

Dwelling in the Dunes:  
Traditional Use of the  
Dune Shacks of the Peaked Hill Bars  
Historic District, Cape Cod

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Final Report for the Research Project,  
“Traditional Cultural Significance of the Dune Shacks Historic  
District, Cape Cod National Seashore” (No. P4506040200),  
Supported by the National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

August 2005

Cover Picture: Theo Cozzi Poulin, Kathie Joseph Meads, Maureen Joseph Hurst, and Susan Leonard at the Tasha Shack in the Peaked Hill Bars Historic District, Cape Cod National Seashore, August, 2004. Picture by Robert J. Wolfe.

## Abstract: Dwelling in the Dunes

This ethnographic report provides a picture of the traditions and cultural patterns of the dune dwellers living in shacks in the Peaked Hill Bars Historic District, Cape Cod National Seashore, Massachusetts. The report describes the seasonal settlement of dune dwellers, and documents their traditional cultural practices, beliefs, customs, and histories that are linked to the shacks and the historic district. Information for the report primarily derives from direct observations on the lower cape and formal interviews with 47 shack residents during August and September, 2004. The research was supported by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior (“Traditional Cultural Significance of the Dune Shacks Historic District, Cape Cod National Seashore,” No. P4506040200).

The report describes a “dune shack society” comprised of shack users, with a core of about 250 shack residents with connections to perhaps another 1,100 to 1,700 shack users. The group traces its history about one hundred years. Several shacks have housed four-generations of family members. In 2004, there were nineteen occupied shacks, most located on barrier dunes of what is locally called “the Backshore” of Provincetown. Shacks are small, weathered, and rustic looking, built on skids or pilings allowing for occasional repositioning on unstable dunes. Minimal infrastructure typified the “fragile house type,” purposively designed to accommodate a fluid and relatively unspoiled natural environment. Shacks survive harsh conditions through unending maintenance and small adjustments by shack residents, including low-tech methods of sand management using simple sand fences and dune plants.

Long-term members of dune shack society relate a shared identity and history that includes “surfmens” and fishers with Portuguese and Yankee roots on the lower cape, as well as writers and artists from Provincetown’s fine arts colony dating since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Socially, the group’s core is organized as a set of extended families linked to particular shacks with networks of close friends who stay as invited guests and provide sources of labor alongside family members. Families and individuals on occasion have organized into associations and nonprofit groups for collective action to preserve the dunes, the shacks, and their traditions. Cultural ideals value privacy, autonomy, and solitude, resulting in a small, personal, but loose-knit seasonal settlement.

At least three identifiable traditions find expression in the cultural patterns of contemporary dune dwellers. First, some dune uses are identified with “Old Provincetown,” Backshore traditions including salvaging, foraging, training children, and retreating from small-town pressures. Accordingly, the dune shacks come to represent for the town iconic symbols of certain traditions perceived as threatened by outside forces. Second, the expressive traditions of the fine arts colony extend into the dunes, with shacks offering centers for writing, art, and other creative expression. Third, concepts of environmentalism associated with Thoreau and Beston find expression in the settlement as demonstrations of special relationships with Nature.

The report provides detailed descriptions of dune shack customs and beliefs, illustrated with extensive quotes from dune dwellers. The report describes cultural patterns such as land use, shack naming conventions, seasonal residencies, privacy and solitude, mutual assistance, shack transference, ceremonies, among others. Dynamic aspects are described, including maturation cycles of families related to shack use, the repositioning of shacks in response to storms and sand, and the transmission of culture through extended family lines and new entrants to the society.



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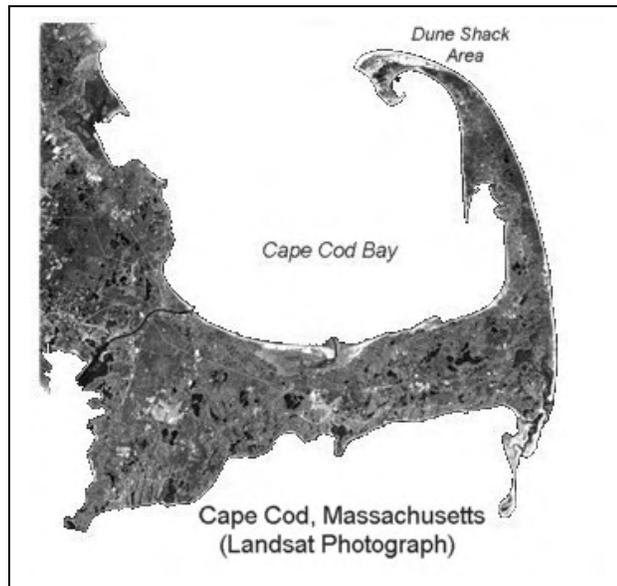
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## Chapter 1. People Living on an Edge

This report is about people living on an edge, an unstable edge of sand arcing into the North Atlantic at the tip of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. They are dune dwellers, self-reliant mavericks choosing to live seasonally in fragile shacks perched on a ridge of barrier dunes above the sea. Here in winter, the empty shacks are exposed to battering northeast storms from the open ocean. From spring through fall when the shacks are used, they are bathed with reflected light from unrestricted horizons. The shacks float on what some dune dwellers call a “liquid earth,” dunes that move, an unstable landscape of sand, wet berry bogs, thorny heaths, and stunted patches of pitch pine and oak. For generations the special

qualities at the cape’s farthest end have drawn fishers, artists, writers, and authentic eccentrics, forming into distinctive communities and establishing roots. It’s a wondrous edge, the dune dwellers assert, offering solitude, new vistas, and creative energy. It’s why they’ve lived there in simple shacks for generations, to be intimately connected to it, purposively exposed on the outer edge of the continent.



This report is ethnography, an anthropological picture of the traditions and cultures of the dune dwellers on the outside edge of the tip of Cape Cod. My goal in the report is to describe the seasonal settlement of the dune dwellers, to document their traditional cultural practices, beliefs, customs, and histories that are linked to the shacks and dunes. Over the years, the cape’s end has drawn other peoples as well, such as surf fishers, dune buggy enthusiasts, and hoards of summer tourists. But this report does not focus on them. It focuses on long-term residents of the lower cape who have lived on the dunes in shacks. To understand the traditional culture of the dunes, I sought out experts, those people with a continuity of memory and direct experience connected to the shacks, dune dwellers who knew their own histories and practices.

There have never been many dune shacks. In 2004, the year of this study, they numbered just eighteen or nineteen shacks, depending on how you counted them. Nor have there been many dune dwellers. At present, about 250 people formed a core, with connections to perhaps another 1,100 to 1,700 users. The barrier dunes with shacks were not extensive either, only about three miles of shoreline, a viewshed of about 1,500 acres. But I discovered a wealth of cultural practices connected to this small area. And the people living on the dunes in shacks were eager to share them with me.

### On the Edge of a Sandy Hook

Cape Cod is a long peninsula commonly described as a flexed arm stuck out into the sea, pointing northward. It’s the remnant from the last great ice age, according to geologists. The

Wisconsin ice sheet shoved into the North Atlantic, riding on a deep moraine of rocky debris scoured from the continent. When the ice sheet retreated about 15,000 years ago, it left its rocky moorings, the terminal moraine, protruding into the ocean, a footing for what was to become the cape. Over the years woodlands covered the cape with pitch pine, oak, bearberry, and other plants. It became a homeland for Native Americans at least 3,000 years ago. When the Pilgrims arrived in the New World in 1620, they first landed at its northernmost bay a few miles from where the shacks sit today.

The tip of Cape Cod is not firm glacial moraine but unstable sand. Over the post-glacier millennia, ocean currents and storms have carried sand northward and southward along the outer rim of the cape, depositing, removing, and re-depositing it. A long beach formed on the outer edge, the great Outer Beach, miles of sandy shoreline with occasional spits protecting rich tidal wetlands. At the north end, the sand swept into deep water. Prevailing currents and storm action dropped the gritty loads, building up an end to the cape made almost completely of sand. The sweep of forces formed a “recurved hook” encircling a small body of salt water, a common formation at the ends of sand spits, resembling the crook of a gentleman’s cane. However, this sandy hook was distinctive because it encircled a deep-water bay. The association of deep water and sand dunes is a rare formation. This sheltered bay became Provincetown Harbor, anchoring human settlement at the cape’s tip. Mariners stopping at the port founded Provincetown, a settlement on sand that developed into a small but significant fishing town by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, harboring large fleets of whalers, fishers, and sea merchants. Provincetown sits on the inside of the sandy hook. It has always been a narrow strip of buildings hugging the beach. Behind it are ridges of sand dunes.

The cape’s northern end is relatively narrow, less than a mile across. Its terrain is shaped into several curved dune ridges with valleys in between, the highest dunes standing about 80 feet tall. The ridges and valleys are remnants of successive barrier dune ridges left inland as the outer beach expanded. The sheltered valleys between dune ridges are frequently damp, sometimes boggy, and filled with heath-like patches of cranberry, blueberry, and bearberry. Salt runs extend up the valley mouths where they touch the sea. The dune slopes are anchored with dune grass and small patches of woodlands, primarily stunted pitch pine and oak. The woodlands and bogs support small populations of deer, coyotes, hare, and turtles. Seasonally, migratory waterfowl use the ponds, and shorebirds like piping plovers and terns frequent the outer beach for breeding and feeding.

The outside of the hook features a short barrier dune and a beach, exposed to winter weather called “brutal” by dune shack residents. The outside of the hook is where the shacks are located. They are built on one side or the other of the barrier dunes, close to vistas looking out onto the ocean. Residents of Provincetown call this thin sandy strip simply “the Backshore,” contrasting it with the hook’s inner shore where the town sits.

Stretching out from the Backshore, the ocean covers shoals, ridges of sand just beneath the waves. These are the infamous Peaked Hill Bars, several shallow sand bars evidently named for a prominent dune once visible to mariners from the sea. Locally, the name is pronounced with two syllables, “peak-ed,” like someone looking sickly. The Peaked Hill Bars were infamous for claiming ships, as were all the shoals along the great Outer Beach. The sands are filled with the bones of wrecks. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a string of lifesaving stations operated along the Outer Beach to assist the shipwrecked. As shown later in the report, some dune dwellers of the Backshore traced their roots to the lifesavers of the Peaked Hill Station.

But the Backshore is more than a geomorphic edge. It's a conceptual edge as well. It represents an outer edge of three traditions described later in this report, sets of ideas, beliefs, and values. These cultural traditions give meaning to the lives of contemporary dune dwellers who choose to live at this edge in shacks, exploring their potentials.

First, the Backshore is the farthest edge of what I will call "Old Provincetown." This is the conceptual center of modern Provincetown, an iconic town for a year-round population that traces roots to the Portuguese and Yankees who harvested the sea's bounty from its sandy hook. The Backshore provides an outer fringe for the expression of traditions connected to Old Provincetown, like foraging, refuge from the stresses of town life, and training children.

Second, the Backshore is the outermost edge of Provincetown's fine arts colony. Formed during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the colony is reputed to be America's oldest, a gathering of artists, writers, and performers that has significance for the history of fine arts. Its creative expression extended out into the dunes, nurtured within the shacks, finding creative expression in unfettered solitude and reflected light.

And third, for some dune dwellers, the Backshore represented an edge to society. It's where human society ended, abutted, and joined untamed Nature. Conceptually, it's that place where the social philosopher, Henry Thoreau, stood during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and proclaimed, "A man may stand there and put all America behind him." The practices of some contemporary dune dwellers were demonstrations of those ideas.

So geographically, the Backshore comprises a thin outer fringe of a sandy spit. And demographically, it contains a small seasonal settlement of rustic shacks. Yet in sociocultural terms, the activities grounded in this landscape appear much larger. The dune residents believe their ways of living are parts of something culturally rich and complex, a layering of old and living traditions. And at times, it seems that the activities of dune shack residents have influenced the course of cultural traditions far beyond the cape.

### Study Background

The sponsor of this ethnographic research is the National Park Service, the federal agency with oversight of America's national parks and monuments. The National Park Service funded the research because of a strong interest in the dune shacks – the Park owns them. The Park Service acquired the dunes and the shacks after the creation of the Cape Cod National Seashore.

Congress established the Cape Cod National Seashore in 1961 in recognition of the national significance of the great Outer Beach. The Seashore encompassed the entire beach facing the Atlantic Ocean running the length of the peninsula, and also portions of the eastern bayshore. The Seashore acquired lands within the towns of Chatham, Orleans, Eastham, Wellfleet, Truro, and Provincetown. The Backshore and the Province Lands near Provincetown became a part of the Seashore. After the Seashore's formation, the Park acquired all but one of the dune shacks as federal properties. Previously, the shacks were privately owned. In most cases, the owners of the shacks differed from the owners of the land underneath the shacks. Most of the Backshore had been parceled up into narrow strips of land that were privately held (so-called "spaghetti strips"). One shack, the westernmost, sat on the Province Lands held by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Under federal ownership, some shacks were demolished. But eighteen shacks continued as dwellings through special reservations or leases with dune shack residents, and a nineteenth shack (the Malicoat-Lord shack) continued as a privately-owned cottage on private

land. In 1989, after nomination by the State, the district was found eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. An historic district was established, called the Dune Shacks of the Peaked Hill Bars Historic District. The designation recognized historic values associated with the group of shacks. The historic district encompassed approximately 1,500 acres of land within the viewshed of the shacks.

Interest in documenting the traditional culture of the dune shack district emerged from a proposal from Provincetown's municipal government. The town's selectmen proposed that federal management preserve the traditions and culture associated with the dune shack district. These were additional values of the historic district, they asserted. Traditions and cultural patterns linked to the dune shacks had not been systematically assessed. Given this, the Park Service saw the utility of doing so, the impetus for this research project. The project was designed to provide ethnographic information and analysis to augment existing knowledge about the historic significance of the district.

### Shacks and Trails

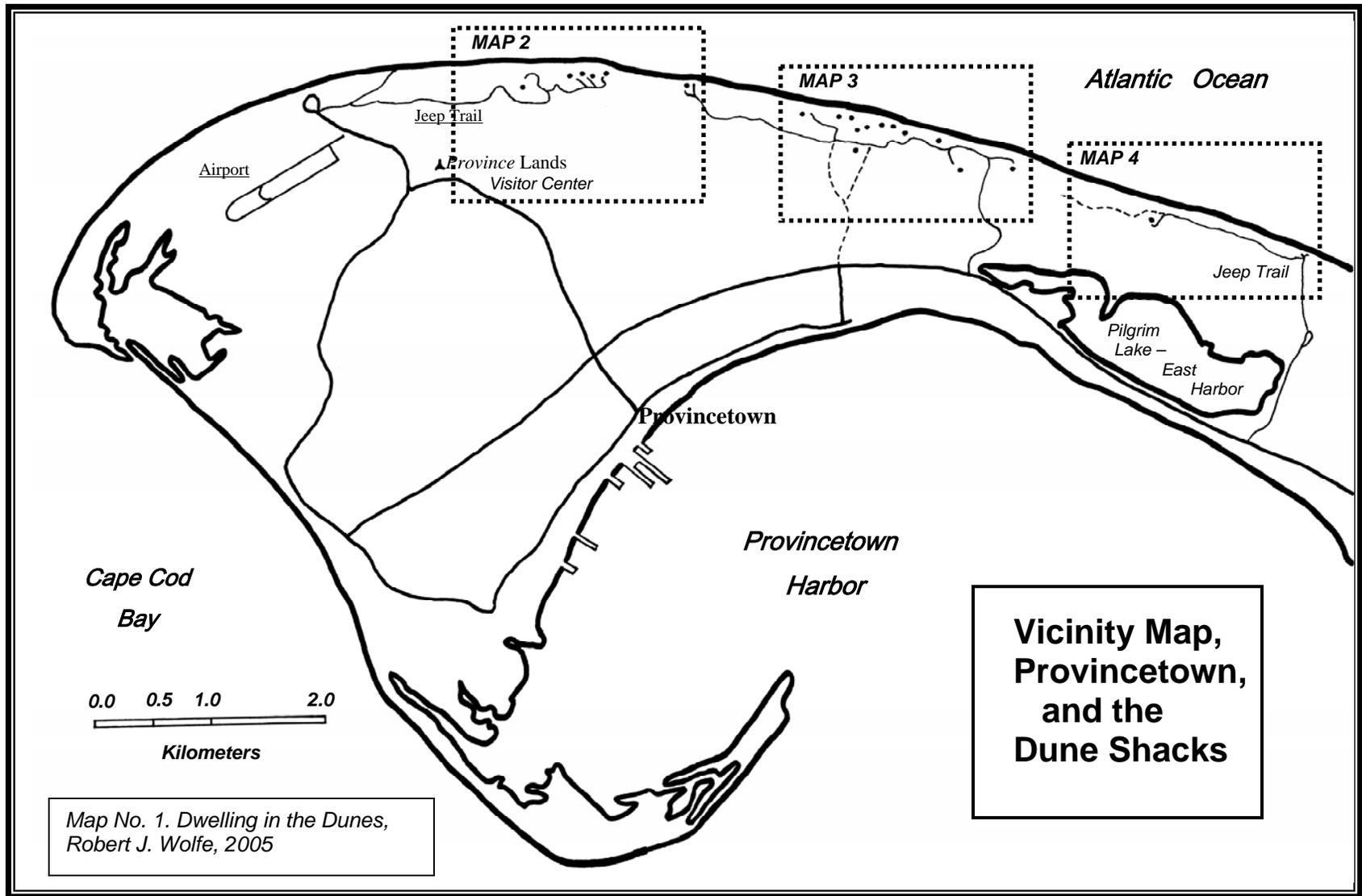
The dune shacks are small, weathered, and rustic-looking. They range from one-room structures to multi-room cottages. They are like "old people you admire," said one dune shack resident, perched at the outer tip of Cape Cod. They "watched" the waters, year after year, "collecting energy," "collecting stories."

