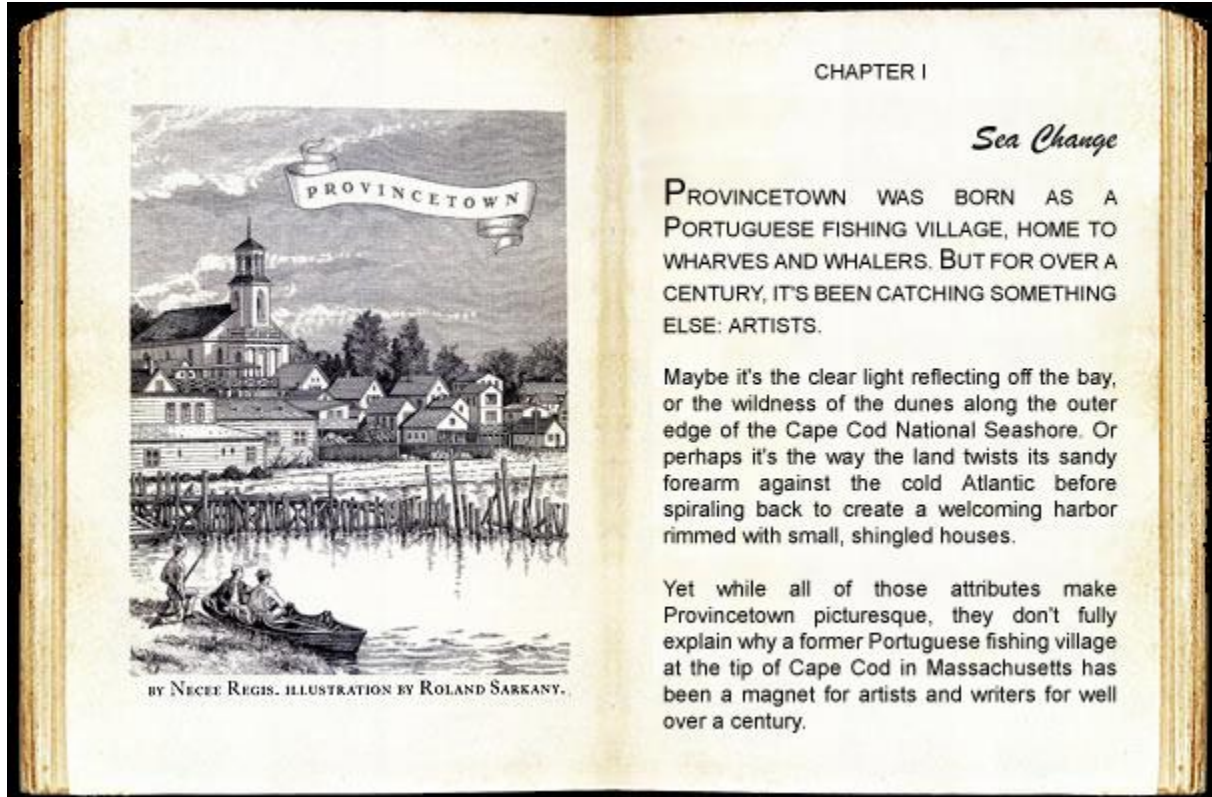


Sea Change



The roster of creative types who've passed through or lived in this town since painter Charles Hawthorne founded one of the first art colonies in the United States there in 1899 reads as a veritable who's who of the international cultural elite. It begins with Hawthorne and the American Impressionists, continues through Abstract Expressionist masters Franz Kline, Helen Frankenthaler, and Robert Motherwell, and includes painters Milton Avery, Marsden Hartley, Edward Hopper, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko, as well as writers Eugene O'Neill, John Dos Passos, Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, and Norman Mailer. In fact, you may catch a glimpse of Mailer, who still lives in town, walking briskly along Commercial Street with the morning paper tucked beneath his arm.

