

# The Church By The Sea *As An Art Gallery*

by Jan Kelly

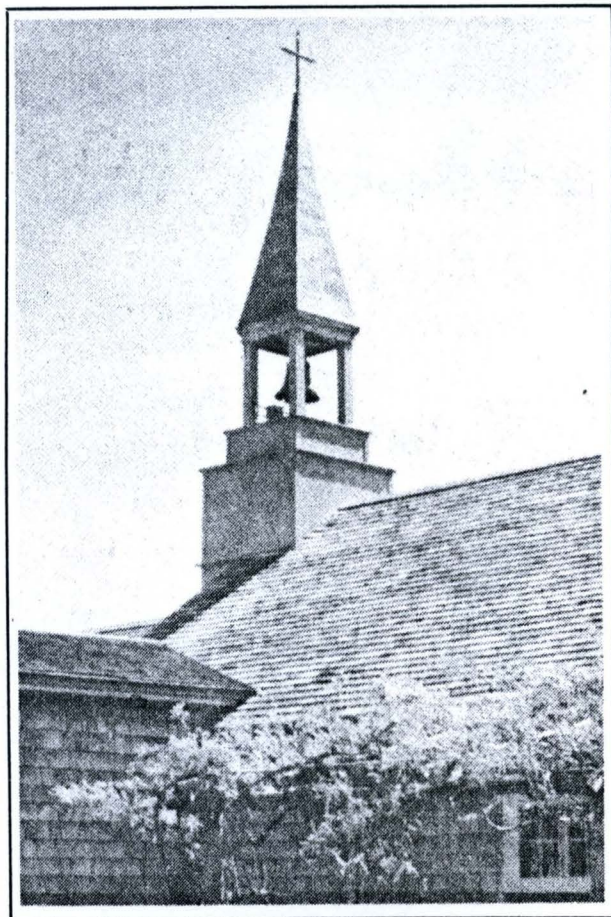
(Provincetown) St. Mary's of the Harbor is a church of great charm. It is also a haven for the arts, not only by its use of the parish hall as a gallery, but by its "permanent collection."

A concerted effort to establish a separate place of worship ended in 1919 when a piece of waterfront property along with a "Salt House" in good condition and with hand-hewn timbers was purchased for \$2,500. Thus began the process of developing St. Mary of the Harbor.

With the top two stories removed, the salt house was tailored into what is now the nave of the church. Years later the congregation purchased the "Sand Bar Club" in the West End. The Club was behind Simon's and the Cottage Restaurant. Reggie Cabral ran a rental property there years later and called it Sand Bar Village. The original Sand Bar Club was dismantled, carried across town to the east side and rebuilt as the chancel of the present church. The plans for construction were drawn by Frederick J. Waugh, the famous marine painter and member of the Academy of the Arts. Selected members of the congregation and Rev. Robert Wood Nicholson aided him. Rev. Nicholson's avocation was gardening and so under his loving care and honest sweat, the charming garden area with low brick wall, pool, and well-placed plants and trees became the respite spot from Commercial Street. Just as it is today, the effect is a bit of Giverny, a bit of Japan.

Many members of the congregation were well known artists. In an effort to continue the graceful growth of their place of worship, these artists started the tradition of donating their artistic labors. Frederick Waugh painted "The Madonna of the Harbor" over the baptismal font. The painting is most fitting. The candlesticks were donated by Rev. Nicholson in memory of his parents. Frederick Waugh also carved the heads and hands of the creche figures. Rev. Nicholson and Peter Hunt designed the creche. Peter Hunt also designed and painted the door to the creche with trumpeting angels floating through stars.

Constance Bigelow painted "The Coming Of The Holy Spirit" above the altar. Arnold Geissbuhler's three statues on a weathered oak beam of "Christ On The Waters" and "Adoring Angels" keep your eye



moving in this treasure hunt of personally placed art. Geissbuhler also sculpted the whimsical representation of St. Francis of Assisi. The pulpit crucifix so fittingly placed on a rough-hewn beam was carved by Anton Lang. Robert Douglas Hunter painted the Epiphany mural. It is a triptych given in memory of Thomas G. Blakeman, William Oldenquist, and Dr. Frederick Hammet. The central portion celebrating the Trinity is flanked by a depiction of fishermen on one side and those involved in the arts on the other side.