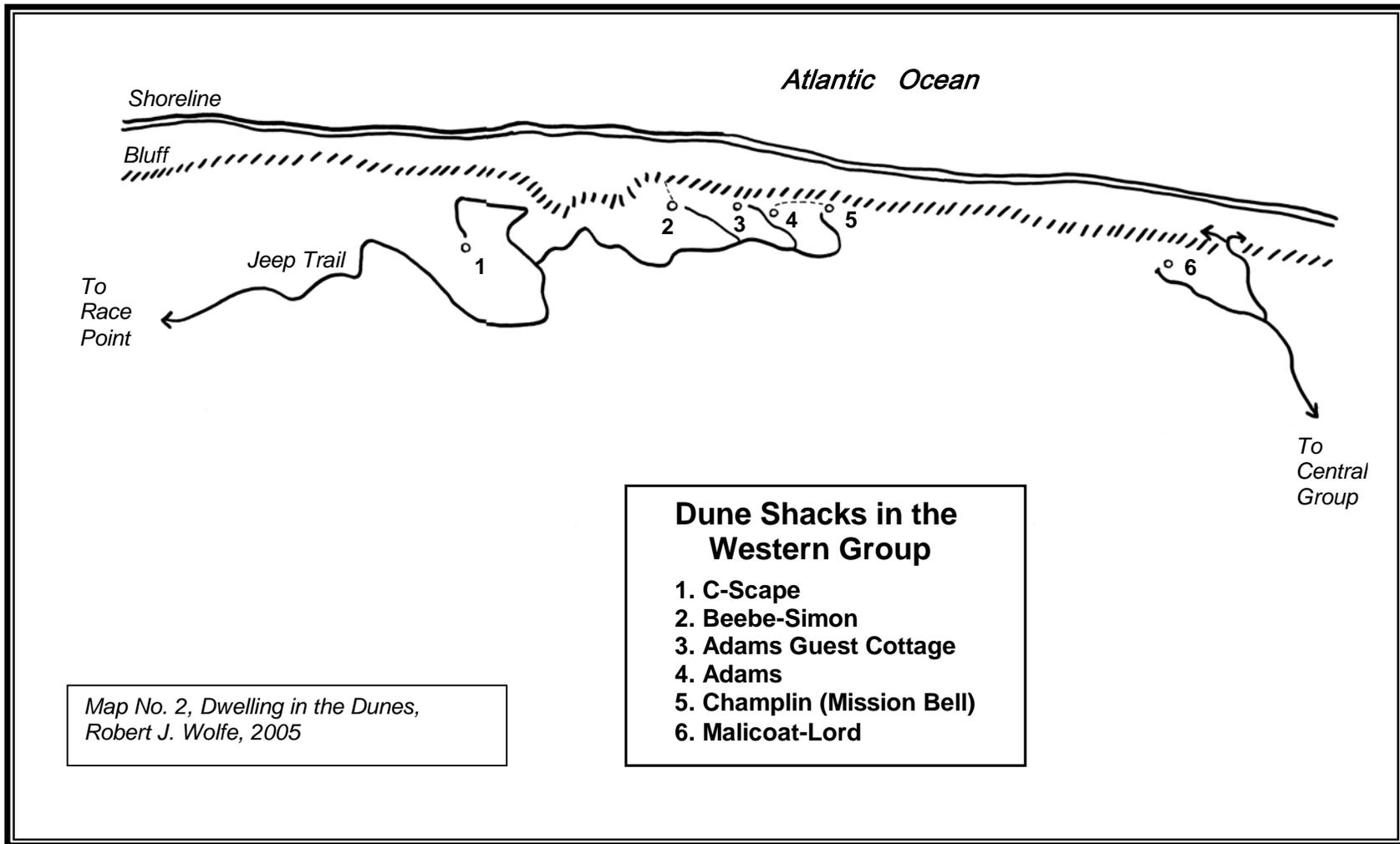
The dune shacks of the Peaked Hill Bars Historic District lie within the fringes of Provincetown and North Truro. The shacks' locations are shown in Maps No. 1 to 4, along with the major trails in the district. Most shacks are short hikes from Provincetown by footpaths, indicated on the vicinity map (Map No. 1). Many small trails extend into the dunes from Provincetown, crisscrossing the district. Some trails were substantial wagon roads at one time, but most have shrunk into modest footpaths and faint deer runs by lack of traffic, traces weaving among patches of bracken and wood.

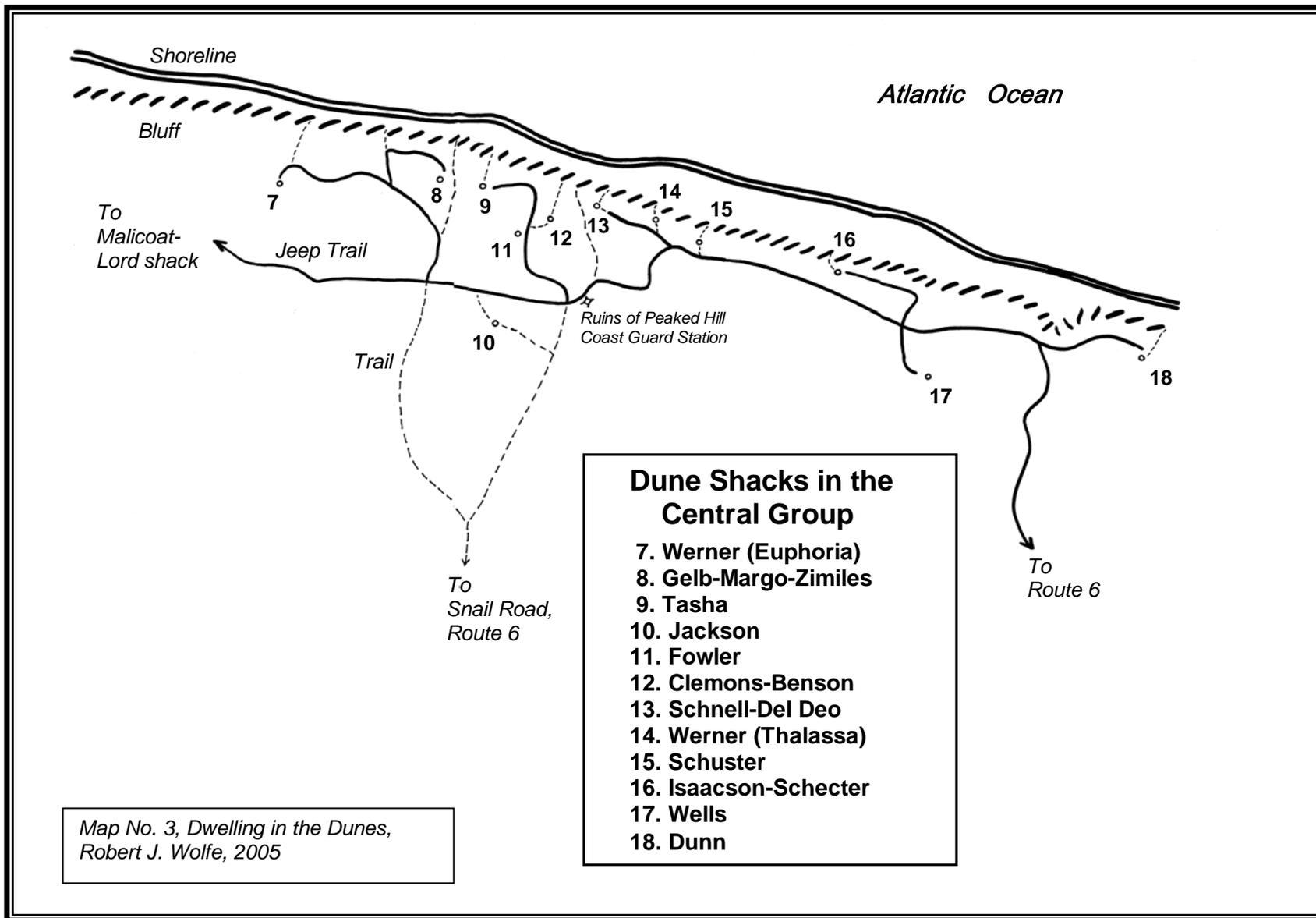


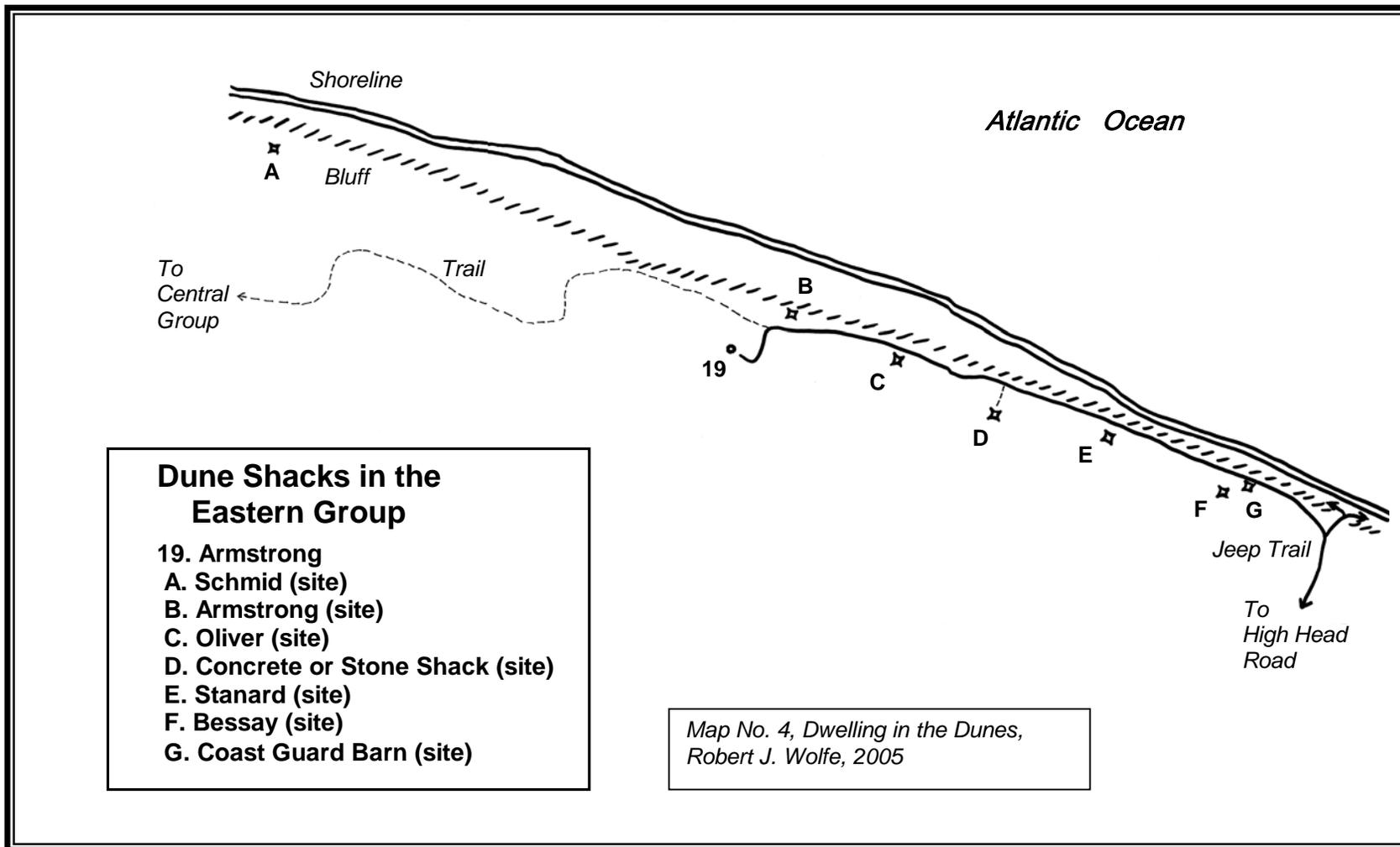
*Top: Tasha shack. Bottom: Schnell-Del Deo shack. (Wolfe, 2004)*

At the time of this study, many dune dwellers routinely walked between their shacks and town. But dune dwellers also reached shacks with over-sand vehicles, typically four-wheel-drive cars with partially-deflated tires. Three jeep trails entered the dunes, each providing access to one of three shack groups. One jeep trail entered the dunes from Race Point near the Provincetown airport, accessing the western shack group (Map No. 2). A second jeep trail entered the dunes near the west end of Pilgrim Lake (East Harbor), accessing the central shack group (Map No. 3). A third jeep trail entered the dunes at the foot of a headland known as High Head, accessing one shack in what was once an eastern shack group (Map No. 4).









Jeep trails were unpaved, single-lane roads over the sand. Before the Seashore, more extensive networks of jeep trails crisscrossed the dunes. The Seashore restricted traffic to a few main trails, providing permits only to dune shack residents and a commercial dune taxi service in Provincetown that offered guided excursions for summer tourists. A padlocked chain blocked the jeep trails, labeled “fire roads.” Going and coming, dune residents stopped their vehicles, unlocked the chain, drove through, and secured the chain behind them. Formerly, the old networks of jeep trails connected all the dune shacks. Currently the jeep trails did not directly connect the three shack groups. Portions of the old trail system were gone, eroded or buried. At one place, the trail left the dunes to the beach. A portion of the beach route was seasonally closed to protect nesting plovers and terns, reopened later to over-sand vehicles with permits.

In 2004, there were five or six shacks in the western group, depending on how you counted them (Map No. 2). I counted “six,” including the “guest cottage” next to the Adams shack. It’s not counted as a separate shack in some listings, leading to an occasional confusion as to whether the current number of dune shacks was eighteen or nineteen in total. My total count was nineteen dune shacks in use in 2004. On these maps, I’ve identified each shack by its current shack heads, unless a building name had supplanted a shack head name. For example, I’ve designated the Beebe-Simon shack after its two current heads, Emily Beebe and Evelyn Simon. Similarly, the Malicoat-Lord shack is identified by its two heads, Conrad Malicoat and Anne Lord. By contrast, C-Scape (a building name) seems to have supplanted past family names attached to that shack, so I have designated it the C-Scape shack. The Champlin shack (headed by Nathaniel and Mildred Champlin) was sometimes called Mission Bell, so both names appear in my designation. My system here is for clearly counting and identifying shacks. I don’t intend my designations to replace customary naming practices of dune dwellers, which are discussed in a later chapter. Whoever might attempt to conform shack names to my system, or to any single standard naming system, will likely incur the wrath of some dune dwellers who care deeply about certain shack names.

In 2004, there were twelve shacks in the central group, located in Map No. 3. The map also identifies the ruins of the Peaked Hill Coast Guard Station, its third historic location, near the center of this cluster of shacks. A major footpath provided access between the central group and town, formerly an extension of Snail Road into the dunes once used by vehicle traffic.

In 2004, there was a single shack (the Armstrong shack) in what was once an eastern group of seven shacks, shown in Map No. 4. This shack was moved away from the spot on the eroding bluff noted as the “Armstrong site.” Map No. 4 indicates the approximate locations of five shacks that no longer existed in 2004 (the Schmid shack, Oliver shack, Concrete shack, Stanard shack, and Bessay shack).

My set of maps do not show the locations of four other former shacks. The Vevers-Pfeiffer-Giese shack location in the southern group falls just outside the map boundaries. The Ford shack in the central group burned down and its location near the Clemons-Benson shack is not shown. An old coastguard boathouse used by the Malkin-Ofsevit-Jackson family and others as a shack fell into disuse and was demolished by the Park, its location near the station ruins not shown on the maps. And I was told of another inland concrete shack, a “work of art,” whose fate and location are not known to me. If one includes these additional places, I count a total of twenty-eight dune shacks in use at the time the Seashore was created in 1961. However, I would not be surprised if I have missed one or two more.

## Sources and Methods

The primary sources of information for this ethnographic report were long-term shack residents. While the dune shacks may be perceived as “old people” that “collect stories,” it’s the dune dwellers who tell them. So I sought out shack experts to interview. I also walked the dunes, at times guided by experts to interpret what I was seeing. I took pictures. I scribbled notes. And I sketched maps. The stock tools of cultural anthropology are direct listening and observing, ears and eyes being the anthropologist’s main instruments, a method called “participant observation.” This was my approach. Afterwards, I transcribed hours of recorded conversations with shack residents, forming the primary basis for this report.

I traveled to the lower cape four times to collect information. In mid-July of 2004, I made an introductory visit accompanied by Chuck Smythe, Ethnography Program Manager for the Park’s Northeast Region. He introduced me to staff at the Cape Cod National Seashore headquarters in Wellfleet, including the acting superintendent. On this three-day visit, Sue Moynihan, Chief of Interpretation and Cultural Resources Management, and Bill Burke, Cultural Resources Program Manager, gave me a guided tour of the dunes. Driving the jeep trails, they introduced me to the shacks. I returned in early August to spend an entire month of research. I did the bulk of work then, finding experts, conducting interviews, and making observations. At night I slept at a Seashore cottage in Eastham, shared with several other seasonal researchers. After a short break in early September, I returned again in mid September to interview experts available only after Labor Day. From October 2004 through April 2005 I organized materials, transcribed tapes, analyzed information, and developed my findings. The information I examined included documents provided by the Park, collected from Seashore files by Chuck Smythe. In late April I returned to the lower cape for a final research session with dune shack residents interviewed the previous summer. Before a group of about thirty shack residents, I previewed the preliminary findings so that I might identify conspicuous gaps or errors before the conclusion of writing.

Interviews with shack residents were extraordinarily productive. Every shack head I identified for a taped interview was available and willing except for one, whose health precluded a formal interview. In this endeavor, I began with a list of shack heads from the Seashore. The list contained names, addresses, and phone numbers of occupants with legal relationships with the Seashore. To each legal occupant I mailed a letter that introduced the project, requesting interviews during August. Accompanying this was a letter of support from the Seashore. The Seashore also released a public announcement about the project. I began phoning shack heads after I arrived in person on the lower cape to set up interview appointments. At the time of an interview, shack heads commonly volunteered names of additional people that I might contact. A few shack users contacted me directly, asking for interviews. I also compiled names from the written testimonies and letters in Seashore files. In this way, I developed a list of people who might be interviewed.

By the end of research period, I completed formal interviews with 47 shack residents. The people I interviewed are listed in the following table. Every shack was covered by a formal interview except one, the Wells shack. However, I learned a bit about this shack through an informal session with Ray Wells, its shack head. Of those interviewed, there were 25 females and 22 males. Their approximate ages fell in the following age ranges: 20-39 years (6 people), 40-59 years (24 people), and 60+ years (17 people). Regarding residency, 21 persons had a house in a lower cape community, 25 persons had a house off Cape Cod, and one person lived year-round at his shack. Of this group of shack residents, 20 were shack heads, 11 were relations of shack heads, and 16 were friends of shack heads. Finally, of this group, 39 persons were

### Shack Residents Formally Interviewed

Count	Date	Shack Resident	Principal Dune Shack(s)
1	9/12/2004	Richard D. Arenstrup	Armstrong
2	9/12/2004	Constance Armstrong	Armstrong
3	9/12/2004	David G. Armstrong	Armstrong
4	9/12/2004	Janet Armstrong	Armstrong
5	9/12/2004	John Cheetham	Armstrong and others
6	8/21/2004	Lawrence Schuster	Schuster
7	8/10/2004	David Adams	Adams
8	8/10/2004	Marcia Adams	Adams
9	8/10/2004	Sally Adams	Adams
10	8/10/2004	Andrea Champlin	Champlin
11	8/10/2004	Mildred Champlin	Champlin
12	8/10/2004	Nathaniel (Nat) Champlin	Champlin
13	8/10/2004	Paul Champlin	Champlin
14	8/10/2004	Maia Champlin Peck	Champlin
15	9/13/2004	Josephine Del Deo	Schnell-Del Deo
16	9/13/2004	Salvatore Del Deo	Schnell-Del Deo
17	8/20/2004	Tom Boland	C-Scape
18	8/20/2004, 8/25/2004	Jay Critchley	C-Scape
19	9/14/2004	Bill Fitts	Werner (Eurphoria), Werner (Thalassa), Gelb-Margo-Zimiles
20	9/14/2004	Harriet (Hatty) Fitts	Werner (Eurphoria), Werner (Thalassa), Gelb-Margo-Zimiles
21	8/27/2004	Joyce Johnson	Various shacks
22	8/17/2004	Genevieve Martin	Various shacks
23	8/6/2004	Julie Schecter	Werner (Eurphoria), Werner (Thalassa), Gelb-Margo-Zimiles
24	8/17/2004	Emily Beebe	Beebe-Simon
25	8/8/2004	Marianne Benson	Clemons-Benson, Fowler
26	8/8/2004	David Andrew Clemons	Clemons-Benson, Fowler
27	8/8, 8/23	Peter Clemons	Clemons-Benson, Fowler
28	8/8/2004	David Forest Thompson	Clemons-Benson, Fowler
29	8/28/2004	Marsha Dunn	Dunn
30	8/28/2004	Scott Dunn	Dunn
31	9/16/2004	Anne Lord	Malicoat-Lord
32	9/16/2004	Conrad Malicoat	Malicoat-Lord
33	8/29/2004	Dawn Zimiles	Gelb-Margo-Zimiles
34	9/17/2004	Martha Rogers Zimiles	Gelb-Margo-Zimiles
35	9/17/2004	Murray Zimiles	Gelb-Margo-Zimiles
36	8/26/2004	Irene Briga	Various shacks
37	8/13/2004	Samuel Jackson	Jackson
38	8/13/2004	Zara Jackson	Jackson
39	8/11/2004	Don Brazil	Tasha
40	8/4, 8/7, 8/9, 8/18	Paul Tasha	Tasha
41	8/11/2004	Paula Tasha	Tasha
42	8/22/2004	Maureen Joseph Hurst	Tasha
43	8/22/2004	Susan Leonard	Tasha
44	8/22/2004	Kathie Joseph Meads	Tasha
45	8/22/2004	Theo Cozzi Poulin	Tasha
46	8/18/2004	Gary Isaacson	Isaacson-Schecter
47	8/18/2004	Lauri Schecter	Isaacson-Schecter

primarily connected to shacks with personal reservations or leases, while 8 persons were primarily connected to shacks with reservations or leases with a non-profit organization. With this set of people, I recorded 2,606 minutes of interviews (43.4 hours). This material was the primary source of information on the cultural patterns of dune shack residents.