Poet Stanley Kunitz, winner of both the Pulitzer prize and the National Book Award and a two-time United States poet laureate, first visited Provincetown in the 1920s. While walking the beach, he encountered Hawthorne, who was teaching a group of women students bedecked in long skirts and sunbonnets.

Twenty years later, Kunitz returned to Provincetown to spend a summer there with his wife, painter Elise Asher. They've done the same every summer since, often staying into the fall before returning to their home in New York City.

Kunitz muses on his time spent in Provincetown in his new book, *The Wild Braid: A Poet Reflects on a Century in the Garden*. It includes his thoughts on the creative process, gardening, and the harmony of the life cycle, as well as 12 poems, color photographs, and conversations with his assistant, Genine Lentine.

"Fall is a beautiful time in Provincetown," he writes in *The Wild Braid*. "Those great blue skies! And there's a certain fragrance in the air out of the brine and the fallen leaves. It is certainly one of the beautiful spots on earth . . . I do not know of a place that is comparable to it, with its vast seascapes, the glorious Cape light, the air that flows in from the sea, and a community of deeply engaged artists."

I felt it was important to have a role in starting a community of artists," Kunitz says. "That, to me, seemed an essential creative necessity if the town was to be more than just a vacation place."

Kunitz celebrated his 100th birthday this summer in Provincetown, in the garden he's been tending since he bought his home more than 40 years ago. Streams of friends passed through to offer good wishes and cheer. (Elise Asher passed away last year.)

"It's curious. I remember coming here from a farm in Connecticut," Kunitz tells me. "I was hearing about the community of artists, writers, and painters, and the next thing I knew, I was here, and I started my garden here, and I've never regretted it."

Kunitz set out to create a community, and on a bright summer day, on this spit of land surrounded by the sea, the community returned to honor him.

JEANNIE MOTHERWELL spent every summer of her childhood in Provincetown with her father, the internationally renowned painter Robert Motherwell, and her equally well-known stepmother, Helen Frankenthaler. In the late 1950s, their circle of friends included luminaries in the fields of painting, writing, and psychology

While their parents worked in their studio, Jeannie and her sister played on the beach with the children of other artists and writers.

"Dad's theory was that this was better than camp," she says. Motherwell, 52, was raised in a world where creativity and psychoanalysis were part of her daily routine.

"We'd talk about our dreams every morning," she says. "Then, Helen and Dad would ask us to write something and make a drawing out of it. We had no coloring books; nothing was premade. We were asked at an early age to think about our thoughts and emotions."

A seminal moment in her artistic development occurred when Motherwell moved to Provincetown full-time in the late 1970s, when she was in her 20s. As she was riding her bike through town, a local fisherman waved and asked her to join him for a drink.

"He pulled a wad of \$100 bills from his pocket and said, 'I have all this money and I can't give it away,' " Motherwell remembers.

The next day his boat the *Patricia Marie*, sank. All that was found was his wallet. Filled with emotion and a sense of loss to the community, Motherwell began a series of abstract paintings and collages of druggers (fishing vessels), which were bought by both local fishermen and art collectors.

"It was my first sense of finding my identity in painting," she says.

In the past decade, she's used collage, digital photography, painting, and text to create complex, subtle works that evoke the Cape's Province Lands. The images straddle abstraction and reality.

She now lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but returns to Provincetown every summer to exhibit her work and find new inspiration. When asked if it's hard to follow in her parents' larger-than-life footsteps, she smiles.

"My audience is different than Dad and Helen's," she says. "It took me a while to realize I'm not trying to change the world with art; I'm trying to use what I know to make good pictures."

A Provincetown Reading List

Provincetown: Stories from Land's End, by Kathy Shorr

My Provincetown, Memories of a Cape Cod Childhood, by Amy Whorf McGuiggan

Land's End, A Walk in Provincetown, by Michael Cunningham

The Wild Braid: A Poet Reflects on a Century in the Garden, by Stanley Kunitz with Genine Lentine