

# THE PROVINCETOWN ADVOCATE WEEKLY SUMMER GUIDE



Photograph © Arnold Newman

*Edward Hopper*



# ARTS & LETTERS

## Edward Hopper

By April Kingsley

Edward Hopper once said that all he "wanted to do was to paint sunlight on the side of a house."

When he settled on the Outer Cape for the summers in 1930 and built the simple house which still stands on a bluff overlooking the bay in Truro, he found the ideal setting in which to achieve this goal.

Hopper was born in Nyack, New York in 1882, studied with Robert Henri of the "Ash Can" School, traveled to Europe, married, and by the early Twenties was beginning to achieve some measure of success as an artist. Most of his best work dates between the late Twenties and the early Fifties and is almost equally divided between cityscapes and urban interiors, which he painted during the winter, and the landscapes executed during his Cape summers. He died at work in his New York City winter studio in Washington Square in 1967.

It is probably not an exaggeration to say that Hopper was the finest representational painter America ever produced. He painted the American scene with a clear eye for form worthy of a Cubist. He never sacrificed humanism to structure, though figuration played a marginal role in his work and he handled it unconvincingly. The truly marvelous thing about Hopper was the way he invested inanimate objects with human emotion. He painted the portrait of America when he painted her empty city streets, eclectic small town architecture, gas pumps and railroad trestles.

Hopper was obsessed with light. Every kind of light interested him, not just sunlight. He painted many night scenes, for instance, in which night either lurks outside the open windows of dimly lit interiors or frames warm interior scenes with its dark mystery. *Rooms for Tourists* is one of the finest examples of the latter type of Hopper nightscape. The subject is the Sunset Inn on Bradford Street at the head of Center Street in Provincetown.

### Altered Little

He has altered very little, as we can see by a comparison with the excellent photo taken of the building as it looks today by Janet Boynton. He blurred the detail, and angled the building's facade less sharply than the eye sees it in order to bring it into better alignment with the picture format and thus flatten the space. All of the other physical differences between photo and painting are a result of changes made by the building's owners, and the house at the far right in the painting was visible to the artist's eye but not to the narrower one of a camera.

Hopper sat in his car night after night on Bradford Street studying the building. He spent so much time there, in fact, that he was worried the police might be summoned to investigate his behavior. Hopper always spent a long time on site drawing and pondering over a prospective subject. This was partly to clarify his formal ideas, but also to get the mood of the place and generate his emotional response to it.

It is this feeling which is responsible for the real differences between the actuality and Hopper's representation of it.

Here, as in most of his night scenes, Hopper seems psychologically captivated by the human activity hidden behind the buildings' walls, but provocatively offered to him in glimpses through the half-opened windows of lighted rooms. There is a bit of voyeurism in his romantic fascination for these mysteries from which he seems to feel excluded.

### Man's Presence

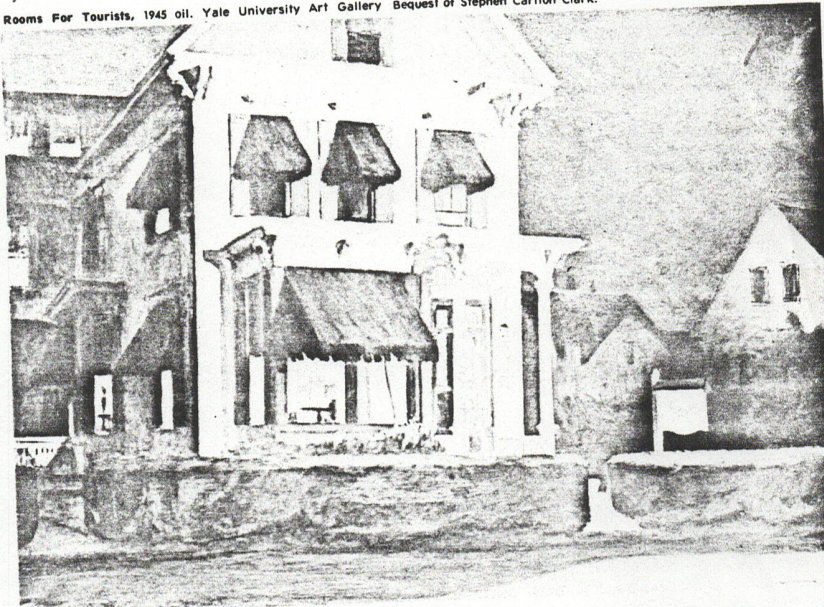
Hopper rarely painted landscapes without buildings or some other evidence of man's presence in nature such as telephone poles, roads or railroad tracks. He responded to 20th century America honestly, taking an attitude that was neither chauvinistic nor escapist.