Frequently, several shack residents interviewed together, as shown by the dates in the table. The largest group was an interview with eight members of the Adams and Champlin families, who had requested a joint interview. Other interviews were with co-heads of shacks, such as Scott and Marsha Dunn (Dunn shack) or Jay Critchley and Tom Boland (C-Scape shack). Some interviews were with a single person, such as Emily Beebe (Beebe-Simon shack) and Julie Schecter, a leader with Peaked Hills Trust, a nonprofit organization connected to the shacks. Several interviews took place at dune shacks. Other sessions were held at restaurants or homes in Provincetown, Truro, or Wellfleet.

Interviews followed a semi-structured format. I asked general questions, guided by a list of topics I was interested to learn about. Shack residents gave answers while I recorded. Periodically, I probed for detail or clarification. Then I would ask another general topical question and the semi-structured conversation continued. While exploring common subject areas with all shack residents, every interview was slightly different in the order and specifics of questions, tailored to the resident's expertise and interests and the information gaps I needed filled. In many cases, shack residents came into interviews primed to inform me about certain subjects. The sessions were specifically designed to allow for this. With group interviews, the information commonly emerged from lively conversational exchanges between shack residents, participants responding to one another's points. With few exceptions, shack residents appeared eager to inform me about the dune shacks, their histories, and their uses. A substantial volume of information was shared in a short amount of time under these conditions.

During select interviews when there seemed to be sufficient time, I collected information on cultural sites in the dune district. In this semi-structured format, I asked shack residents to look at aerial photographs and U.S.G.S. topographical maps of the dune district. I asked shack residents to locate places of significance to them, along with the places' names and reasons of significance. Sites were marked on transparent plastic sheets placed on top of the aerial photographs. This methodology provided information for compiling maps of cultural sites.

On an informal basis, I spoke with many other people during my research on the lower cape. I acquired considerable basic information from these conversations, such as local history, seasonal patterns of activities, gossip about colorful residents, and so forth. I spoke with art gallery owners along Commercial Street in Provincetown, learning about the art trade. I chatted up a vacationing social worker washing clothes at a Laundromat, learning about summer cottage rentals. I spoke with rangers near Race Point, learning about law enforcement on the beaches. I commiserated with commercial fishermen in Provincetown pubs to learn about fishing, and with street musicians to learn about expatriate students from Eastern Europe providing cheap summer labor in the tourist shops. I developed a sense for the shape of life on the lower cape by living there, participating, and observing for this short period.

### Scope and Limitations

At the start of this project, one dune shack resident told me politely, during our first contact by phone, that she hoped the Park Service had hired someone with "the proper frameworks" to conduct the ethnography. I'm not certain she was entirely satisfied after meeting me. I am

trained as a cultural anthropologist with twenty years' experience documenting traditional cultures on public lands in Alaska. Given my background, many aspects of local culture on the lower cape were substantially new for me. In particular, the expressive fine arts culture and art colonies were new, requiring quick study. In total, I spent less than two months physically on the lower cape conducting interviews and making observations. Given the constraints of research and my particular strengths and weaknesses, I expect some experts will find certain deficiencies in the report. I may have gotten some things wrong, not hearing correctly or observing completely. For such errors in the report, I must take full responsibility. But in consolation, I remind myself that ethnography is science, amenable to correction with additional information. Scientific description and explanation should always be considered incomplete, needing expansion and refinement, challenges for future work.

The ethnography has one limitation that may be identified upfront, one purposively built into the design of the project. I was not charged with conducting formal interviews with the Park Service. By design, such interviews were outside the scope of work for the project. Accordingly, I did not conduct formal interviews with members of the Cape Cod National Seashore to collect information related to the dune shacks. This constraint exposes the final report to the potential criticism that it's "one-sided" in that it presents information from shack residents but not shack owners. If there are two sides to some stories, one of the sides may be missing. In digesting the findings of the report, readers should keep this limitation in mind. The information about dune shack culture primarily comes from long-term dune shack residents, the focus of the project. It is an ethnographic description of traditions and cultural patterns from people who have lived in shacks.

A final caution is important concerning perceptions of bias. A good ethnography seeks to describe the world of a group of people, not just as the outside social scientist sees it, but also as the subjects themselves portray it. When a cultural anthropologist describes something, it does not mean the researcher necessarily is agreeing with it, or sympathizing with it, or advocating for it. Readers of ethnographies sometimes jump to that erroneous conclusion, that detailed ethnographic description is the same as subjective agreement, distorted by personal bias. In this report, I have tried to paint an accurate picture of the traditions, culture, beliefs, values, and customary practices of dune shack residents. Frequently, I have tried to express them using the words of the dune dwellers themselves, transcribed from recorded interviews. I believe recorded interviews can present information with authenticity, straight from the source. Extensively quoting a dune shack resident is done for rich description. It should not be misinterpreted as advocacy, a soapbox masquerading as science. It's true that this report places great trust in the dune shack residents to present authentic pictures of their lives as they experience them. It's also true that this is done with the goal of presenting rich descriptions of cultures and traditions.

### Acknowledgements

There are a great many people who provided much-appreciated help in the project. Literally, this project could not have happened without them. In this short section, I'd like to give my thanks for this assistance. I've never conducted a research project with such a uniformity of support as this one. I can truthfully say that this was my first project where people actually found me out, begging to be interviewed. In social science, it's generally the researcher who begs.

My first thanks are extended to the forty-seven dune shack residents who provided formal interviews. They are listed above, individually. They took me into their homes, fed me, and buried me with detailed information, much of it very personal, most of it exceptionally useful.

My hope is that this group finds that the report does justice to the body of knowledge they shared. Among this group, I'd like to especially thank Paul Tasha and Debra Pelletier, whose cool lemonades at their home on Tasha Hill in Provincetown saved me from heat exhaustion several times. Paul Tasha gave me several valuable guided tours through the dunes, north Truro, and Provincetown, volunteering a lifetime of expertise on these places. A special thanks is extended to Peter Clemons and Marianne Benson for the use of their Backshore Art Gallery as an occasional place of rest between interviews in Provincetown, and for compiling extensive historic materials on the shacks for my use. A special thanks is given to Josephine C. Del Deo for the use of her historic materials, particularly her manuscript, "The Dune Cottages at Peaked Hill Bars," written by her in consultation with Ray Martin Wells, Philip S. Packett, and John Corea, a basic source on shack history, and her book, *Figures in a Landscape, The Life and Times of the American Painter, Ross Moffett, 1888-1971*, containing an account of the preservation of the Province Lands. Others also graciously provided materials for the report. Dawn Zimiles provided digital photographs of artists and writers connected to her family's shack. Murray Zimiles provided materials on the work of Boris Margo and other family members. David Armstrong provided historic materials pertaining to the Great Beach Cottage Owners Association. Jay Critchley and Tom Boland provided statistical information on the users of the C-Scape Shack, as well as logbooks of its occupants. Joyce Johnson provided information on the Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill. John Cheetham provided transcripts of interviews he conducted with shack residents.

Throughout the project, I received tremendous help from personnel in the National Park Service. Of particular help were Sue Moynihan, Chief of Interpretation and Cultural Resources Management, and Bill Burke, Cultural Resources Program Manager, the Seashore's resident staff historian. They were available whenever I had a need, providing me with materials, a telephone in the headquarters' library, an introductory guided tour of the dunes, and answers to questions based on their wealth of personal expertise. Mark Adams, GIS Specialist, and Elizabeth Murray, Cartographic Technician, put together aerial photographs and topographic maps of the dune district that were essential for the mapping of cultural sites. The base photo was from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, MassGIS (2001 digital orthophoto). General and administrative help was provided by Marianne McCaffery, George Fitzgerald, and Nancy Finley. The Cape Cod National Seashore provided me with accommodations at a cottage in Eastham for the duration of the fieldwork. And finally, Chuck Smythe, Ethnography Program Manager, Northeast Region, National Park Service, Boston provided an extremely supportive work environment for the project. He compiled a wealth of documents from government records to give me a solid background to the dune shack issue. The credit for the conceptual and fiscal foundations for the project belongs to him.

## Chapter 2. The Roots of Tradition

Dune shack residents today recount a history of the shacks covering over a hundred years, from at least the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and stretching into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The traditions associated with the dune shacks of today are rooted in that history. The dune shacks figure in the history of Provincetown and lower Cape Cod, and have national significance in the history of American literature, theater, and art. The history of the shacks and the evolution of their distinctive uses are marked by significant periods, or milestones, for the shacks and the people who have used them. This chapter traces the history of the dune shacks organized around these periods.

Of course, history is more than just a chronicle of milestones. For living traditions, history also provides sources of present customary patterns. In history is found an understanding of the present, origin stories that make sense of things today. It provides a logic for the evolution of the past into the present, a rationale for why things are the way they are. It offers historic figures and social groups with whom people of the present may identify. Because of this, the past establishes a foundation for the actions of people who choose to emulate and build on it. Histories influence the future. The history of the dune shacks, as told by current shack residents, does all of this.

One powerful origin story celebrated by the townspeople at Provincetown is that of the Pilgrims of the Plymouth Colony. In the national consciousness, the story of this one colony has been elevated to mythic proportions. It's taught to children in public schools, commemorated in a major national holiday, and in Massachusetts, sold to tourists to generate substantial income. Provincetown was the original landfall of the Plymouth colonists in 1620, where the Mayflower Compact was signed. The town has staked a claim in this mythic tale. Provincetown's Pilgrim Monument, America's tallest granite tower, consecrated by Presidents Roosevelt and Taft in grand celebrations, commemorates local events. At a smaller scale, Sunny Tasha and Harry Kemp, noteworthy dune shack residents, organized annual public reenactments during the 1950s of the Pilgrims at Provincetown. Dressed in period costumes, they commemorated the "First Wash Day" by women off the boat. The homespun ceremony reaffirmed the humanity of this mythic tradition. Tasha and Kemp's reenactments, drawing in family members and neighbors, made the Pilgrims' story their personal story too.

Like the Pilgrims for Americans, dune shack history captures the imaginations of contemporary dune shack users. The historic stories are recounted with pride and passion. They are very personal origin tales whose retellings provide grounding for contemporary dune shack society. Dune shack residents I interviewed did not trace their origins to the Plymouth colony. Shack users of today were not modern-day Pilgrims, though the early colonists set the stage. I was told that early colonists on the lower cape inadvertently unleashed the dunes by cutting and overgrazing. But none of the dune shack residents I interviewed started dune shack history with the Pilgrims. Instead, dune shack residents located their origins in Yankee and Portuguese fishermen, in the lonely surfmen stationed on the Backshore, in the occasionally-renowned but typically-starving writers and visual artists from the Provincetown art colony, and in a succession of unconventional mavericks experimenting with life on the dunes. Hatty Fitts, a Provincetown resident whose family has used dune shacks for four generations, provided a thumbnail synopsis of this history during our interview:

Most of the shacks originally were built by the precursor to the coastguard for their families or for their own use. Then the local fishermen started using the shacks because it was far more convenient staying out there to fish off the Backshore than it was to keep trekking

across. Then it was by word of mouth and that sort of thing that the artists that were coming into town at that time found out about the shacks, especially writers. Through their friendships with fishermen and others, they started using the shacks.

This chapter organizes what the dune dwellers recounted about their history, interweaving their stories to provide a glimpse of the origins of dune shack society. The living traditions on the dunes described in later chapters find their roots in this history.

### Shipwrecks and Life Saving Stations

Many dune shack residents like Hatty Fitts traced their origins to the lonely surfmen of the lifesaving stations on the Backshore, the precursors to the coastguards. The surfmen watched the offshore shoals for ships in distress, providing rescue and shelter for people shipwrecked by storms. The U.S. Life Saving Service began in 1872 and was made part of the newly-formed U.S. Coast Guard in 1915. On the lower cape, there were stations at Race Point, Highland, Peaked Hill Bars, and High Head, with lifesaving huts between stations. Lifeguards patrolled the beaches from the stations to the huts and back. The lifesaving huts evolved from the so-called “charity huts” of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, erected along Cape Cod beaches by the Massachusetts Humane Society as shelters for the shipwrecked.

Kathie Joseph Meads, a dune shack user, saw a direct linkage between the lifesavers and the dune shacks. Sunny Tasha, the matriarch of the extended Tasha family and friend of Harry Kemp, the poet, taught her this connection:

Sunny Tasha always said, “The oldest tradition here in these dunes and these shacks was that of the lifesaving stations.” She wanted to run this shack as one of the lifesaving stations were run, which was with an open door, with whatever a stranded sailor at sea, who was in a shipwreck, would need. He’d make his way up to one of these little dune houses and he’d open the door. There’d be a set of matches and a candle. There’d be some sort of little food and shelter from the storm. The coastguardsmen, the lifesaving service, would make their way from one shack to another. These were always open. More than likely they’d be by themselves. But they sometimes found a shipwrecked sailor there and brought them back. That’s what the tradition of these shacks was. And it remains. And it should be carried on in that tradition. It didn’t start with Sunny. It was what these shacks were meant to be way, way back.

Paul Tasha confirmed that the open-door policy of the Tasha shack was connected with the surfman tradition, as shelters for wanderers in need, through Harry Kemp and his mother:

It’s the old school of thought from Harry Kemp and my mother. They wanted anybody who was wandering in the dunes, if they needed shelter, to be able to come in. So there was never a lock on the door. And to this day, believe it or not, in this day and age, there’s still been no locks. We get people from all over, all over the world really.

These accounts illustrate how the oral traditions passed down within this family line have directly influenced use patterns of the Tasha shack today. The shack’s open-door policy was rationalized by the Tashas as an extension of the traditions of the Backshore lifesavers, who originally built the Tasha shack. After winning the lease for the former Peg Watson shack, Gary Isaacson and Laurie Schecter also decided to follow an open-door policy for their shack, even though this involved risks. Many I interviewed spoke in admiration of the open-door policy of the Tashas,

Isaacson, and Schecter, although they did not follow it. How the open-door policy fits with the pattern of use of shacks is described more fully in Chapter 5.

Like the Tashas, Russell Powell and Julie Schecter connected dune shack origins to the early charity huts of the Massachusetts Humane Society, described in their film, *Shack Time*, which they produced in 2001. The film quotes Thoreau, from his essay, *Cape Cod*, where he describes a lifesaving hut he observed in 1851. Thoreau approved of the general concept of lifesaving huts presented in the Humane Society's tract, but he was not too impressed by the accommodations in the one hut he examined:

Keeping on, we soon after came to a Charity-house, which we looked into to see how the shipwrecked mariner might fare. Far away in some desolate hollow by the sea-side, just within the bank, stands a lonely building on piles driven into the sand, with a slight nail put through the staple, which a freezing man can bend, with some straw, perchance, on the floor on which he may lie, or which he may burn in the fireplace to keep him alive. Perhaps this hut has never been required to shelter a ship-wrecked man, and the benevolent person who promised to inspect it annually, to see that the straw and matches are here, and that the boards will keep off the wind, has grown remiss and thinks that storms and shipwrecks are over; and this very night a perishing crew may pry open its door with the numbed fingers and leave half their number dead here by morning... These houses, though they were meant for human dwellings, did not look cheerful to me. They appeared but a stage to the grave.

What kind of sailors' home were they? This "Charity-house," as the wrecker called it, this "Humane-house," as some call it... had neither window nor sliding shutter, nor clapboards, nor paint. As we have said, there was a rusty nail put through the staple. However, as we wished to get an idea of a Humane-house, and we hoped that we should never have a better opportunity, we put our eyes, by turns, to a knot-hole in the door... We discovered that there were some stones and some loose wads of wool on the floor, and an empty fireplace at the further end; but it was not supplied with matches, or straw, or hay, that we could see, nor "accommodated with a bench." Indeed, it was the wreck of all cosmical beauty there within... We thus looked through the knot-hole into the Humane-house, into the very bowels of mercy, and for bread we found a stone... However, we were glad to sit outside, under the lee of the Humane-house, to escape the piercing wind. (Thoreau 1961:84-90)

None of the current dune shacks was as rustic as the lifesaving hut described by Thoreau. The Tasha shack, the smallest of the dune shacks, approximates the dimensions of Thoreau's charity-house, but currently it offered many more amenities, including windows, double French doors, a bed, well-stocked book shelves, wood stove, and storage attic (see Fig. 20). Among the current set of dune shacks, the Armstrong shack and Dunn shack were said to be located at the sites of lifesaving huts, and the Schnell-Del Deo shack was built upon the second Peaked Hill Coast Guard Station foundations.

The linkage of the dune shacks with the Backshore surfmen is structural, as well as conceptual. As documented by Josephine Del Deo, a resident of the Schnell-Del Deo shack, many contemporary dune shacks in the central district have descended from buildings constructed by the lifesavers stationed at the Peaked Hill Station (Del Deo 1986). The first uses of the dune shacks in the central district were by the surfmen and coastguards, connected with the activities of the Peaked Hill Station. These links with the lifesavers are still within the memories of the two oldest shack residents, Zara Jackson and Ray Wells.

Certain coastguards working at the Peaked Hill Station (Captain Frank L. Mayo, Frank Cadose, Raymond Brown, Joe Madeiros, Louis H. Silva, Louis Spucky, and perhaps a couple others) built several small cottages near the station to house family and other guests, and to rent for income. According to Josephine Del Deo (1986), the cottages were built from loneliness, as places to put loved ones visiting the Backshore from Provincetown:

The several buildings in this complex were variously service buildings for the station and/or small cottages constructed by the Coast Guardsmen themselves for use by their families in the summer months, loneliness being a compelling stimulant to this activity.

This has become part of local oral history, as retold by Peter Clemons, a dune shack resident:

There were a couple of cottages built in conjunction with the lifesaving station. They were specifically built for families to come out and visit. This is part rumor, part truth, I suppose. They were built for kids and mothers to come and be somewhere in the vicinity of the guys that were running the coast guard station.

According to this oral history, the shacks were not built for solitude, but to relieve it. Relatives and friends from Provincetown who walked out Snail Road to visit the coastguards at Peaked Hill Station or to fish the Backshore could stay in the shacks. A variant of this pattern of use continues today. Relatives and friends come out to the Backshore to visit the core residents of the dune shacks. This continues to be a primary use pattern of dune shacks, as described in subsequent chapters.