There are two other donating artists I want to give special attention. They are William F. Boogar, Jr., and Richard E. Miller. Permanent at the church are Bill Boogar's fetching sundial in the garden, "The Hare and The Tortoise," the aumbry which holds the Blessed Sacrament, the dove above the aumbry and the outdoor St. Francis of Assisi which was given in honor of his mother. The painting behind the altar "The Triumphal Entry" was painted by Richard Miller and given in memory of his daughter Elspeth. The reason for noting these two names is that on July 25, 26, 27, and August 1, 2, 3, and 8, 9, and 10, from 7-9 pm, there will be an exhibition of Boogar's Arctic drawings, watercolors, and bronzes. The paintings of Richard Miller will complement them.

William Boogar attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia as well as classes with Charles Hawthorne in Provincetown. This period





ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI  
carved by William Boogar

lasted from 1915 to 1917. While in Provincetown Boogar served as Hawthorne's "paint boy."

The trek to Provincetown and back to Philadelphia was made on foot by Boogar. He earned his bed and board by painting portraits in saloons. He enlisted in the Army in World War I. He received the Croix de Guerre with gilt star. Post war studies included wood carving in Germany and bird anatomy and drawing at the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago. Study and hard work for survival occupied these years of learning. Boogar joined the Coast Guard and was stationed at Peaked Hill Bar. He taught high school and taught art at camps. In 1926, Bill Boogar accompanied Capt. Donald B. MacMillan on the Bowdoin to the Arctic. Boogar was cook and free-lance artist. You will see the art work resulting from this period at St. Mary's exhibition. In 1928 Boogar branched out again artistically by studying bronze casting procedures. The independence of casting his own works was the goal. He married Alice Williamson on December 31, 1932, a good way to end one year and start another. Alice still lives here and has a striking resemblance to Helen Hayes. With Alice, his foundry and \$2.45, Boogar moved to Provincetown for good and set up his foundry in a rented blacksmith shop owned by the Beachcomber's Club. He invited the public into his foundry, an unprecedented gesture. His discovery was gradual, but the precise individual style of each piece left no confusion as to whether it was a Boogar. Charm and strength is what I see in each piece I have seen. From jewelry to full-sized sculpture, you will see those qualities.

Richard Miller attended the St. Louis School of Fine Arts at Washington University. While working as an

artist-reporter for the St. Louis Post Dispatch, he received a scholarship to attend the Academie Julian. He remained in Paris for 20 years, teaching winters at Ecole Colarossi and summers at Giverny and Brittany. He was awarded a gold medal at the Paris Salon in 1901, doubly a distinction since it was his first exhibition. The Pan-American Medal, the Belgian Medal, and Knighthood in the Legion of Honor of France followed. The medals and distinctions followed like ticks of a clock. This international period of his life was his training field and was highly successful. Miller bought and settled in 200 Bradford Street in 1918. He lived there until his death in 1943. Miller was one of the founders and teachers of the Provincetown Art Colony. The awards followed Miller to Provincetown. He showed extensively and is a much collected artist. The Art Institute of Chicago, Musee du Petit Palais, Paris, Galley of Modern Art, Rome, King of Italy's private collection, Corcoran Gallery, the Luxembourg, Paris, the Met of New York, Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp, and Carnegie Art Institute are only a few.

I urge you not to miss this show. The scope of the founding artists of Provincetown is not parochial but international and has the spirit of adventure—continental and rustic. Where else could you see a show of two cronies in one small seaside village with such diverse offerings as academic paintings and Arctic originals? The Outermost Gallery of the Church of Saint Mary's of the Harbor is located at 519 Commercial Street. Fridays through Sundays, 7-9 pm. This is a three weekend show, indicative of its importance. you may even care to visit the church and enjoy the pieces displayed as I say "in the permanent collection."