The Cold Storage Plant in Truro, for instance, is handled without flourish. Detail is minimized, only a few changes were made in the size and shape of two long pitched-roof sheds for formal reasons (to stress rhythmic compositional repetition, and to link close and distant planes in order to flatten the picture space). That is all. The other differences, again, are due to actual alterations in the structure over the years.

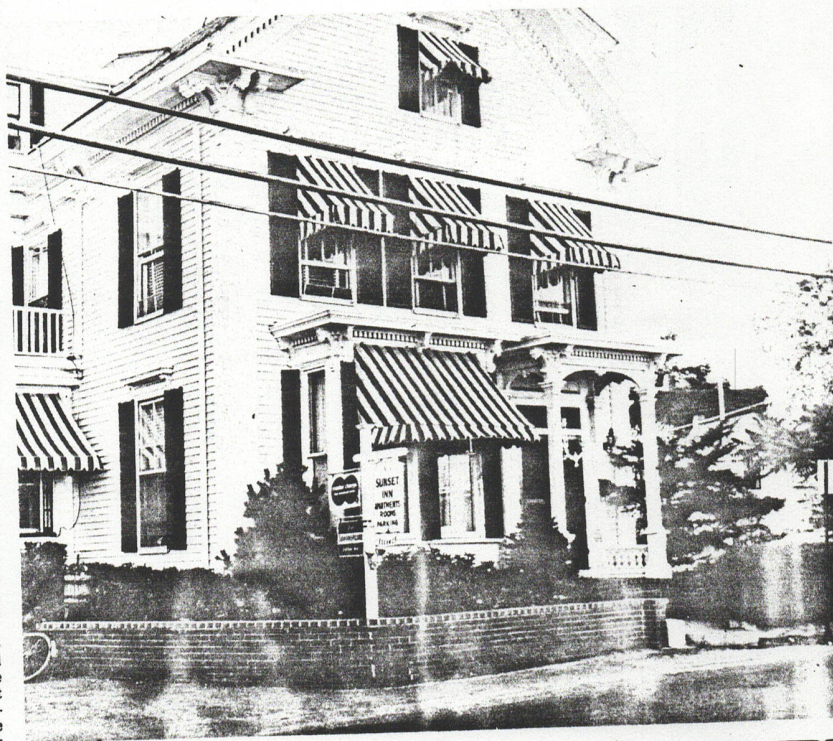
But what happens is that a prosaic, utilitarian structure is made flesh—given a heart and soul, so to speak—and lifted from the ordinary world onto a special plane through the intervention of Hopper's art. He achieves this end without sentimentalization, without glorifying the building's function and without jazzing-up the physical ambience of the setting. No sunset or dramatic-cloud filled sky, no stark shadows or stress on individual foreground foliage distracts us from the simple clarity of these sunlit walls.

Hopper's intense feeling for his subject is able to convey emotional impact by very modest means. Here, and in many otherwise unnoticed places from Provincetown to Eastham, Hopper realized his lifelong goal of "making the most exact transcription possible of my most intimate impressions of nature."

Rooms For Tourists, 1945 oil, Yale University Art Gallery Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark.



Little has changed in the 29 years since Hopper painted this guest house on Bradford Street, Provincetown.



## Around The Galleries

### PROVINCETOWN

**A Crystal Gallery**, 439 Commercial Street. Peter Schelling's copper wheel engravings, Daum's crystal sculptures, limited editions plates in porcelain. Open 7 days, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., 6 p.m.-11 p.m.  
**Davis Gallery**, 422 Commercial Street. From July 5-31, there will be an exhibit of drawings by Kass Sable. Open 7 days, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., 7 p.m.-11 p.m.  
**Eve De Nagy Gallery**, 244 Commercial Street. 18th-20th century American and European paintings, etchings, wood carvings,

bronzes, and art objects. Open 7 days, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., and evenings 8 p.m.-10 p.m.

**Fine Arts Work Center**, 24 Pearl Street. An exhibition of recent work by Will Hips will open at 8 p.m. Friday, July 26, and will continue until Aug. 1. Mr. Hips has shown widely in regional and national exhibitions. In 1971, he was awarded a fellowship to attend the 1971-72 season at FAWC. A one-man show of his work took place at the Provincetown Group Gallery in the spring of 1972. He returned in 1973 to become head of the visual staff at the Work Center. Gallery hours: open daily including Sundays 2 p.m.-5 p.m.; 8 p.m.-11 p.m.. Closed Thursdays.