The owners of the small cottages also rented to interested parties, including Harry Kemp, Ray Wells, Hazel Hawthorne Werner, among others. Very early on, several cottages changed owners for modest sums. And the small cottages were moved as storms undermined the beaches. The changing configuration of structures around the Peaked Hill Station was documented by Hazel Hawthorne Werner, an early shack renter and shack owner in the central district. About 1960, Werner drew a series of five maps of the district for Al Fearing, another shack owner (Werner 1971). Based on memory, her maps depict structures at successive time periods, labeled 1920, 1933, 1939-1946, 1946-1950, and 1950-1960. The maps graphically depict how buildings constructed by coastguards at the Peaked Hill Station evolved into a clustering of dune shacks. A summary of the historic periods is as follows, extracted from the Werner maps, supplemented with information from Del Deo (1986).

Werner's 1920 map identifies nine structures at that time:

- The "new" coastguard station (eventually relocated further inland, then decommissioned, and then burned);
- The "old" coastguard station used as the Eugene O'Neill summer home (eventually lost to the sea);
- Captain Frank Mayo's cottage (eventually lost to the sea);
- Frank Cadose's cottage (originally the station's hen house, eventually claimed by Frank Henderson and rented to Ray Wells, then rented to Harry Kemp, becoming the Kemp shack and then the Tasha shack);
- Chief of Police Charles Rogers' cottage (rented to Harry Kemp, eventually becoming the Malkin-Ofsevit-Jackson shack);
- The coastguard boathouse (eventually becoming the second shack of Malkin-Ofsevit-Jackson, and then incorporated as salvage into the Isaacson-Schecter shack); and
- Three sheds near the "old" station.

Werner's 1933 hand-drawn map identifies four additional structures:

- Raymond Brown's cottage (eventually becoming the Fearing-Fuller-Bessay-Clemons-Benson shack);
- Joe Madeiros' cottage (eventually abandoned and collapsed);
- Louis Silva's cottage (eventually becoming the Werner shack named Thalassa); and
- A shed built for O'Neill (circa 1921-26)

Werner's 1939-46 map identifies six additional structures:

- Frenchie Chanel's cottage (started in 1946, eventually becoming the Schnell-Del Deo shack);
- Boris Margo's cottage (rebuilt several times, eventually becoming the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack);
- Hill-Ford cottage (eventually accidentally burned);
- Stan Fowler cottage (the Fowler shack);
- Hazel Hawthorne Werner cottage (originally built by a coastguard Louis Spucky for his wife and bought by Werner in 1946, eventually becoming the Werner shack named Euphoria); and
- A coastguard watchtower (removed from the station and relocated to the beach, eventually destroyed by fire in 1946).

Werner's maps of the next two periods (1946-1950; 1950-1960) chronicle the movements of the station and shacks in the central district, but mention no additional shacks being built (except the Gelb-Margo rebuilds). However, in addition to the above shacks illustrated in the Werner maps, Del Deo (1986) reports that coastguards P.C. Cook and Joe Medeiros built another cottage just east of the station in 1931 and sold it to the Braatens soon after, eventually becoming the Schuster shack. Conrad Malicoat reported that the Schmid shack originally was built by a coastguard named Meads, and owned by Peg Watson. Other shacks outside the central group also may have been built by coastguards.

For about two decades (circa 1919 to 1939), dune shack residents and the coastguards formed an interactive community in the central cluster of shacks. They lived as neighbors, providing favors for one another. This Backshore community was described by Zara Jackson, who remembered it as a young child about 1929:

The Hill [Peaked Hill] was basically where Margo's [shack] is. It was a different configuration then. There was the top shack, the middle, and then Brownies' [Raymond Brown's shack]... There was Louis Spucky's shack that Hazel owned, and then a middle one, and then what became the Fearing shack. The Hill was immediately parallel to the station. Remember, all of these shacks, with the exception of mine, were built by the coastguards for their families. They would sometimes bring their families out, or they'd have a little place to go themselves. So that was like a little community, which was a different thing from when people later wanted to come out only to be alone.

When the station was opened, in the early years, these men all came from this region. They were from Provincetown, or very close to it. They would walk home on liberties. For a weekend or whatever time they would get, a day-and-a-half, or whatever, they would walk back to town. Now there's a little bit left of the old Snail Road which came over the dunes. It was completely lined with planks for walking. They would walk back carrying their liberty bags. The Snail Road through the low-lying woods could accommodate a horse and wagon. "Greeny" Silva, I think his name was Emmanuel, was the cook. He'd go in weekly for supplies. Sometimes we'd get a ride with him. Otherwise we'd walk into town and carry

things back in an onion sack. We'd pump cold water and keep it for a few days in a bucket of cold water. That was the early preservation.

The coast guard station started out with a horse and wagon. They had scythes and they cut the beach grass for Betsy's hay for the winter. Then they got a tractor. And then they had a truck. The truck was in the middle 1930s. Some people had flivvers. Jimmy Thomas had a flivver, an old car like a Model-T that had been stripped down. They would under-inflate the tires. He would bring it out here. He could make it go almost anywhere. And Frankie Henderson had a car that he got out here.

This was a very old-fashioned culture. In a sense everyone looked up to the coastguards. They were our guardians. Occasionally we'd get invited to have a meal with them. It was a big dining room. They'd have iron stone mugs and heavy dishes from the Navy. There was a big coal stove in the kitchen, and it was always going. There was always a pot of coffee on. This was a different world from today.

When the station was on the bluff, the watch was in the cupola because that overlooked the beach. After the station was moved back to this area, they built a little watchtower, a little watch house, and they'd walk there. Joe Morris was the chief mate at the coastguard station. My mother paid him to watch out for the shack in the winters. Joe Morris would open and close it... While the coastguard station was open, there was no vandalism.

I think the station closed up around 1938 or 1939. Then there was just one coastguardsman, Frank Henderson. He was assigned to watch out for the station and to keep things in order. Then it was closed completely. It was re-opened after World War II, which was 1941. The Coast Guard became a part of the Navy. So it was a very different culture then. The Navy culture was not the original one.

In this oral history, Zara Jackson recalled a type of friendly interaction with the coastguards. She said they were admired, "our guardians." People regularly came and went between the Backshore station and Provincetown. She got rides to and from town in the station's horse-drawn wagon. She occasionally dined with the crew in the station's dining hall. Her mother hired Joe Morris, a station man, to open and close their shack and to watch it over the winter. She recalled that Morris built their shack's outhouse and children's swing set, on hire by her mother. According to Jackson, the dune shack residents and the coast guard station personnel formed a type of community on the Backshore. The involvement of the lifesavers in this community ended with the closing of the stations just before World War II. The station was briefly reopened by the Navy during the war.

The coastguards assisted dune shack residents during storms that threatened the shacks. Zara Jackson recalled the series of storms that undercut her shack and the coast guard station, and that destroyed the old station used by Eugene O'Neill:

When we first came out [1926], our shack was not in its present location. It was all the way in front of where the Boris Margo's shack is, on the bluff. It stayed there until about 1932 or so. When we were first out, it was also the time when there was the old station that Eugene O'Neill had lived in. You know "Reds" – that was a film about O'Neill living out here – that was that period. Well, O'Neill had been here earlier than us. He was here around the period of World War I. By the early 1930s, he had left Peaked Hill. That station was being washed out to sea just about that time. There were tremendous storms in the early 1930s that were eroding the cliffs all along there. So the shack was really in danger.

I have a memory of this one night when Harry Kemp and Hazel Hawthorne and I don't remember who else was living here then. It was sort of like a party in the shack, because there was this enormous storm going on. When we got up in the morning, to get out of the screen door you had to back along the front because within two feet was the drop of the cliff.

The shack was moved back on rollers. They had huge telephone poles. The coastguard pulled it back with the tractor a fair amount. But that was as far as it could go. It couldn't stay there because this erosion was still going on. So it was taken apart into sections by Jesse Meade, the same mover for the station. The station was in jeopardy too. So at just about the same time, they were moved back. They were in a parallel position [with her shack].

So the coastguards helped save the Jackson shack as well as their own station. The old coast guard station used by O'Neill as a summer residence was not so fortunate. It fell into the sea and was lost in 1932.



*O'Neill's Summer Residence Falling into the Sea*

For some dune residents, such as the Tashas, Jackson, Wells, and Schuster, their shacks provide direct reminders of the lifesavers on the Backshore. By and large, these are positive associations. In local oral traditions, the lifesavers are remembered as brave, dedicated public servants, and good neighbors. However, not all associations are positive. According to Julie Schecter, the connection of Thalassa with the lifesaving period keeps some people from using that shack, the problem being ghosts:

Hazel Werner bought Thalassa from one of the coastguardsmen... There's a story of a shipwreck that took place right out there. They say they laid the dead men out on the floor of Thalassa. There are people who won't stay out there because they can hear the dead men talking to them.

Werner's shack continues to be infused with the spirits from that tragic event, by this account.

### Fishing Shacks

Some dune residents trace the origins of dune shacks to fishing by Provincetown residents, to the sheds, shacks, and huts used by fishers for shelter and gear that predate the lifesavers. In her interview, Kathie Joseph Meads traced shacks to fishing huts. Meads said that Thoreau observed fishing huts in his travels around Provincetown in 1851 and 1857:

The shacks did exist at the time of Thoreau, which was before the coastguard. They had fisher shacks out here in the 1800s.... I hope you've gotten a chance to see Henry David Thoreau's *Cape Cod*. There's a chapter at the very end, one of his Provincetown chapters, where he refers to the fisher shacks, which are these dune shacks, where he spent the night... There's a little few sentences where he spent the night in the dune shack, in the fisher shack as he called them. He said everyone should engage in this kind of experience with nature, because this was what was meant by a "true hotel." This is where the environment was brought to you. That's what a true hotel should be.

Thoreau's reference to a "true hotel" is found in the final paragraph of his essays on Cape Cod, just before the famous statement about a man putting all of America behind him, standing on the Backshore and facing the wide Atlantic:

A storm in the fall or winter is the time to visit it; a light-house or a fisherman's hut the true hotel. A man may stand there and put all America behind him. (Thoreau 1961: 319)

So for Thoreau, the "true hotels" for a Cape Cod vagabond like himself were places like the lighthouse on High Head, overlooking the Backshore, and a fisherman's hut on the beach, especially during stormy fall or winter.

Thoreau's essays do not explicitly describe him ever lodging in a fisherman's hut, although he might have. In his account, he refers to "the make-shifts of fishermen ashore," referring to the rough buildings erected in town and near places where people fished. Thoreau describes Provincetown as a collection of houses, fishermen's huts, fish houses, storehouses, and salt works:

The town is compactly built in the narrow space, from ten to fifty rods deep, between the harbor and the sand-hills, and contained at that time about twenty-six hundred inhabitants. The houses, in which a more modern and pretending style has at length prevailed over the fisherman's hut, stand on the inner or plank side of the street, and the fish and store houses, with the picturesque-looking windmills of the Salt-works, on the water side... This was the most completely maritime town that we were ever in. It was merely a good harbor, surrounded by land dry, if not firm, an inhabited beach, whereon fishermen cured and stored their fish, without any back country. When ashore the inhabitants still walk on planks.

As described by Conrad Malicoat, a dune resident (see below), starting in the late 1800s, many poor artists and writers happily adapted the "rinky-dink" shacks in town into seasonal dwellings and studios, bases in their quests as artists in the emerging Provincetown artist colony.

Most of the shacks used today were not originally fishing shacks. However, some may trace their origins to that activity, at least in part. Zara Jackson called Frank Mayo's shack a "little fishing shack," in her description of its demise after a major storm in the early 1930s:

At that time Frank Mayo had a little fishing shack. It ended up cantilevered, half on the cliff and half over the ocean. So the coastguards put a huge rope around it and attached it to their tractor. They were trying to pull it, maneuver the shack back. Instead it sort of just folded up like a house of cards, and went over the brink.

Frank Mayo's shack was one of the shacks in the central cluster, in the vicinity of the Peaked Hill coastguard station. So fishers used one of those shacks, and perhaps others in the central cluster.

As described above, the coastguards employed a different approach using rollers to help pull the Jackson shack away from the eroding cliff edge.

Some Provincetown residents erected shacks to use as fishing bases, a type of fishing camp on the periphery of town. They were not exclusively fishing bases: local residents constructed them also for merrymaking, dancing, and drinking. According to Nathaniel and Mildred Champlin, their shack was built by Dominic Avila, a member of the Provincetown Portuguese community, for fishing and partying in the early 1930s. Champlin himself discovered the Avila shack in 1948, also while fishing and partying on the Backshore with buddies. Other shacks in the northern cluster built by Jake Loring (the Adams shack) and Albert Nunes and Jake Waring (the Beebe-Simon shack) apparently were built for similar purposes. Fishing (surf casting from the beach) was one of the uses of the Backshore at that time, and shacks in the northern cluster were linked to this pattern of use.

Some local place names given by shack residents refer to camping sites of fishermen who erected shelters. For instance, the Champlins identified The Bowls, Second Rip, and Bill's Camp as camping places for fishermen (see Chapter 6, Map 6, Cultural Sites Nos. 11, 13, and 19). Bill's Camp was described by the Champlins as a site between Phil Malicoat's shack and the Peaked Hill area where fishermen erected small temporary shelters and tents as bases for fishing. There may be other sites like this on the Backshore that I did not document in the mapping sessions.

The first shack built by Phil Malicoat in the northern cluster was burned down by fishermen who were using it in Phil's absence, according to Conrad Malicoat's history of his shack:

The original shack my father built. It was very small, something like 12 by 16 feet. He built it in the late 40s, about 1948 or 1949. The way he determined its location was this. He owned a piece of property that at that time was 75 feet wide and went from Bradford Street to the ocean. He determined where he was going to put this shack by looking at a map. It wasn't a topographical map, it was just a map that the government put out. He knew the angle because the deed had a description of the compass needle, so he plotted that across the dunes. The map was clear enough, so he could sort of figure out where it was. The map wasn't topographical or else he probably would have hit it right on the nail.

Later in the 1950s he went to Europe. He let some fishermen friends of his use it. I guess they had a party or something and the place burned down. That happened when he was away. And that was a very good thing to have had happen. When they came back, he and I surveyed it. We got a real surveyor's instrument and surveyed it right directly across. We found that this former building was off by about 600 to 700 feet. So we rebuilt that place according to the new survey.

My dad would share the shack with his artist friends in town here. And he shared it with the fisherman. Well, I guess he didn't share it with them after it burned. *[Laughter.]* Actually, I think he was understanding. He was very understanding. He never complained about it. He had to go fishing himself just to earn a living at one point.

It's possible some of the shacks in the eastern group of shacks also might be traceable to fishing shacks. A shack co-owned by Graham Giese and friends was used for fishing before being undercut by tides and removed by the Park Service. It may be more difficult to reconstruct the history of this grouping, as all except the Armstrong shack are gone.

As shown by this information, fishing from temporary shelters was a pattern on the Backshore since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, and perhaps earlier. Some dune shacks were used as bases for fishing, and so might be considered “fishing shacks.” Though connected to shacks, fishing from the Backshore evolved into a use pattern distinct from that of dune shack society. Surf fishers began using converted bread trucks for shelter in addition to tents and temporary shacks, according to the Champlins and Adams. Today, the surf casters find shelter in recreational vehicles camped on the beach under the authorization of sand permits provided by the Park (see Fig. 2). This large social group directly descends from the surf fishing patterns of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The surf casters who use sand vehicles are represented in part by the Massachusetts Beach Buggy Association, many of whom fish. The surf casters interact with the dune shack society, but are distinct from them.

### Old Provincetown and Rural Economies

The Peaked Hill Bars Coast Guard Station was connected socially and economically to Provincetown during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most surfmen were Provincetown residents from old Provincetown families, primarily members of the town’s Portuguese community. Surfmen and others traveled back and forth between the Backshore station and town for supplies. Shacks were built around the station to accommodate visitors from Provincetown. On liberty, the coastguards walked to town to visit family and friends.

In addition to employment as lifesavers, Provincetown residents used the Backshore and dunes for a number of economic purposes during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The beach was regularly searched for salvage from shipwrecks, an occupation described by Thoreau in the Cape Cod essays. Salvaging the Backshore was profitable. Wreckage from ships became the property of finders unless the ship owners employed the salvagers. This traditional use of the Backshore by Provincetown and dune shack residents has continued to the present. Shacks commonly incorporate salvage in their construction, as described in later chapters.

Since its earliest days, the dune district provided certain wild food products for Provincetown families, especially deer, hares, migratory waterfowl, cranberries, blueberries, beach plums, rose hips, and mushrooms. East Harbor, the water body surrounded by dunes to the southeast of Provincetown, provided eels, turtles, and other fish. These family subsistence activities were extensions of the fishing economy of Provincetown. Families ate wild foods gleaned from the sea and the land. The plums and berries were preserved as jams. Fish was smoked. The wild food products were eaten in the home and sold for small amounts of income. Like salvaging, the traditional uses of the dunes for food have continued to the present. The food gathering activities have come to be perceived as emblems of a traditional heritage at Provincetown, particularly of the Portuguese community. The uses are viewed as continuations of valued Provincetown traditions, providing satisfaction to families who identify with that heritage.

The dune district was used for small-scale cranberry farms during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A portion of the dune district was divided into narrow, privately-held tracts running from the shore of Provincetown Bay to the shore of the Atlantic, for use in cranberry farming and other economic activities. The “spaghetti strips” and their uses were described by Conrad Malicoat and Anne Lord, whose family owned two of the narrow parcels during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century:

Malicoat: Originally a lot of people farmed out there on the dunes. One of the biggest farming that they did was cranberries. Pretty close to where we live there's a trail that's called the Whistle Path, because the train came across it. That particular path went from Bradford Street [in Provincetown] all the way over to the Backshore. The farmers in horse-and-buggies would go over the dunes and get to their plot of cranberries. This was quite a flourishing business for everybody. There are a lot of cranberry bogs around here. Those little "spaghetti strips" they call them, they were pretty narrow, so each individual owner had their own little private holdings, for whatever they were doing out there. They were maybe harvesting other things, too. I don't know exactly. Wood was harvested. And you could be fined. I remember this historical fact. If you started harvesting your berries before a certain time that some elder determined every year because of the frost, you'd be fined a dollar.

Lord: Or you'd lose some kind of right. I think some of the cranberry bogs were in the Province Lands and really belonged to the town, before they signed it over to the state. This is going back a really long time ago.

Malicoat: Yeah, we're going back to the 1700s, or the 1600s.

Conrad Malicoat described Provincetown in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when dune shack history emerged, as a culturally-mixed community of old Yankees and Portuguese fishermen, who became friendly to artists and writers:

I'm going to get into a little bit of history, because I think it's important to understand. The working class people who were here originally had a dependence on the sea. The fishermen were a group unto themselves. The Province Lands were the farthest out into the water, and therefore a very valuable place to be in terms of being able to harvest fish. These were Yankees. We could call them Yankees, but probably they were from different countries, yet mostly English in origin.

Then came the Portuguese. The Yankee fisherman had started to disperse. The captains had a harder time finding crews. So they went to the Azores and to the Verde islands, mostly the Azores, and they had them as crew. The crews weren't allowed ashore. But they'd jump ship. Pretty soon this town became a Portuguese community, basically. The politics were run for the most part by Portuguese for some time.

