Monument; sketch (at right), Captain Jack's wharf; below, alfresco living among the dunes.

and usually other games to get going as well. There's activity to suit every type.

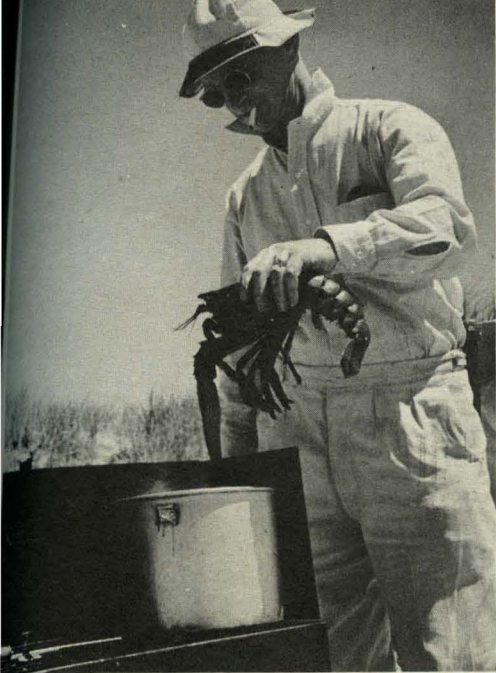
Race Point offers the finest fishing around; you may come back after a morning on the water with haddock ready to be cooked for lunch Portuguese style with a juicy sauce of tomatoes and all kinds of spices. At P-town, there are always cocktail parties in the afternoon. That goes for evening-time as well, with mornings not necessarily excluded. You may have been asked to one of the expanding parties at the exclusive beaches on the bay that are privately owned. And if you don't receive a formal engraved invitation, it scarcely matters. Just open the open door leading to the patio, mix your own gin-and-. P-town hostesses, like Texans, are notorious for their hospitality. And paradoxically, as crowded as every corner is, there always seems to be room for more.

So make your way to the bar on your own—after all, you've gone through enough instructions in the How-to-Do-It-Yourself kit by now, haven't you? Just change the directions to fit the local specifications. If you see some particularly appetizing *hors d'oeuvres*, don't hover over the catfish *vinha d'alhos* (translation: marinate before frying) or the "tinkers" (cold baby mackerels pickled with spices). Pass over the *liquica* (sausage is sausage, even in Portuguese), and don't spend too much time on the *tortas*, tempting as those pastries are with their mixture of sweet potatoes, olive oil and honey. Instead, walk up to the tastiest dish and inquire, "Haven't we met before? Near one of Dr. Zemo's adjustable couches, I believe." The smoke-filled haze at these parties is thick with psychiatric jargon, and the doctors and patients of both sexes are fascinating folk to bend elbows with, or to lean back and adjust with.

For imbibing and amusement in more public places, there are hostelrys that run the gamut from big bills to small silver. The Colonial Inn is haughtily swank, and serves aristocratic lobsters, giant steaks and smoothly blended drinks. Atlantic House, while you won't have to part with quite so much loot, also offers good food and drinks. The big-name bands play here, and there's usually a glamor personality at the mike. Town House has a night club show m.c.'d by Julius Monk of Ruban Bleu fame.

The Pilgrim Club absorbs many of the unattached gals breathing in the local color. It also offers the most fun for the least expenditure, since a couple of beers can last all evening while you tap your feet to the jazz combo. Incidentally, the third member of this jiving trio is a lady drummer. She really pounds those sticks. This place is also the

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favorite hangout of the "natives." You'll see Portuguese fishermen dancing in jeans and gaudy shirts, swinging around the women in their flouncy skirts and bouncy necklines. The feminine art students and models spend a lot of their evenings here.

For an off-beat time, The Moors is a combination restaurant and bar, with a rather gay clientele. Each sex seems to prefer its own company exclusively here. Indeed, there are in P-town quite a number of what someone referred to as "the species that does not reproduce itself, yet seems to be increasing all the time."

The theater has a dramatic history here, starting with the original Provincetown Players group founded by George Cram Cook in 1915. The group, which included such notaries as Robert Edmond Jones, the designer, Susan Glaspell, Wilbur Daniel Steele, Mary Heaton Vorse and others, converted an old fish-house at the end of the town's central wharf into an auditorium where ninety sociable people could crowd together onto wooden benches. Their most expensive set cost all of thirteen dollars, and after presenting *Bound East For Cardiff* by a totally unknown playwright by the name of Eugene O'Neill, they offered associate membership in the Players to anyone in the audience who was willing to pay one dollar to see the remaining three plays of the season.