(Continued to Page 15)





CEMETERY POTS CUT FLOWERS GERANIUMS

**THE FLOWER SHOP**  
536 COMMERCIAL ST.  
HOURS 9:30 - 4:30 WED 9:30 - NOON 487-0600

**THE WINNEBAGO BENEVOLENT TRADING CO.**  
at WHALER'S WHARF

HAND CRAFTED BRASS & SILVER JEWELRY & SCULPTURE

Be Sure To Visit the  
**Truro Historical Museum**  
(300 yds. from Highland Lighthouse in North Truro)

See how living was made from the sea 100 years ago. Explore shipwreck items. Thrill to an original pirate chest. Superb needlecraft exhibits!

Open 10am to 5pm Daily

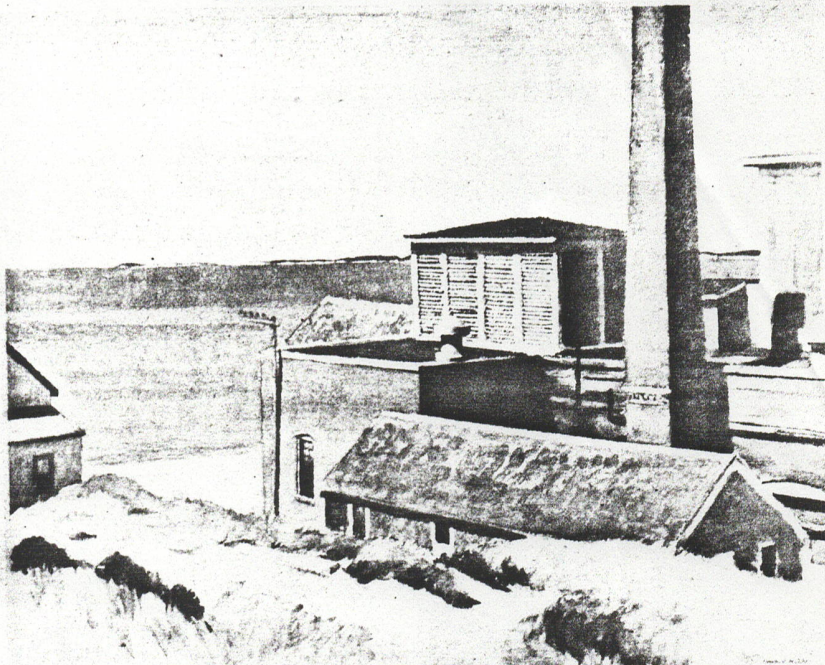
**Handsew**  
is unwaive clothes

SILKSCREEN PRINTS EMBROIDERY OLD AND NEW APPLIQUES FANTASY CLOTHES FOR ALL SEXES CUSTOM DESIGN TOO

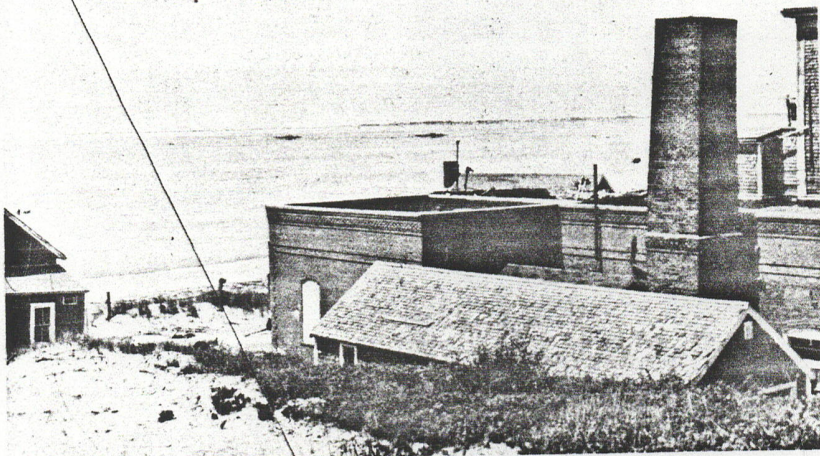
ALSO PLANTS & LOTS OF PLANTS

10 - 5, MON. - SAT. RTE. 6 WELLFLEET

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SUMMER GUIDE AD DEADLINE IS THE THURSDAY PRIOR TO PUBLICATION



Cold Storage Plant, 1933 watercolor. Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Louise E. Bettens Fund.



The now-abandoned cold-storage plant in North Truro has lost part of its chimney, but little else. This photograph attests to Hopper's faithful interpretation of the American landscape.

**Muddy River**  
South  
194 Commercial St.  
Provincetown, Ma.  
**USED JEANS**

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**SKIVING KNIFE LEATHERS**  
331 Commercial St  
Across from Library

**CUSTOM SANDALS, BAGS, CLOTHING**

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HANDWOVEN STRAW HATS BAGS & BASKETS

\*MEANS "COME IN"

OUR LIONESS WITH CUBS

**shankpainter zoo**  
Provincetown