The fishing community of Provincetown was described by Thoreau in the middle 19<sup>th</sup> century. Fishing fleets and transporters came and went from the deep-water port, carrying herring and cod harvested from the near-shore banks. Salt works lined the Provincetown shore boiling sea water into salt for curing fish, burning wood collected from nearby woodlands. Families moved fish to and from storage sheds each day, laying them out in the sun to cure. Traffic was primarily by foot and boat. Packets ferried fish and supplies from Provincetown to the mainland. The mixture of Portuguese and Yankees in Provincetown during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was described by Mary Heaton Vorse's *Time in Our Town*, and also *In the Narrow Streets* by Wes Moffit. Several dune shack residents identified the Vorse book as an accurate portrayal of the Provincetown society they knew, before its changes from tourism toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The town's population was relatively poor, subject to the insecurities of fishing, but hardworking and proud. It was a small, maritime-based community with a rural economy, producing food for home use and sale, making a living from nature. Some of the uses in the dunes today are viewed as a continuation of these small-town traditions, as described in subsequent chapters.

Provincetown also was a community with a reputation for tolerance for the maverick and marginal. Salvatore Del Deo, a dune shack resident, believed the freedom derived from Provincetown's geographic isolation and political autonomy:

In general terms, Provincetown was a free port. That may have set the tone of this place, before the Revolutionary War. They were isolated from the rest of the nation. There was no conscription here in Provincetown for the military service, because it was not considered really part of the United States. It was that kind of rebelliousness. There was an infamous settlement that developed at Hatches Harbor called Hell Town. That's exactly what it was. It was like a miniature Shang-hai and 'Frisco in the gold rush days, all put together.

Provincetown residents in general, and dune dwellers in particular, identify with the tradition of personal freedom at Provincetown. The town's free spirit predisposed it for acceptance of the free-thinking writers and artists who arrived during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### The Provincetown Art Colony

Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Provincetown attracted another community of residents in addition to the old Yankee and Portuguese fishers. These were visual artists, writers, and actors from the mainland and Europe. Many were seasonal visitors coming for the summer to work. But others tarried longer, becoming year-round residents. Several schools of art were established in Provincetown, attracting students for summer art classes. In a short time, an art colony developed at Provincetown resembling colonies in Europe. Some dune shack residents considered Provincetown to be America's oldest art colony, extremely influential in the history of American art, theater, and literature. They saw their own activities on the dunes as a continuation of that storied tradition. Josephine Del Deo, a dune resident, summarized this history:

When the artists came here in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the first was Waterman – he came here in the 1880s. He had come from Africa. He had been doing paintings over there of the dunes. When he came here and saw the dunes, he said, "Oh my God, this is incredible." He went out there and did all these dune landscapes. And he put Arabs in them. Then we had Charles Hawthorne who came in 1899. Since Charles Hawthorne's time, this place has been a major art colony. So naturally the fallout from that would be artists out there [on the dunes]. And writers too. Writers have been big out there. Eugene O'Neill. Edmund Wilson. Hazel Hawthorne. Norman Mailer. Myself. You name it. The painters and writers have always gone there, for the things that the painter and writer essentially value the most, which are privacy, solitude, and the contact with nature.

Artists and writers began using the dunes by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, an extension of the colony out onto the Backshore. Eugene O'Neill, the well-known playwright, may have been the first writer, working from the old coast guard station at Peaked Hill during the First World War. But others began using shacks surrounding the station and elsewhere. The dunes provided places of solitude for creative work, and places for creative thinkers to gather for collaboration and revelry. These types of uses of the dune shacks have continued to the present. The history of the development of the art colony at Provincetown, and its connection to the dune shacks and the Yankee and Portuguese communities, was recounted by Conrad Malicoat, a resident artist in Provincetown, whose family was part of that history:

In the late 1800s, and there were probably some artists here before that, I'm sure, there was one particular man, Charles Hawthorne, I'm sure you've heard of him. He proselytized and

he sold the area. This became a counterpart of a European artist colony. He was so excited about his place because of the light. This was a period of Impressionism, so light particularly was an important thing. He went around the country and got students to come to Provincetown. He had a flourishing class for many, many years. That's what originally drew both my mother and her family, her parents, here, in the very early part of the twentieth century. And then later, in the 1920s my dad came here to study with Hawthorne. So, Hawthorne was a very important influence.

Now, when these artists started coming to Provincetown, they loved it, and some stayed. Where did they stay? You might say they stayed in shacks. And what were the shacks? The shacks were old buildings. You see, the fisherman would not live on the waterfront. They had wharfs, they had many, many wharfs in this town. If you see the old pictures, there are some beautiful pictures of the early fishing fleet. Nobody lived on the waterfront. As I heard them say, when you got off the boat you turned your back to the sea. The fishermen lived on the other side of Commercial Street, not too far back.

On the waterfront there were all these rinky-dink kind of buildings, put up for their value as a place to put fishing equipment and so forth. They were constructed out of whatever they had available. The salt works were on the waterfront side, too. Also, when the artists came here there was an economic demise because of the Portland gale. A lot of the salt works were lost, and a lot of the working shacks were demolished because of the tremendous storm in 1898. A whole shift started to happen. Oil was coming in, so they were not sailing, they were using engines to run around and go fishing. At this particular time, artists discovered this town. When they discovered it, a lot of them decided to stay. They found the dregs of buildings to live in, because they're all poor.

One of the reasons for this is their whole quest. An artist's quest is a spiritual quest. It's not money. Money doesn't come into it. You see a shift in that today, where people are being taught to market their art, and that's a whole different thing. The passion to be an artist was something else. It was a very deep commitment to life, to experimentation, to develop a means of sharing whatever was inside of you, seen through your painting. It was a very dedicated profession. People took it very, very seriously. And believe me, I was a son, with my sister, of a family that felt very strongly that way. And many other men and women that I knew of felt that way.

And so this began to infiltrate out there to the Backshore. This was going on now right up to the 1950s and certainly right through the 1950s. You'd have these people come into Provincetown finding inexpensive places to live, and then if they couldn't even find an inexpensive place to live in town, they'd go out to there and build something and live out in the dunes. Nobody cared. The people in Provincetown looked upon them as bohemians. They called them bohemians. They weren't beatniks or whatever, they were bohemians. That was a description of these people that they couldn't figure out, and they kind of laughed at them, or many of them did. They were sort of a particular class of people all by themselves. They would go out there to the Backshore. That place had a reputation for the... I don't know for what. But these people were taking themselves seriously, too. They were not just a crazy bunch of people. They were people who had very particular objectives in mind when they were out there, on the Backshore.

Conrad Malicoat described the attraction of a place like Provincetown to the individual artist. He stated it was a "colony" in the sense of a collectivity of individuals driven by a passion to express:

It's individuals. You have these individuals who are looked at askance for the most part. You know the history of families getting upset when all of a sudden one of their offspring wants to be an artist – they reject them, and then they're out there. So you have these individuals that have a dream, they have an inspiration, an intuition about their life. So they go forth, but they're struggling. Nobody seems to really want them. They have to develop a talent before they get respected, and that's an arduous thing to do. So [in a colony] you have these individuals together, but every individual doesn't agree with the other one. What unites them is the fact that they're all in the same boat of being sort of disrespected, just a fringe group, really trying to bring out something from within themselves.

Provincetown became a cultural center, a small community that drew people engaged in art, theater, and literature. The artists and writers came to Provincetown for education, inspiration, and work. The creative population came and went from the center, a flow that continues today. The historic importance of Provincetown as a cultural center was described by Anne Lord:

Provincetown became a colony with Hawthorne coming, a very charismatic teacher, bringing people in from around the country, following him, and other teachers who were teaching at the same time, and later, drawing all these people in. Then the First World War came and artists who had been going to Europe couldn't really go any more. A lot of Europeans came here. They shared experiences, taught each other, learned from each other, and worked together. It's been called the Cradle of American Art. It drew people from New York, yes. From Boston, yes. From Gloucester to Rockport. From New Hampshire. From the South. From the West. If you go to the National Museum of Art in Washington, go into any gallery and you'll see: the majority of the artists will have spent some time, some of them years, some of them short periods of time, in Provincetown, Truro, and the environs, all drawn here, but especially to Provincetown.

According to several I interviewed, the Portuguese fishermen were instrumental in sustaining the poor artists and writers who came to the Provincetown art colony. Artists found cheap rents in the buildings owned by fishermen along the shore in town or owned by coastguards on the dunes. They received a bemused tolerance from fishermen about the so-called bohemian lifestyle. And they found inexpensive, at times free, food regularly brought to the docks by the Portuguese fishermen. The supportive relationships were described by Susan Leonard, Maureen Joseph Hurst, and Kathie Joseph Meads, three users of the dune shacks with Portuguese roots in Provincetown:

Leonard: These two groups of people, these two cultures, merged here, the artists and the Portuguese. Really, the Portuguese community sustained those people. They would have starved to death. They would have absolutely starved to death if it hadn't been for the fishermen. It was really considered poor form to say 'no' if someone went to the pier when the boats came in with their catch, if someone asked for fish. You were obligated, morally obligated.

Hurst: You never say 'no.'

Meads: The Portuguese felt that if they said 'no,' they were saying no to Christ, and saying no to charity, and therefore their next fishing trip they would not do well. That was just one of their traditional values.

Leonard: It's because of St. Peter being a fisherman, and St. Peter is the patron saint of all fisherman. That runs really deep.

The art colony came to be an integral part of Provincetown. Its members rubbed shoulders with members of the older Cape Cod groups, the Yankee and Portuguese residents. A sense of pride within all social segments led to a type of social egalitarianism in town, and least in the civic self-perception. The ideal was that rich and poor, creative artist and fisherman, seasonal resident and year-rounder, interacted in daily affairs in the small town. Kathie Meads said it was a town in which men like Walter P. Chrysler, Jr. of Chrysler Motors, who owned the Chrysler Art Museum in Provincetown, exchanged vegetables over the fence with her father, a Portuguese fisherman earning \$7,000 a year. It was a town of mixed cultural traditions, face-to-face familiarities, and tolerance.

### The Emergence of Dune Shack Society

By the 1920s, a dune shack society distinct from Provincetown was emerging on the dunes, tracing its roots to this confluence of local traditions – surfmen at stations, fishers (and revelers) at cottages, writers and artists in hand-me-down stations or shacks, and salvagers, hunters, and cranberry pickers from town. All were closely connected to Provincetown, socially, culturally, and economically. From the 1920s to the 1960s, a period of American history linking horse-drawn wagons with walks-on-the-moon, the dune shacks housed about three generations of residents and their coteries. With its clusters of shacks, the dunes came to house a series of residents. Distinctive personalities connected with the dunes came to be celebrated in the dune’s oral traditions, notables such as Eugene O’Neill, Edmund Wilson, and Norman Mailer, as well as others known locally, like Captain Frank L. Mayo, Frank Cadose, and Joe Medeiros. Several extended family lines became established in the shacks during this period, including the Adams, Armstrongs, Champlins, Gelb-Margo-Zimiles, Malicoats, Malkin-Jackson, and Tashas.

During this time, dune shack society was small-town and personal. People knew one another, often on a very personal basis. Dune dwellers interacted and gossiped about neighbors. Stories circulated among dune dwellers about dune dwellers, especially memorable characters with serious life endeavors, such as Charlie Schmid (Dune Charlie), Harry Kemp (the so-called “Poet of the Dunes,” the “Last Bohemian”), Jeanne Chanel (Frenchie), Rose Savage Tasha (Sunny), Margaret Watson (Peg), among others. These stories comprised a corpus for an emerging oral tradition. Long-lived dune residents like Hazel Hawthorne Werner, Ray Wells, and Zara Jackson testified to these people and events. In my interviews, dune shack residents frequently gave personal thumbnail sketches of dune notables as iconic illustrations of the distinctive characters connected with the dunes. Talking about the dune shacks meant talking about the people in the dune shacks. Personal sketches provided by Josephine and Salvatore Del Deo illustrate how dune residents commonly talk about dune shack society. At this point in their interview, the Del Deos were discussing dune dwellers other than just artists:

#### Charlie Schmid

Josephine: He’s a wonderful example. Charlie Schmid came here because his wife died. He was from the south. He was so devastated by her death that, just short of dying himself, he wanted to reject the world, forget about it. He came here and built this shack. There was a shack already there, but he built on it, and under it. It defied gravity. He lived there as a complete character until he died, wanting to be alone and left alone to be sad and suffer and whatever else he did. And he drank a great deal, of course. But his contribution was, he did this marvelous study of the swallows. He was so original with it, and so persevering, they asked him to come to Switzerland to a major ornithology conference. He’s an example of someone out there who had nothing to do with the arts. But he was driven to being there. And so grateful all his life to being out there. He just worshipped the ground he walked on.

### Peg Watson

Josephine: When Peg Watson died, she left the custody of her shack to Charlie Schmid. He took care of it as best he could.

Salvatore: Toward the end of her life she was such a determined woman. Never married. She was librarian, I think. But she loved the dunes more than any artist ever could. She knew every blade of grass. She became crippled.

Josephine: With arthritis.

Salvatore: But she just wanted to go out to the dunes. And Charlie [her neighbor] would carry her on his back up to the cottage every spring and every fall, and whenever she had to go into town. He took care of her. And for that, she left him her cottage.

Josephine: She dramatically died, crawling on all fours to get to her cottage. She could drive her jeep. But her cottage was in a rather difficult place.

Salvatore: It was on the top of a hill.

Josephine: So she had to get there by going up the hill. Peg Watson was another one who was totally devoted to the dunes, and who had nothing to do with the arts.

### Grace Bessay

Josephine: Take Grace Bessay.

Salvatore: She had the longest lawsuit in the history of American law against the U.S. government. How many years was it?

Josephine: Oh, it was twenty years at least. Peter Clemons can inform you of that.

Salvatore: Out of her own pocket. She paid for everything out of her own pocket.

Josephine: She was completely, well almost, bankrupt by it.

Salvatore: That kind of passion. Jesus.

Josephine: That shows you what kind of passion these people have. She wanted so much just to keep her way of life and her cottage. They were giving her such a hard time because she couldn't have "improved property" status because she didn't observe the zoning code of the town. They said, "You don't have the plumbing, you don't have this and you don't have that." And she said, "For God's sake, if I did that you'd throw me out because I'm not maintaining historic property." All she wanted to do was to have her shack and let them leave her alone.

### Laura and Stanley Fowler

Josephine: The Fowlers. They had nothing to do with the arts. Their place was beautiful. It was so beautifully kept. They came back every year. What they loved was to be with everybody else. They were kind of gossipy. They'd pick up little news here and there, you know. But they didn't bother anybody, and they were so loving and kind.

### Harry Kemp

Josephine: Harry Kemp, of course, represents the dunes. He's the dunes. His spirit is out there still. We were dear friends of Harry Kemp's. He was diabetic. He had to take insulin everyday. He would leave the needle out there with the medicine. And so he would walk to the Backshore every day in good weather. We're talking about the spirit of the dunes, Harry Kemp. Some of his best poems were about the Backshore. Those poems will probably live. Harry lost recognition in his last years. But he was a highly successful writer in his time, and of course the last bohemian in the Village. He knew everybody. He was a good friend of O'Neill's. In a sense, he was sort of the bulkhead out there of the writers, starting in a sense with Eugene O'Neill, with Harry coming later.

### Jeanne Chanel (Frenchie)

Salvatore: A remarkable woman. She chucked a promising career in theatre in New York and chose to come here and to build her own place with her own hands.

Josephine: Frenchie Chanel used to post the tern nests, long before the Park ever came.

Salvatore: She'd make a cordon of dune wood around the nesting areas of the birds. She did this on her own. She knew those little fellers were in danger.

Josephine: She'd take care of any wounded seagull. She had a remarkable sense of things.

### Robert Gibbs

Salvatore: Our first superintendent was Gibbs, Robert Gibbs. He was so wonderful. He really got himself involved with the community. At that time, all of our sister towns on the Cape still looked upon the Park as an intruder into the way of life.

Josephine: Here it was considered a great intrusion. Here the common cry was, "Oh, you've stopped our development cold. The Park has taken everything." Now you can hardly find a single person in this town of any persuasion who doesn't believe the Park has saved it. And it's true.

Salvatore: Gibbs used to say, he had been to the Great Smokies. He was a chief ranger there. He said, the one thing we learned the hard way, when you go to an area that has a uniquely rich cultural background, you respect it. You let it lie, let it be, providing they don't transgress into your unlawful procedures, you know. He said, "Every now and then we'd be walking around [the Great Smokies] on our horses and we'd hear, 'Boom!' It would be another still blowing up. [Laughter] We'd just turn the other way." He tried to bring that philosophy here. For the long time he was here, he was much loved by the lower Cape people.

### The Dune Shack People

Josephine: It's the people in these places [the shacks], the way of life they have in these places, that forms the cultural background of the thing. God knows everybody out there has been an extraordinary individual. We are all uniquely different from the average run-of-the-mill. We know everybody out there. Unfortunately, the case [to preserve the shacks] has been made around the constellation of artists and writers and so forth. But really it goes further than that. This is a community of unique individuals, unique in their character. They want isolation. They want solitude. They want independence. They do not want to be bothered by anybody. What you have to look at here is a way of life. This is what we are trying to save.

One main conclusion that may be drawn from life history sketches like these is that the dune shack society known by the Del Deos is extremely personal, and very self-aware. Long-term dune dwellers not only know about one another, but they love to talk about one another, and to draw life lessons from the stories. Even newcomers like Robert Gibbs, the first superintendent with the Seashore, can be brought in and preserved as a personality in the oral traditions of the dunes. From the 1920s through the 1960s, a distinct dune shack society grew to be a very personal community, rich with colorful people and outrageous stories, and more than full with a sense of itself.

### Preservation and the Cape Cod National Seashore

The formation of the Cape Cod National Seashore by Congress in 1961 was a milestone in the history of the dune shacks. In the versions of local history told to me, dune dwellers supported the Park's creation at Provincetown. Dune shack residents related this part of history with considerable pride. Dune dwellers played essential political roles in getting the Park fully

established in the Provincetown area, according to local accounts. Grassroots activists in Provincetown sought to preserve a threatened way of life on the lower cape by protecting the dunes through the Park. The perceived threat was from excessive land development for summer tourism and second homes, development controlled by outside interests primarily driven by short-sighted profit rather than the long-term benefit of Provincetown. Grassroots activists viewed the Park as a way to protect areas around Provincetown for their traditional values.

In the Provincetown area, the political fight focused on the fate of the “Province Lands,” 3,000 acres of relatively open commons including shoreline, wetlands, and dunes, held by Massachusetts. In 1654, a chief of the Nausets sold the Province Lands to Governor Thomas Prince for use of the Plymouth Plantation Colony. In 1670, the Province Lands were among the first areas in America set aside as a fishing reserve by the General Court of the Old Massachusetts Bay Colony. The issue was how much of the Province Lands would be transferred to the Park, and how much would be retained by state, town, or private owners for future development. Grassroots preservationists wanted all the lands to go to the Park. They drew substantial support from the artists and writers at Provincetown, and eventually from a majority of the town’s voters.

The fight to preserve the Province Lands for the Park was catalyzed by Ross Moffett (1888-1971), a painter and resident of Provincetown since 1913. Josephine Del Deo, a writer and dune shack resident, teamed up with Moffett in the campaign to organize public support to preserve the Province Lands. She chronicled the three-year political fight in her biography of Moffett (Del Deo 1994:317-345). Josephine and Salvatore Del Deo remembered this personally-difficult, grassroots political fight for the Park in our interview:

Josephine: I wrote a biography about Ross with a chapter devoted to this. I was frightened that this history would go by and never get written down. I was writing about his life, so this was something that I couldn’t miss. It was major. As you know, it was the first Park in the country that was placed inside an already-developed area. That’s what made it so unique. And that’s what made it so tough. We saved 1,500 acres of the Province Lands in our fight to establish the National Seashore. We had an original tract from the State of Massachusetts of 3,000 acres. The town fathers wanted to grab 1,500 acres of it for development. We fought that off. That was a remarkable fight. As a result, the whole of the Province Lands went into the Park.