The Original playhouse structure is gone, but, refurbished and replenished, the Provincetown Players are still going strong under the auspices of Katherine Huntington, a Beacon Hill socialite. Almost any night you can catch previews of Broadway smash hits—as well as turkeys—and in between performances it's fun to recognize stars and budding starlets cruising around the town. Last night's ingenue may well be today's next-seat neighbor at the soda fountain. If the theater is really in your blood, you can hie yourself out to the west end of town to Captain Jack's wharf where Tennessee Williams wrote *The Glass Menagerie*. Tomorrow's playwrights, poets and pundits are all banging away at their typewriters there in a series of shabby apartments that harbor all sorts of interesting activity.

Back in town, there are two movie houses; one for the art trade and the other for regulars. Shopping is another pleasant time-consumer. The gals just love looking at all the pretty things for sale. They really go for the made-to-measure sandals and originally designed leather bags and belts. Unique items of jewelry are also very much a thing here. The local craftsmen will make the maddest design you can dream up. Just call back in twenty-four hours. Screwball signs abound, like "Psycho-ceramics—for crackpots." And of course there are paintings for sale and on exhibition almost everywhere.

The Art Association has two big shows in the course of the summer. Recently, Gallery 256 has opened up to display the works of the most avant of the avant-garde school. At the end of the summer, the Association gives its annual Artists' Ball, and quite a ball it is. The costumes are not only out of this world, they're sheer out of the next one as well. Phosphorescent sequins pasted on in the most amazing decorations . . . materials draped in ways that Mother never taught; it's really anatomical. Nothing more whirling than this wind-up-the-season ball—except, that is, what's been going on all season long.

One artist doesn't even make any attempt to keep his entertaining private; he advertises the goings-on in the local *Advocate* and *Beacon*. So anyone who's able to read a newspaper headline is invited to his gala beach party. The date

depends on the situation lunar, since Boris Margo insists on holding his event only when the midsummer moon is full. This is a sight to take back home and warm yourself with on the coldest winter night.

When you arrive, slightly after sundown, you'll see an enormous, weird statue jutting up five stories high like a totem pole. "It" is painter Margo's own original design—a wild, non-objective behemoth of sculpture composed of flotsam and jetsam he's picked up along the beach for days and nights beforehand. Driftwood, stones, cork, rope, wood, shells, barnacles, bottles—whatever the ocean has washed ashore. A match is struck, and there's the biggest bonfire the beach has ever seen for everyone to frolic around. Harry Kemp, the last of the true P-town bohemians chants his verses, and the party is under way. There's eating, drinking, singing and swimming. Guitars get plunking, the drunks get drinking. Soon everybody's in a highly sentimental mood. If you need any further inducement, there's more poetry read aloud by assorted versifiers, and who wouldn't respond to a brand-new version of the Song of Songs? The climax of the whole shindig is a tour of the dunes by moonlight. For the less adventurous souls, or those who are still humming "Little Brown Jug," Margo has hired taxis. But, if you're neither senile nor over-crocked, you'll elect to walk. This exploration of the dunes is a trip you mustn't miss, particularly if the miss has accepted your invitation.

For if you've never looked up at the stars from a Provincetown dune, you haven't yet enjoyed the finer, more esthetic things of life. Any sensible male should be able to convince any female of that. Naturally, if she prefers to close her eyes, that's a syndrome shared by many.

Don't think that you have to wait for Margo's midsummer moonlight madness to descend. A journey across the dunes can be enjoyed any evening, or any day. Depends on whether you prefer the setting of sunset's romantic hues, the brightness of high noon, or the cool of early morning. Take a thermos and picnic basket along and make a real expedition of it. Across the rolling dunes you'll find patches of beach plums and other shrubbery that nature has artfully planted. And women seem to be attracted by both art and nature at the same time. So your trip from the bay side of the dunes to the ocean may take longer than you thought. But after all, this is a vacation, isn't it?

When you finally reach the ocean, you'll feel like a triumphant Balboa. The rhythmic waves, the sweeping arch of sky, the soft sand will put you and your companion in a tranquil mood. You can siesta undisturbed, for no matter how many other couples may be plodding their way across the dunes (or resting), the sandy hills are spacious enough so that you'll have all the privacy you need. Nothing to interfere with your picnic snack and discourse except the swoop of graceful gulls above the horizon or an occasional low-flying plane.

So take your choice of the life unprovincial in P-town by the sea. Party-minded, play-minded, the place is a far cry from the days of the dour old Founding Fathers. While the Town Crier (dressed in his sober gray suit with broad white collar, high-crowned hat and stiff buckled shoes) still appears daily in the center of town to ring out the news, you can't blame him for calling out only such innocuous items as the weather, time or low and high tide, and suchlike. If he really gave out with the news of what was going on, it would shock the Pilgrim-minded. For the summer-living in Provincetown today is anything but puritanical. □ □ □