Salvatore: You can’t imagine what an incredible battle this was. My poor wife. I’ll tell you, she has done many things, but this has certainly got to be one of the major victories. She fought against the local newspaper, the selectmen, millionaires like Walter Chrysler, people who had lots of money, who had envisioned a tremendous development from Monomoy all the way to the Province Lands, wall-to-wall with development.

Josephine: As soon as they knew the Park was coming in, it was like alligators.

Salvatore: They started moving fast. And she had to defend her position on behalf of the little people on the back street, the Portuguese people, the innocents who had never been threatened before.

Josephine: We have to say it was with my dear friend, Ross Moffett, the artist. We shared the burden. This man was tremendous. He was the only one from Provincetown in 1959 who went to the Senate hearings in Eastham concerning the Park. He was the only one who came to speak on behalf of the Park. And when he came back, he talked to me about it. I said, “Can I help you?” And that was the toughest thing I ever said because he said, “Yes,” and it was the next three years. He was a remarkable man. We formed this

committee, the Emergency Committee for the Preservation of the Province Lands. So many people helped us. But Ross Moffett was the one.

Salvatore: Ross was later recognized by the Park as their first archeologist in residence. He knew more about the cape than anybody else. He walked every area of this place, from here to Monomoy. He had lived here since 1913.

The Emergency Committee for the Preservation of the Province Lands, organized in 1960, grew out of the Provincetown Property Owner's Protective Association, a group working to protect the traditional qualities of town. According to Del Deo (1994:321), its original list of members included more than fifty artists and writers in Provincetown. At the root of this movement was the preservation of local traditions against destructive forces of other traditions, in this case, large-scale real estate profiteering, as described by Del Deo (1994:322):

What we sought was seemingly unrealistic from the contemporary view: *non-acquisition* of land to develop; *non-satisfaction* of investment interests. Over and against this were the traditional forces of exploitation best represented by real estate investors and planners who argued, sometimes subtly but always determinedly, against us... It was the comfortable short view expressing itself in a society ever self-serving, no more so in Provincetown than in any other community.

The battle portrayed here was between two visions for the future of Provincetown and its surrounding open lands – a future with its traditional values, or a future without them. The determinant force was real estate development, its extent and type. The preservationists fought for placing all the open lands surrounding Provincetown into the new Park, keeping them out of the hands of land developers, to help preserve the traditional values of the town and its way of life. In their assessment, this was a far-sighted vision rather than the “short view.”

As told by Del Deo, between 1959-61 the fate of the Province Lands was debated by Congress deliberating the Park bill in Washington, and by the public in local town meetings and federal hearings on the cape. The Emergency Committee for the Preservation of the Province Lands pressed for their vision at each venue, against the efforts of land developers who worked to retain a piece of the Province Lands for development. The tug-of-war for the public's sentiment at Provincetown was decided at the annual town meeting in 1961, where four alternative questions about the Cape Cod National Seashore were voted upon by the residents of Provincetown. Del Deo (1994:331) interpreted the outcome of Provincetown's final vote:

When the vote on this last question came, it was 144 in favor of, as opposed to 61 against, retaining the entirety of the Province Lands as they were for inclusion in the National Seashore Park. It was a moment in conservation history which had brought to fruition, as so few moments have, a resolute stand on the environment, an intelligent plan to carry it out and a final determination to see it through. No other town had so rallied to a view of the future. No other town had supported the Park so wholeheartedly. We were again unique on the Cape. The input of the artists and writers throughout this entire effort had been crucial.

The congressional bill establishing the Park passed in 1961. The local grassroots campaign in support of the Park continued through 1963, until the Province Lands were finally transferred from Massachusetts to the Park. Del Deo (1994:322-323) summarized the local effort:

The fact is that, eventually, Provincetown, of all the towns on the Cape scheduled for inclusion in the Seashore, was the only town to endorse the Cape Cod National Seashore Park unconditionally and to enter the Park exactly as the original first piece of legislation

had suggested, without one acre being deleted from the proposed land mass. How did this happen? Certainly not by poetic pronouncements but through a carefully orchestrated and intense campaign which began in 1959 and which did not falter for the next three years.

From the point of view of Del Deo, achieving the Park was a personal, hard-fought victory. Artists, writers, and others in Provincetown who fought to preserve the town's traditional values and its distinctive way of life, believed that they had a personal stake in the new parklands. Having toiled in partnership with federal entities to create the Seashore, many entered this new era with high hopes.

### Preservation Struggles, 1960-1985

Until the 1960s, dune shack society had no formal integrative organization, other than the informal ties between particular shack families. Dune shack society was a collectivity of neighbors living in family-owned shacks. Dune dwellers espoused values like autonomy, privacy, and personal freedom, and shared certain things, such as a passion for the dunes, historic roots, and certain common practices. There had never been a need to organize politically. There was no governing entity or representative association specific to the dunes. Their local municipal governments were either at Provincetown or Truro, where they paid property taxes depending upon the shack's location in the dune district. The dearth of political organization within dune shack society was to change after 1960. The changes occurred in response to perceptions of threats to the dune shacks and their traditional uses that materialized with the newly created Park.

With the formation of the Cape Cod National Seashore in 1961, conditions on the Backshore began to change markedly. The Seashore became the primary owner of the Backshore lands through the state's transfer of the Province Lands in 1962. The Seashore's enabling legislation authorized and defined procedures for it to acquire public and private land within the boundaries of the Seashore. During the 1960s, the Seashore proceeded to acquire land within its boundaries. The procedure involved identifying land and property owners and, depending on the status of the specific lot or structure, making an offer to a willing seller, or initiating condemnation procedures. Individuals with valid ownership to improved property (defined as buildings in place before September 1, 1959 with electricity, water, and sewer) were permitted under law to maintain ownership if they did not wish to sell. Somewhat over 550 structures were found to qualify as private property inside the Seashore. Most were single-family homes with titles and facilities that were deemed to meet the standards. The structures were allowed within the Seashore as privately-owned dwellings, adjoining or surrounded by park land. Some structures were occupied year-round, but most were second homes used primarily as summer residences. Other structures did not qualify. Somewhat more than a hundred properties were put under use and occupancy reservations throughout the Seashore, most for being post-1959 construction.

The Seashore's acquisition of property inside the Park directly affected the dune shacks. The Seashore asserted that the dune shacks did not qualify for private ownership within the Park, and the Seashore moved to acquire them from their owners. The dune shack residents asserted that their shacks did qualify. The facts of the individual cases proved complicated. Most shack owners had deeds of transfer for the shacks acquired through inheritance, gift, or purchase, but most shack owners did not have clear titles to the dunes beneath the shacks which were held either by other private parties or by Massachusetts, depending on the shack. Further, because they were rustic structures adapted to dune conditions, many dune shacks had no (or non-standard) systems for electricity, water, and sewer, raising questions as to their improved property status.

Most dune shack residents were not willing to relinquish title to their homes to the federal government. Residents understood that once the federal government held title to the shacks, the government might compel families to leave. Then the shacks might be razed. In their recollections of this historic period, Mildred and Maia Champlin recalled Herb Olson, the superintendent of the Seashore, telling the family that his goal was shack removal:

Mildred Champlin: Olson stood on the beach and he told us. We were standing on the beach, and he said to us, "I am looking forward to the day when all of these are gone and it's back to nature."

Maia Champlin: And he's talking to homeowners. What if somebody came up to you in your home, that you've worked on for decades, and said, "I can't wait to see you gone?"

To dune dwellers, the federal government's ownership of the shacks presaged the end of the dune shacks and the society of dune dwellers with their traditional patterns of living.

In an effort to preserve the dune shacks and their traditional uses, dune dwellers organized politically by forming a representative association. For the first time, the dune shack families were taking collective political action as a united body. Dune shack owners created the Great Beach Cottage Home Owners Association in 1962. Their purpose was to work as a united front to prevent the federal acquisition of the cottages on the Backshore. In the organization's name, the term, "cottage," was chosen over "shack," as the latter term had a connotation of "unimproved property," a legal category of structure subject to taking by the Seashore.

A news article entitled "Cape Cod Beach Owners Have a Problem" in the *Cape Cod Standard-Times* (October 14, 1962) covered the formation and purpose of the new organization of dune shack residents:

On their part, the "dune dwellers," usually an offish lot who eschew neighborliness in search for aloneness, have banded themselves into a united, determined group already and, one gets the impression, eager to fight for their rights to live in isolation. Normally free-thinkers, they have formed the Great Beach Cottage Owners Association with the intent of raising their voice in high circles, though it is an anomaly. Heretofore, Back Shore cottage owners have sought only freedom to live, paint, work, or write as they please without interruption, and if their nearest neighbor is two miles away – so much the better... "A place in the dunes," said Ray Wells at a recent meeting, "is a way of life."

The article ran with a picture of seven members at Ray Wells' home, including Ray and Nicholas Wells, Grace Bessay, Hazel Hawthorne Werner, and David, Constance, and John Armstrong. According to the article, the purpose of the organization was to preserve a "way of life" on the dunes, including "freedom to live, paint, work, or write." It also identified the apparent contradiction of united group action by an "offish lot" that customarily did their free-thinking autonomously, "in isolation." The organization planned to appeal to "high circles," including Congress and the Park Service, to find ways to retain their cottages and preserve their uses.

A membership list of the Great Beach Cottage Owners Association circa 1962 identified 40 members and one "Counselor at Law" who "contributed time and advice to the organization, and represents some of the members individually." The group was an association of "cottage owners," persons with legal interests in the dwellings. Other shack residents and users, a substantial set of people, were not listed. The membership list is summarized in the following table, linking members with their cottages (as of 1962), as well the cottage's current identity (as of 2004, based on information obtained in this study). As shown in the table, all dune shacks had

an owner on this membership list except one, the Malkin-Ofsevit-Jackson shack. At the time of this study (2004), at least fifteen of the shacks were still being used to some extent by the cottage owner's families or their designated heirs-caretakers (two Adams shacks, Champlin shack, Malicoat-Lord shack, Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack, two Werner shacks, Fowler shack, Clemons-Benson shack, Tasha shack, Schnell-Del Deo shack, Schuster shack, Wells shack, Jackson shack, and Armstrong shack). In 2004, four shacks had occupants not directly connected to the owners in 1962 (C-Scape shack, Beebe-Simon shack, Isaacson-Schecter shack, and Dunn shack). In 2004, six shacks in the eastern group of shacks were gone, removed by the Seashore (Schmid shack, Bessay shack, two Fuller shacks, Stanard shack, and Vevers-Pfeiffer-Geise shack). And one additional shack was gone, destroyed by an accidental fire and never rebuilt (the Ford shack).

### Members of the Great Beach Cottage Owners Association, Circa 1962

Members (Names and Number)	Member's Cottage	Cluster	Current Shack
3 Mr. and Mrs. Don Burns; Jean (Cohen) Burns	Burns-Cohen	Western	C-Scape
1 Leo Fleurant	Fleurant	Western	Beebe-Simon
1 David Adams	Adams - I and II	Western	Adams - I and II
1 Nathaniel Champlin	Champlin	Western	Champlin
2 Philip and Barbara Malicoat	Malicoat	Western	Malicoat
2 Jan Gelb and Boris Margo	Gelb-Margo	Central	Gelb-Margo-Zimiles
1 Hazel Hawthorne Werner	Werner (Euphoria)	Central	Euphoria (Werner)
	Werner (Thalassa)	Central	Thalassa (Werner)
2 Stanley and Laura Fowler	Fowler	Central	Fowler
2 Al and Doey Fearing	Fearing	Central	Clemons-Benson
1 Rose Savage Tasha	Tasha	Central	Tasha
1 Jeanne Chanel	Chanel	Central	Schnell-Del Deo
2 Theodore and Eunice Braaten	Braaten	Central	Schuster
1 Margaret Watson	Watson	Central	Isaacson-Schecter
2 Nicholas and Ray Wells	Wells	Central	Wells
2 Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Jones	Jones	Central	Dunn
3 Josephine Ford	Ford	Central	(Gone)
(No member listed)	Malkin-Ofsevit-Jackson	Central	Jackson
3 David and Constance Armstrong;	Armstrong	Eastern	Armstrong
John Armstrong			
1 Charles Schmid	Schmid	Eastern	(Gone)
1 Grace Bessay	Bessay (Red Shack)	Eastern	(Gone)
1 Andrew D. Fuller	Fuller (Concrete Shack)	Eastern	(Gone)
	Fuller (Joe Oliver's)	Eastern	(Gone)
2 Mr. and Mrs. H. Stanard	Stanard (New Yorker)	Eastern	(Gone)
4 Mr. and Mrs. Anthony M. Vevers;	Vevers-Pfeiffer-Giese	Eastern	(Gone)
Mr. and Mrs. Chet D. Pfeiffer			
1 Francis Willemain	?	?	?
40 Total Listed Members			

The owners' united efforts to resist the federal taking of the dune cottages placed the dune dwellers and the Seashore in an adversarial relationship for the first time. As discussed above, many dune dwellers previously had lobbied to create the Park. They had done this in an effort to preserve traditional ways of life at Provincetown against excessive real estate development. But

when it appeared to the dune dwellers that the preservation of the dune shacks and their traditional uses was not part of the Park's vision, these early cooperative relationships soured, and then turned adversarial in court.

As a united effort, the Great Beach Cottage Owners Association was active somewhat less than ten years. As things developed, the federal acquisitions of the dune shacks were determined individually, rather than as a class action. Individually, some shack owners retained legal assistance to represent their interests. For some this entailed long and expensive litigation. The longest was litigation by Grace Bessay, which lasted from 1967 to 1991, reputed to be the longest civil suit ever against the federal government, according to local oral tradition. Other shack owners with more limited means did not litigate for long. As cases were settled, the association lost members. Eventually, all cases were decided. The ownerships of all dune shacks except one (the Malicoat shack) were taken by the federal government. The previous owners lost legal title to the shacks.

The dune dwellers were correct in their understanding that the Seashore intended to legally terminate the residencies of dune shack families. The Seashore set termination dates for each family through "reservations of use." In the majority of cases, under settlements between the owners and the federal government, the Park issued either a transferable 25-year use (a time estate) or a non-transferable lifetime use based on certain occupants (a life estate). During this period, the persons holding the reservation were legally permitted to determine who used the shack, within specified parameters. When the terms of each reservation ended, the legal right to use the shack ended. In sum, the reservations of use established finite legal tenures for dune shack families. But the settlements did not say whether or not families using the shacks would be evicted at the end of their tenures, nor did they say whether or not the dune shacks would be removed. Under these new stipulations, dune shack residents continued to use their shacks, which were now legally owned by the federal government, except for several shacks in the eastern cluster that were removed by the Seashore.

### Preservation Struggles, Post 1985

The struggle by dune dwellers to legally preserve the dune shacks and their traditional uses saw a revival after 1985. This second effort was spearheaded by leaders of a newly-formed nonprofit organization called the Peaked Hill Trust. The grassroots effort eventually led to the recognition by state and federal agencies that the dune shacks had values of an historic nature. According to local accounts, the second preservation campaign was catalyzed by an action of the Seashore – the razing of the Schmid shack.

Charlie Schmid, also known as "Dune Charlie," was a respected eccentric within dune shack society, a full-time dune resident whose long-term studies of tree swallows on the Backshore dunes had gained international recognition. Schmid's multi-storied shack was unique on the dunes and considered a local landmark. Phil Malicoat and Anne Lord described the shack's construction:

Malicoat: I was a particularly a good friend of Charlie Schmid. I helped him build a good deal of his shack. There's two structures there. There's one that was originally built by a man named Meads. He sold it to Charlie for a hundred dollars back in like, 1957 or 1958. That shack eventually became buried. But what he did was, he wanted to build something on top of it. I helped him build something on top. Now he had this place he could go underground for the winter. He just had one little burner, a kerosene burner that would warm that place right up, no matter what the weather was. When they bulldozed

that shack they probably didn't realize this. I don't think they dug it up. There's another shack underneath it that could probably be uncovered. [Laughs.] He was wry person, like Harry Kemp. And you've heard all about the birds?

Lord: He went to conferences to consort with Konrad Lorenz. He met him, taking these interesting data to meetings.

Malicoat: To Switzerland.

A colorful description of the shack was presented in Josephine Del Deo's *Compass Grass Anthology, A Collection of Provincetown Portraits* (Del Deo 1983:43-45). Her affection toward Schmid and his multi-storied shack is evident in descriptions of a visit she paid to his place with her husband:

By any natural law, the place should have fallen into the sea long before. It was a driftwood "Lego" set no manufacturer had ever produced, a construction that defied gravity. As Charlie careened carefully along the rotting planks of the top level of his crazily cantilevered porch, God, in some kind of tacit arrangement with the odds, always tipped his balancing act in favor of the return trip. Down below, another deck shot out, as Wright would have said, "to fit the contours of the land."... [In] that surrealistic interior, we became confused as to which level we were sitting in, but the concern for our whereabouts gradually assumed the casualness of Charlie's comings and goings between decks as he primed the pump, frequented one of three bathrooms or retrieved a beach treasure for us to admire. We sometimes thought of the thirty-foot drop out back, but decided that if we leaned to the north'ard, we might escape Newton's Law. Balzac lay curled unconcernedly by the stove as Charlie jammed in another piece of driftwood. The clatter of the lid was a sharp sound against the monotonous pulse of the sea outside. (Del Deo 1983: 43, 45)

Schmid received a life term reservation of use of his shack. He lived there full time, conducting bird studies at an adjoining wetlands. Over time, Schmid's health failed and he was nursed by friends away from the shack. He died in 1984. One week after his death, his shack was bulldozed. The event shocked dune shack society, according to many I interviewed. The incident became an iconic story in local oral traditions. It was told to me in various versions by a number of people. One person said the shack was bulldozed with Schmid's possessions still inside, the wreckage left scattered across the dune ridge for years, "like Appalachia." "Charlie was a very private person," said another dune dweller, who helped Schmid with his bird observations, yet "all his stuff was strewn out for everyone to see."

Dune dwellers concluded from this action that the Seashore intended to quickly demolish dune shacks when their reservations of use ended. This belief energized dune shack users to organize to save other shacks from similar fates. Julie Schechter, former director of Peaked Hill Trust, described the leveling of the Schmid shack, and the efforts that followed to preserve the others:

The shacks were under leases from the Park to individuals, some of them under life leases, some of them under timed leases. One of the life leases ended, which is to say, the man [Charlie Schmid] died. It had been a while, a stretch of years, since one of the leases had expired. There were a number of us who were convinced that park policy regarding the shacks had moderated a bit, and the shacks that were slated to be removed from the Park would not be removed from the Park. Well, this particular fellow's shack was bulldozed. And quite a few of us said, "Oh, my!" They did exactly what they said they were going to do, surprise, surprise.

The superintendent of the National Seashore told me completely flat out that they wanted to get rid of the dune shacks. They had to certify that the shacks had no historic value, and then they could remove them. He in fact did hire somebody to look at the dune shacks, in the dead of the winter when nobody was out there, and take pictures of them, and got an attestation saying the shacks had no historic value. I didn't actually believe that the most interesting thing about the shacks was that they were historic. I don't really know too many people who thought that's why they were interesting or a resource. But the guy who had control over this had just told me that either they're historic or they're cinders.

So we went around and asked as many people as we could for as much information as we could about the history of the shacks. Who had been there? What had gone on? We contacted conservation organizations, historic organizations, all the selectmen in the pertinent towns. Hazel Werner had been a part of the Eugene O'Neill-John Reed group and she had a lot of contacts. We used all of those contacts. We wrote letters to people and called them up and said, "What do you know? This is the situation we're in. Is there anything you can do to help us out?" We were really lucky that we had a letter from Jack Kerouac saying that he had written part of *On The Road* there. We got a number of letters from various people. One of the people who went out there often was Joe Hawthorne, the conductor of one of the Ohio symphonies. He went out every year until he became disabled. There was an article in the paper. People called me and said, "What can I do, what can I do?" I said, "Write to the Massachusetts Historic Commission."

There was a meeting that the Massachusetts Historic Commission held right here in Provincetown. Something like 200 people showed up to this meeting. It was stunning, just stunning, and all this over shacks that most of these people had never visited. But it was part of their community, part of their world. On a number of instances since then, I had people come up to me, and say, "You know, I looked at those shacks for a decade or more, and I knew that they were there, and I just really liked that they were there. I didn't think I could go visit them. It was just that they were there." That gives me the chills. They're really special to a lot of people.

Initially the Cape Cod National Seashore found that the shacks were not eligible for listing. By the procedure they follow, the finding goes to the Massachusetts Historic Commission. By and large the Massachusetts Historic Commission has no reason to disagree with the local park service representatives. In this particular instance, they received more comments on this issue than they had received on any issue they ever dealt with in their history.

This grassroots action ultimately led to a finding by the Massachusetts Historic Commission that the dune shacks were eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The eligibility status meant that other dune shacks probably would not be immediately removed at the termination of a lease or reservation. The eligibility finding also identified the shacks' historic values as something to be considered in the shack's management, maintenance, and authorized uses. The eligibility finding was pivotal in changing institutional assessments of the shacks, according to Julie Schecter:

The shacks are now seen as having some value, that they are a resource, which originally they weren't. They weren't a resource for them, so they wanted nothing to do with them.

The eligibility finding also affected assessments of the roles of dune shack residents. Under this new perspective, shack residents who appropriately maintained and used shacks might be

contributing in preserving something with historic values. They were not simply occupants marking time in a structure scheduled for eventual demolition.

### Historic and Cultural Values

The Dune Shacks of the Peaked Hill Bars Historic District was determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 1989. While eligible, the shacks had not been listed in the National Register at the time of this study (2005) because administrative steps had not been completed. The historic district comprised an area of about 1,500 acres covering the viewsheds of the dune shacks along a two-mile stretch of dune ridge. The historical association of the dune shacks with Provincetown writers and artists was a principal factor in the finding of eligibility as a historic district, since these persons were involved with the development of American art, literature, and theater. A second factor of eligibility listed in the finding was the physical structure of the shacks themselves, which were said to represent “a rare fragile property type.” Third, the shacks and the dune together were said to 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.” One shack in the district (the Tasha shack) was found to be significant for historic associations with the life of an individual poet, Harry Kemp, but other direct associations of shacks with specific individuals were not identified. The determination of eligibility recognized that the dunes and the dune shacks, in representing a 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.”

The finding of eligibility identified the “dune landscape” as the “lynchpin of the district’s cultural importance.” The dunes were said to be “the source of natural beauty and artistic inspiration,” and they “provide 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.” Further, “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.” The “period of significance” was identified as from the 1890s until 1960, the year the Seashore was established.

Subsequent to the Schmid shack action, reservations of use terminated for a number of other shacks, including the Burns-Cohen shack, two Werner shacks, Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack, Braaten shack, Watson shack, and Jones shack. The Seashore did not remove them, though several remained unoccupied, experiencing substantial deterioration. Eventually, the Seashore arranged for all the shacks’ continued use and maintenance in partnership with selected families or private entities. The Seashore put three shacks under the care of non-profit organizations (Peaked Hill Trust, Provincetown Community Compact, and OCARC) with provisions for access that included artist-in-residence programs. Such programs represented substantially different patterns from historic uses, as discussed in later chapters. By 2005, through the scheduled expiration of existing reservations of use, ten shacks would come under the legal management of the Seashore, with others following suit in upcoming years. With so many shack reservations ending, the Seashore sought guidance regarding the future of the historic district from the Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission, an advisory body with representatives of six towns, the county, the state, and the Department of the Interior. A dune shack subcommittee created by the Commission periodically convened after 1990 to assist this consultative process,

addressing questions such as, what should become of the district, the shacks, and the shack uses, and how might the values of the district be preserved?

In 2003, in response to a subcommittee report, the Provincetown Board of Selectmen raised a question as to whether the historic district was “traditional cultural property” for the dune shack residents, who might qualify as “traditionally associated peoples.” In a letter to the Commission dated May 14, 2003, the selectmen stated that “some, perhaps all, dune shack dwellers are a protected cultural resource, and the Cape Cod National Seashore (CCNS) has legal obligations to manage this cultural resource in the way that best maintains, perpetuates, and strengthens this cultural group’s continued access to and use of the dune shacks in which they live.” The selectmen referenced developments in cultural resource laws and policies, including the *Guidelines for Evaluating Traditional Cultural Properties* (National Register Bulletin No. 38). If so, then an additional value might be considered in the Seashore’s vision for the future uses of the historic district, its value as traditional cultural property. The query from Provincetown raised a need for additional ethnographic information on the customary and traditional patterns of use of the dune district. My current study was designed to collect and present that information.

As stated at this chapter’s beginning, history is more than just a chronicle of milestones for those who have lived it. For many dune shack residents, the local history was deeply personal. Every shack resident I interviewed offered heartfelt stories related to the efforts to continue the traditions of the dune shacks. Like stories about their neighbors, the stories of struggle to preserve the shacks have become part of local oral traditions on the dunes. The historic narrative provided by Paul Tasha, presented below as an example, illustrates its personal nature. The Tasha family’s reservation of use was scheduled to end the year of this study (2005). In our interview, Paul Tasha told his version of history, beginning with Harry Kemp’s bequeath of the shack to his family, and covering the stipulations with the new Park, the struggle to preserve the shacks, and the ambiguities of the present time with its uncertain future. As a very personal ending to this historic chapter, Tasha’s account is touched with sadness, perplexity, frustration, humor, and hope:

The way it read, when Harry [Kemp] gave it to us, it said, “I give my dune shack to Mrs. Herman Tasha and her family.” This is the formal name, my father being Herman. So I guess the shack belongs to the family, at the very least to the four kids that were alive then, and I suppose technically, the term “family” would include the grandchildren by now, I would hope.

We didn’t have a real title. You didn’t need one back then. It wasn’t the traditional way of doing things, not to belabor “traditional,” but it just wasn’t. You didn’t need to do that. It wasn’t necessary. And now, oh boy, now, you better have everything lawyerized. Had we taken the time before the Park came in, we had the opportunity. You just never thought you’d need it. We could have had it done. No one would have objected, because nobody really wanted anything out there [on the dunes]. It was only very eccentric weirdoes who wanted to be out there. “What the hell do you want to go out there for? There’s nothing out there. The shacks don’t even have plumbing!” It wasn’t very popular.

But they offered us a contract, “Either get out now, or take the 25 years or whatever, because you don’t have a legal title.” I said, “The way it was done in the old days, Frank Hendersen gave it to Harry, Harry gave it to us, that’s how it was done. That’s not good enough anymore?” Nope. The guy told me, “You don’t have a legal deed and title, you don’t have a leg to stand on. So basically you got to get out now, or take your 25-year deal.” We hired two lawyers. They came back to us and said, “You’ll never win. Take the deal. Take the

twenty-five and see if you can work it out in the long run, because there'll be new administrations, maybe more reasonable heads."

We had at one point asked the Park to give us life tenancy, for those of us that were alive, because they were giving life tenancy to some people. But they wouldn't do it. The guy told me, "Frankly, you're apt to live too long and we'd like to have this all over with within 25 years, so we'll give you 25 years. Or, you can prove you own it legally with a deed and a title and we'll leave you alone. But if all you have is that little piece of paper from that drunk poet, then you don't have a leg to stand on. So you can leave now, if you don't want to take the 25-year deal."

So, of course you take the deal, because it's either that or you get out now. At least you got 25 years. You kinda felt like you had gun to your head. 'Yeah, yeah, I'm a witch, shoot me.'

Most of the time, I don't know why they do what they do. They don't even know why they're taking the shacks away from us. They don't actually have a reason. There was a reason, originally. The Park came in and said, "We don't want to change anything. We want to preserve it." That was in the 1960s. The middle seventies we got a letter, a new administration. They want it pristine. They want to bulldoze all the shacks and create a pristine environment. And they did bulldoze, like three. Then there was an outcry and the National Historical Register, saying, you can't do that anymore. Their reason was to create a pristine environment. Okay, I can kind of understand that. But since now they can't, the only one reason they had for taking the shacks away was gone. So now you say, "Why are you doing this? You're just going to take it from us and give it somebody else because you have to keep them, mandated to make sure they exist. So, you lost your reason. So why don't you lose the whole damn idea?" [*Gentle laugh*] It's like, you know, kinda like trying to fight elephants with farts. [*Laughs*] You get steamrolled, you know? But, you ask at this stage, "Why are you doing this?"

Definitely there's a better attitude now. But still, nobody is willing to say, "You know what, this was just a bad idea, we should have never done it. We did it with a pen, so let's just turn the pen over and use that rubber thing on the other end and put it back like it was supposed to be when Kennedy came in, when nobody was supposed to lose anything."

We were all basically promised nothing would be taken away. So you feel betrayed, you know. It may not be fair for me to compare myself to a Native American, but as far as I'm concerned, what they're doing is no different. You make a promise, then you change your mind and say, "We're going to do this." How can they do that? It's mind boggling that they feel so free to destroy people's ways of life without thinking that it's a big deal. It is a big deal. It's a huge deal.

I've gotten to the point now, and I hate to say it, but for the last couple of years I go to the shack and mostly I wind up sad and melancholy. It's like when my mother was really old and I knew she was going to die pretty soon. I didn't know when. But I knew it wasn't long. You just had that feeling, like, 'Well, I get to see her again, but I won't have many more times.' It's like that with the shack now. I get to be here again, and as wonderful as it is, now it's got that dark cloud over it of loss, of impending loss, you know. You can't help but while you're there, you think, 'How wonderful it is to be there and how lucky you are,' and then you remember, 'Oh yeah, well, they're probably going to take it away.' And you can't figure out why.

## Chapter 3. Dune Shack Society

The last chapter traced the history of the dune shacks, how they have housed coastguards and their guests, summer writers, visual artists, year-round Provincetown residents, seasonal families, and bona fide eccentrics. Such a disparate fellowship forged a distinctive pattern of living on the backshore edge of Cape Cod, one that has continued into the twenty-first century.

This chapter begins the description of contemporary patterns in the dune district whose roots reach into that past. The chapter describes the numbers and types of people residing in the dune shacks at the time of this research, and how they were socially organized. As will be shown, they were members of extended families, networks of friends, members of nonprofit groups, awarded occupants, renters, drop-in strangers, among others. Together, these kinds of residents comprised the people of the dune shacks as I observed them in 2004-05. The core of this society of users was a set of long-term residents, primarily but not exclusively extended family groups. They maintained the shacks, managed their integrity within the fluid landscape, and reconstructed them after catastrophes, typically with a passion and commitment toward preserving the shacks and their traditional uses. But the dune shack residents extended beyond this core. Substantial numbers of short-term users gained access to the dune district through the longer-term dune dwellers. Long-term residents typically allowed their shacks to be used by friends. Other users operated as nonprofit organizations through which access was allotted by more formal rules. Over time, some of these short-term users themselves became part of the core. The size of the population of dune residents, and the kinds of the dune shack users, are covered below. Further descriptions of the social organization of this population are provided in the next chapter.

### Discovering Shack Society

The residents of the dune shacks formed an unusual society, a nonstandard, primarily-seasonal settlement stretched along barrier dunes on the Backshore. Being unconventional, “bohemian” in the older parlance, was a source of some considerable pride within the set of people I interviewed. They knew they comprised a distinctive community, far from run-of-the-mill.

How to go about identifying this society of dune residents presented initial challenges to me, a newcomer to the area. Who were the dune shack people? On the Backshore, the society seemed almost invisible, at least to an untutored eye like mine. Walking among the dune shacks was not like walking along many public beaches on Cape Cod where I encountered throngs of summer beach users baking in the sun on towels, reading paperbacks under umbrellas, running through the waves, building sand castles, and other shore activities. By contrast, the Backshore dunes were nearly always empty of people. When I walked out into the dunes and among the shacks during the day at the height of the summer season, I never encountered more than a few other people. The dunes offered relatively open, empty solitude to someone on foot. Now and then, a dune taxi tour passed along the jeep trails, filled with tourists peering from cab windows at the sights. The occasional person I saw, or small groups of people, were commonly at a distance, usually moving in some other direction. Were they dune dwellers? Or were they vacationers like those in the dune taxis, simply exploring the Backshore on foot? Knocking on shack doors was not a preferred strategy to find out, I was told. It was rude. A polite person didn’t do that. It disturbed the privacy and solitude of residents, glibly called “shackies” or “dunies” by some speakers. This local vernacular spoke of social boundaries demarcating *insiders*, those who lived

on the dunes, from *outsiders*, people like me. The impropriety of knocking on shack doors clearly spoke of local etiquettes, that is, customary practices of a social group. But whose customs were these? How many were there? And on what basis were they an identifiable group?

I received help in discovering shack society at the Flying Fish Café in Wellfleet, the second town south from Provincetown. Emily Beebe took an hour off work to meet with me there for an interview. She herself was a relatively new member of the dune shack society, the “north neighborhood” of shacks as she explained. She and her friend, Evelyn Simon, successfully bid on the Leo Fleurant shack in 1993, becoming residents under a long-term lease with the Park Service. Before that, she and Simon had not been part of the dune shack society. During the interview, Beebe recounted her own experiences as an outsider looking in. Her initial encounters with dune shack society helped me to understand its basis, how to become a dune dweller, and as an anthropologist, how to socially construct a hard-to-see group. I was surprised to learn that Beebe had never stayed at a dune shack, prior to winning the bid for her shack.

Wolfe: You had stayed in other dune shacks before you got this one?

Beebe: Never. Never.

Wolfe: What was your relationship with the dunes before your proposal?

Beebe: I used to walk out there all the time, just walk around the shacks, sit on the decks, take photographs, and just meditate, be out there. I had actually been out in 1988 or 1989, when I worked for the town of Provincetown... David [Adams] had to address the septic system for his place [on the dunes]. So he asked me what he needed to do to be up to standards. I said, “I think you need to put in a Title 5 septic system.” He said, “You’re kidding.” And I said, “If the Park wants you to have a Cadillac, that’s what you need to do.” So that was my first introduction to this neighborhood. And I remember distinctively going out and sitting out on the bench [on his deck] and looking over at this place and wondering, what’s going on over there? Why is that place all boarded up? What’s happening? Really wanting to engage with David about it, but not wanting to invade his privacy. It was really trippy when you think of it in retrospect, that a few short years later this was our charge, to take care of it and to fix... Incredible.

Wolfe: So that was your connection to the dunes before, walking, and then seeing the shacks. And how about Evelyn?

Beebe: Same, the same. We liked to drive on the beach. We used to drive on the beach a lot. You know. She had always admired them. The shacks – they’re like old people who you admire, who you want to talk to sometime, because you know that it would be such an interesting conversation, but you don’t want to invade their space. That’s what they feel like. At least to me, they do. So you admire things from a distance, these places. And we did that for years. I think that they kind of have that [effect] for people.

Wolfe: And they are unique for you, compared to other places on Cape Cod? There are a lot of cottages on Cape Cod.

Beebe: Yes. Absolutely. Because they’re out there by themselves. They survive. And they more than survive. They’re out there watching the ocean everyday, everyday, just collecting all this energy. They’re little churches, each one of them. It’s just, phenomenal. I think you can feel the magic of different buildings anyway, being inside them, being around them.

In this retrospective account, Beebe and Simon were users of the dunes as visitors, exploring, photographing, meditating, and the like. Beebe occasionally even experienced the shacks, walking among them, admiring them, and briefly sitting on decks. But Beebe clearly felt like an outsider to the social world connected to the shacks. She imagined the wonderful histories connected to them, but did not know how to start the conversation. She was an outsider looking

in. But soon after winning the bid, an unusual thing happened to Beebe and Simon's social world. Their social world "exploded." The lease making them the residents of what had been Leo Fleurant's shack opened a door to the dune shack society.

According to Beebe, substantial numbers of other people were eager to be part of rehabilitating her shack. Unsolicited offers of help came to her and Simon, from people in and out of Provincetown, and from other shack residents, as described by Beebe:

The process of rebuilding the shack created a whole other community for us. When we got this place in 1993, the place was falling apart. Literally, you'd walk in the door and you'd fall through the floor. One of the things that happened was, all these people started calling us, writing to us, being in touch with us, people who we had not known or had much contact with. We had people who just wanted to be part of that. We would meet every Sunday to go out to the shack when we first got it. We never knew who was going to show up at the parking lot at Race Point to come out with us. Now we have all these friends of ours who come out to use it on a regular basis. We have, basically, built a whole other family that comes out to the shack and uses it. Our friend Lee, our friends Kay and Larry who live in Brewster, and friends of theirs, and that sort of thing. So it's really an amazing thing that happened. This little gift exploded our world – it made it into so much more. It was really cool.

The volunteer help was not organized through any formal group such as the Peaked Hill Trust or a Provincetown art association, but through informal word-of-mouth. Beebe and Simon became beneficiaries of an informal, long-standing community of people connected to the shacks, or people wanting to be connected. They were experiencing a tradition of mutual aid among shack lovers. Also, they were falling into a customary practice of reciprocity, opening their shacks to people who contributed labor in their care.

A second type of assistance soon followed. Heads of three neighboring shacks, Nathaniel and Mildred Champlin and David and Marcia Adams, quickly established connections with the newcomers. They specifically came over to instruct them in the oral history of the dune shack residents and the ways of successfully living on the dunes. They gave them copies of old photographs, now part of Beebe's album documenting the history of the Fleurant's shack. They also offered assistance in practical exigencies, such as procuring water and getting cars unstuck from sand. Beebe recounts how these lessons from her dune neighbors began:

Beebe: When we started with our project we had three or four months of working on it before our neighbors came out [to their own shacks], before we had any contact with them. We started in October and November. The Champlins come out every month and start their generator. They'll come out and heat up a can of soup in the wintertime, sit and do their thing, they're such a trip. They're great. And we just kept missing them when they would come out. The Adamses didn't come out until June. But as soon as they came out and we managed to coordinate, the Champlins came over. They gave me photographs. They told me stories about Leo. They told me the history of the building. They told me things about what we need to do with water. They told me about the best way to drive on the road out there because there's elevated ground water out there and you need to figure all that stuff out. We've pulled each other out of the sand I can't tell you how many times...

Wolfe: You're saying that the assistance and the information were given gratis to you?

Beebe: Oh my God, yes. And, "p.s., come on over for a glass of wine when you're done doing whatever you're doing."

Wolfe: And you didn't mind them? You weren't out there to be private?

Beebe: No. Absolutely not. They give themselves and their knowledge and their understanding and their experience. And it's such a gift, because it's fifty years of history. And it's [about] Leo, the fellow that I'll never know but yet I know, because of him being alive through them. And as I got to learn the building [by rehabilitating it], all the stories they were telling me started coming true in a certain way. I know every single board in that building because we really had to take it all apart and put it back together in a certain way. It's really amazing. They're just so great. They're very generous folks. And, you know, we share the same passion and understanding about how to live out there. I think that that's really significant. Totally neat folks.

A third type of unsolicited instruction arrived as well, information about the legal and regulatory histories of the shacks. The materials came primarily from Josephine del Deo, who also offered advice about dealing with federal government entities, according to Beebe:

All these people started calling us... One of them was Josephine Del Deo. She's still very much around. Her association is with Frenchie's shack. She lives in Provincetown. She is awesome. I would call her the head of this whole movement to save the dune shacks, right behind Barbara Mayo. She was the head of the dune shack subcommittee. She generated hundreds of pages of documentation on the shacks themselves. She did a lot of footwork. She carried the standard for the places for years. As soon as we got our place, she just buried us with paperwork, saying to us, "This is what you have. This is what you need to protect. You need to understand the National Park Service so you can deal with that." So she gave us a lot of background information. It has been absolutely invaluable.

Del Deo provided details on the sociopolitical contexts for the actions of dune residents and the Seashore. According to Beebe, certain Seashore documents suggested that there might be no people of historic significance associated with their shack. She said she felt "devastated" when she read that. After months of work on the Fleurant place, after learning about the life of the "little old man" who had spent twenty years of his life out there, like a hermit, to read someone calling him "insignificant" was "absolutely devastating." It started her on a "search for the truth," for what it is that makes the shacks significant. From this information, Beebe perceived that her family was now playing an important part of a longer, dynamic history. They were entrusted with a role in preserving the shacks and the ways of living connected with the shacks.

I could see that after this induction, Beebe and Simon no longer were dune users standing on the outside of dune shack society, looking in and wondering, like me. They were now part of that social group. Beebe stated that she was now part of a community, a new "family" that uses her shack, a social group that provides mutual support and that shares certain things in common:

We help each other in so many ways, because we have the same needs, we have the same parameters that we're living within. But I think the overall characteristic is that these are people who understand how to live out there. It's not about changing the way to live out there. It's changing the way you live to live out there, so that you're adapting to what is presented to you, which I think is the biggest piece about being out there anyway. You're not imposing your own will and your own way. It's not going to work. Your will, your way, your lifestyle is gone. And you have to come in and step in to this already-established mail shirt or whatever it is, so can deal with whatever is going to come up when you're out there. Whether it's working on your place, which everybody has to do, in a 45-mile-an-hour wind that's pulling the shingles out of your hand, or just putting the boards up because there's a gale that has come up all of a sudden, or whatever it is, pulling your neighbors out

of the sand. You can't bring your own stuff and try to control your environment out there. You have to let it go. And I think that's part of the neighbors deal, what makes them so essential to this whole way of living out there.

### Basic Elements of Dune Shack Society

This interview with Emily Beebe about her personal experiences clarified for me the basis for dune shack society, the “parameters” as she states it. Three basic elements, in combination, delimit what I will call “dune shack society”: the dunes, the shacks, and long-term shack residents. There are other elements as well, such as ways of living, belief systems, sociopolitical struggle, and so forth, as discussed elsewhere in the report. But these three are basic parameters. First are “the dunes” themselves. The Backshore system of dunes with its sands, storms, vistas, and other natural features is viewed as a distinct and unique place for Beebe and other shack residents. This place of raw, uncontrolled nature is what initially drew her, a place to discover and experience, and is what she now must adapt to as a dune dweller. Second are “the shacks” themselves, cultural places erected on the dunes, scattered and solitary, rustic and weather-beaten, relatively low-impact shelters allowing people to be long-term dwellers on the dune system. Beebe noticed and wondered about them, imagining them as ocean sentinels, survivors, absorbers of special energy, silently holding a wealth of personal stories. The structures drew her also, like the dunes. Third are the “long-term shack residents” and their respective coteries of shack users. Beebe and Simon discovered this social group by gaining entrance into one of the shacks, by receiving the key to long-term residency by the Seashore. Conversely, it may be equally said that dune shack society discovered Beebe and Simon. Through this mutual encounter, the two newcomers were incorporated into an existing social group that is centered in long-term shack residencies. These three are distinct elements – the dunes, the shacks, and the long-term shack residents. Yet when connected over time, they have become the basis for the emergence of a unique social group. It was a nonstandard, sometimes hard-to-see community of self-avowed nonconformists, sharing a history, traditions, cultural patterns, and social identity, on a backshore edge of 21<sup>st</sup> century America.

### Counting Shack Populations

Emily Beebe's story recounted her entry into dune shack society. But what was this society of dune dwellers? Who were the dune dwellers? How many were there? How were they connected? To answer these questions, I began interviewing the heads of the dune shacks about the people who used their shacks.

Early on I learned that the Seashore had no tallies of shack residents or users. As I became immersed in the project, I realized that no one maintained a list of dune shack residents or users. There were no censuses, no registers, and no rolls, such as voter rolls of local election districts or tribal membership rolls of Native American governments. Dune shack society was not organized to compile such lists. It had no internal government or fully representative bodies. Two nonprofit organizations tallied counts of users for four shacks under their care. Provincetown Community Compact had user estimates for C-Scape, the one shack it managed. Jay Critchley and Tom Boland of the Compact graciously shared them. Peaked Hill Trust had estimates of its membership and some tallies of users of the three shacks it oversaw. Otherwise, no entity, agency, or person kept numeric tabs on dune shack society. No one had ever documented its size or composition.

The federal government did maintain a list of shack occupants with whom the Park had legal relationships. The list was an electronic spreadsheet entitled, "Occupant and tract and expiration list, 2004," and it listed "people and organizations with whom the NPS has a legal relationship for occupancy and or use of the dune shacks... with the exception of the one private landowner." It named eighteen shacks, twenty-eight persons, and three organizations. A footnote advised, "This list is not for general distribution as it includes Privacy Act protected information." The spreadsheet identified people and organizations with whom the Park had one of four types of legal relationships as of March, 2004: a reservation of use (9 shacks, 15 people), a lease (3 shacks, 6 people), a cooperative agreement (2 shacks, 3 people), a special use permit (3 shacks, 3 people), or private ownership (1 shack, 1 person). Essentially, the list identified legally-responsible occupants for each shack. The 28 occupants were actually 26 persons, as one person's name was listed for three different shacks. The count (18 shacks, 26 people) represented a conservative enumeration of dune shack society. I used the list as a starting point for interviews.

During interviews with shack heads, I attempted to more fully document the numbers of shack users and their relationships with one another. I observed that there seemed to be a core of long-term residents associated with each shack. This core might be counted with some precision because it had a stable structure, usually kinship based. I also observed that there was a larger set of short-term users, the coteries of this core, comprised of friends, guests, drop-ins, or awarded renters. This set of users appeared to be more fluid, their names and numbers changing from year to year depending upon the circumstances of the long-term residents, such as their health, employment, life stages, and activities, among other factors. This was the general structure of the population – a fairly stable core of long-term residents with a larger, more fluid set of short-term users who were guests of the core residents.

Interviews with shack heads provided me a way to document the size and composition of these types of users. During interviews I asked shack heads, "Who generally uses this shack, and how are they connected to the main shack residents?" This general question provided information about the core network of users of shacks. I also asked, "How many people use the shack during a year, such as the last twelve-month period?" Most shack heads easily remembered what had happened in their shacks during the last twelve months. This general question provided information for documenting users other than people in the core. Accordingly, I compiled this information to form a conservative estimate of the dune shack residents and users. The population of dune shack users, broken out by shack and type of user, appears in the following table.

### Dune Shack Single-Year Population \*

Shack Name and Type	Shack Heads	Core Network	Other	Estimated Totals
<i>Shacks with Family Caretakers</i>				
2. Beebe-Simon Shack	2	34	82	118
3. Adams Guest Cottage	2	18	10	30
4. Adams Shack		<i>(Included with No. 3)</i>		
5. Champlin Shack (Mission Bell)	2	8	10	20
6. Malicoat-Lord Shack	2	10	20	32
9. Tasha Shack	7	31	50	88
10. Jackson Shack	2	9	44	55
11. Fowler Shack		<i>(Included with No. 10)</i>		
12. Clemons-Benson Shack	2	17	54	73
13. Schnell-Del Deo Shack	3	6	20	29
15. Schuster Shack	1	1	15	17
16. Isaacson-Schechter Shack	2	15	60	77
17. Wells Shack	1			1
18. Dunn Shack	2	4	6	12
19. Armstrong Shack	2	20	15	37
<i>Shacks with Nonprofit Caretakers</i>				
1. C-Scape	2	10	42	54
7. Werner Shack (Euphoria)	12	20	44	76
8. Gelb-Margo-Zimiles Shack	<i>(Included with No. 7)</i>		44	44
14. Werner Shack (Thalassa)	<i>(Included with No. 7)</i>		44	44
<i>All Shacks and Types</i>	44	203	560	807

\* Residents and other users during the previous twelve months. Over time, the set of persons using shacks is greater than the users during a single year.

Based on interview materials, my rough estimate of persons using the dune shacks during the most recent year was about 807 people. Of these, I placed 44 users in a category of “shack heads,” that is, residents with the primary responsibility for overseeing a shack, typically the heads of a family or of a nonprofit group. I placed 203 users in a “core network” of long-term residents, that is, consistent users of a shack, typically members of an extended family associated with a shack, or regular active members in a nonprofit group with caretaker responsibilities. I placed 560 users in the “other” category, representing short-term users, typically friends invited to the shack, persons awarded “shack time” by a nonprofit group, or more occasionally, drop-in strangers. In total, the estimate of 807 users during a year’s time is about thirty-one times the starting list of twenty-six legal occupants.

The actual set of persons directly connected to dune shacks through residency and use is larger than 807 people. How much larger is difficult for me to say with accuracy with the information I have collected. The core set of users (about 247 people in the above table) changes less from year-to-year than the “other” category of short-term users (about 560 people last year). If one assumes that, during recent years, the pool of “other” short-term users was two or three times greater than the set of last-year’s short-term users drawn from that pool (that is, assuming the set of short-term users was between 1,120 and 1,680 people), and if one assumes a core of 247 users, then the people directly associated with the dune shacks through residency and use during recent years numbered somewhere between 1,367 to 1,927 persons. More information

would be needed to assess the reasonableness of these assumptions. I would not be surprised if the pool of long-term and short-term users over the past several years might be found to be larger. However, my best estimate is that dune shack society currently numbered between about 1,367 to 1,927 people. Given its shaky basis, I anticipate this estimated size of dune shack residents and users to generate lively debate. But it's a starting point toward understanding the social dimensions of dune shack society.

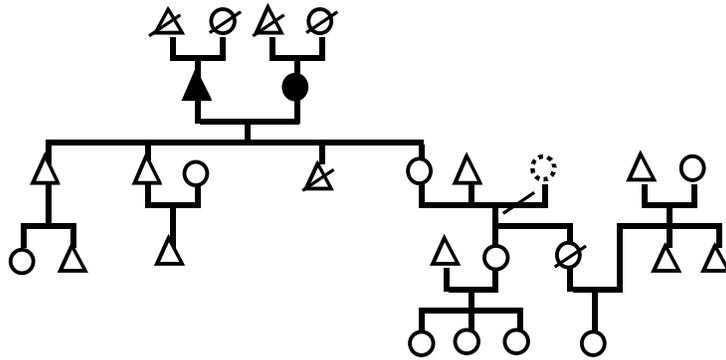
### Family Networks: The Primary Organization of Dune Shack Society

Interviews with shack residents quickly established the social core of dune shack society – family networks. I observed a common feature among shacks not managed by nonprofit organizations: shacks typically housed members of families, that is, people connected through kinship. The most common “customary rule” for qualifying as a core user of a dune shack was being closely connected by descent or marriage to the shack heads, figured through both maternal and paternal sides (a bilateral system). In filling their shacks with people, the heads of dune shacks commonly opened their doors to members of their extended families. Over time, it was common for several generations of an extended family to use a shack.

During interviews, several shack residents concurred that families lay at the core of shack society. There were certainly more kinds of shack users than simply family members. But families were central. With the affirmation of these observations, I added a component to interviews, the drawing of kinship diagrams. The diagrams proved an efficient tool for identifying many regular shack users and for establishing their relationships with the shack heads and themselves. These kinship networks are presented below for each family-based shack where the information was collected, with a short descriptive narrative. The symbols in the diagrams are as follows:

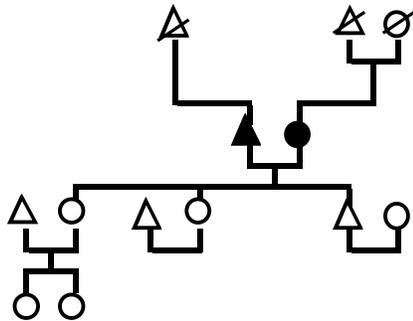
Key	
● ▲	Heads (female, male)
○ △	Core network of users (female, male)
⊙ ⊚	Nonusers (female, male)
⊘ ⊚	Deceased former users (female, male)
┌┐	Partners
	Descent
┌┐	Siblings
┌┐	Former Partner

### 1. The Adams Shacks: Heads and Core Network



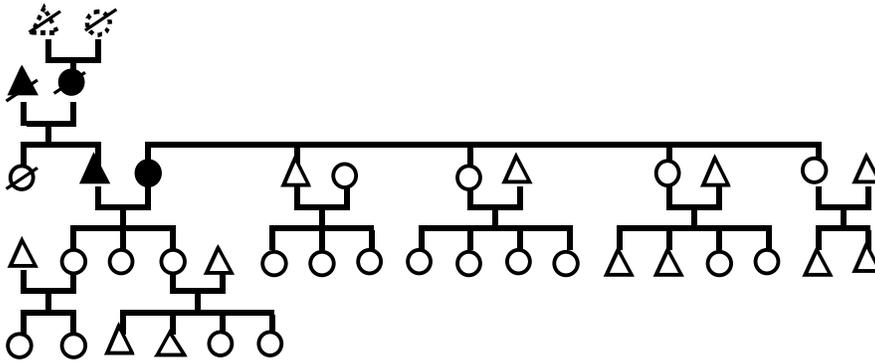
The current heads of the two Adams shacks were David and Marcia Adams (depicted in black, above), whose second home was in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Five generations of people from this extended family have used the two shacks. These include David and Marcia, their four children, two of their children's partners, six grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren, as well as David and Marcia's four parents. Included in this core network of users was an additional household of four linked through an adopted great-granddaughter.

### 2. The Champlin Shack: Heads and Core Network



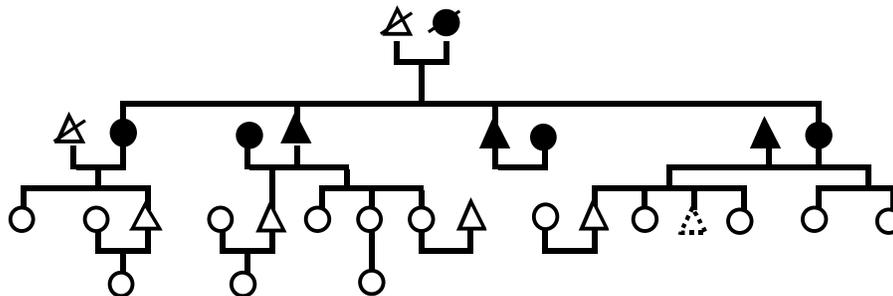
The current heads of the Champlin shack were Nathaniel (Nat) and Mildred Champlin, whose second home was in Bristol, Rhode Island. Four generations of people from this extended family have used the shack. Current users include Nat and Mildred, their three children, their children's three partners, and two grandchildren. In addition, Nat's father and Mildred's parents used the shack.

### 3. The Malicoat-Lord Shack: Heads and Core Network



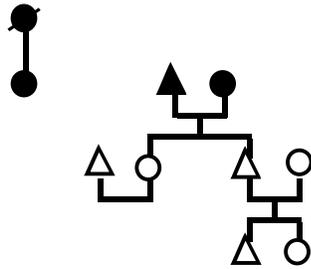
The former heads of the Malicoat-Lord shack were Philip Malicoat and Barbara Brown Malicoat of Provincetown. Currently, the heads were Conrad Malicoat (their son) and his partner, Anne Lord. Five generations of this Provincetown family have used the shack. The most regular users have included Conrad and Anne, their three children, two sons-in-laws, and six grandchildren. In addition, Anne's four siblings with their partners, and thirteen nieces or nephews used the shack. Conrad's sister (Martha M. Dunigan) also used the shack before she passed on. Conrad's great grandparents listed above were Harold Haven and Florence Bradshaw Brown, both former directors of the Provincetown Art Association (1928-32 and 1932-36 respectively).

### 4. The Tasha Shack: Heads and Core Network



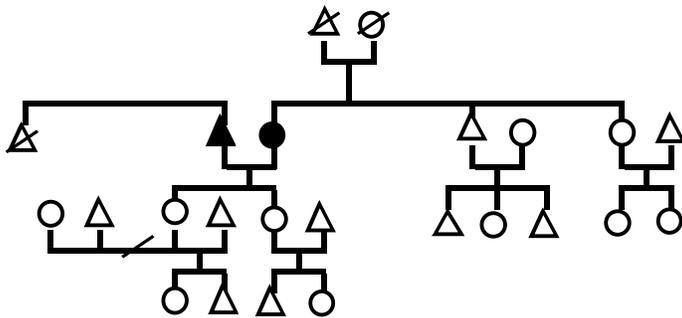
Formerly, the head of the Tasha shack was Rose Savage Tasha (Sunny), a Provincetown resident who used the shack with her husband (Herman Tasha) and her four children, Carla, Carl, Paula, and Paul. With her passing, the shack remained in the family with its use decided jointly among the four children and their partners, depicted above as a consortium of seven. There have been four generations from this extended family using the shack, including Sunny and Herman Tasha, their four children, their children's partners, eleven grandchildren with four partners, and three great-grandchildren. All resided on Cape Cod, primarily in Provincetown, Wellfleet, and Truro.

### 5. The Schnell-Del Deo Shack: Heads and Core Network



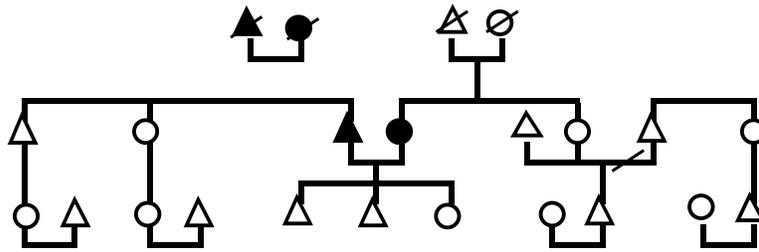
The former head of the Schnell-Del Deo shack was Jeanne Chanel (Frenchie). Currently, the principal head was her daughter, Adrienne Schnell (Schatzi). Two co-heads were Salvatore and Josephine Del Deo, close friends of Frenchie and Schatzi, who were bequeathed the shack by Frenchie. Provincetown has been home for all four. From this network, four generations have used the shack, including Salvatore and Josephine's two children, their children's partners, and two grandchildren.

### 6. The Armstrong Shack: Heads and Core Network



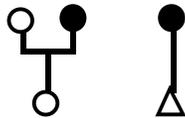
The current heads of the Armstrong shack were David Armstrong and Connie Eshman Armstrong, whose second home was in Maine. Four generations of this extended family have used the shack. Regular users have included David and Connie, their two children, three sons-in-law, and four grandchildren. Additional users have included Connie's parents, Connie's two siblings with their partners, and five nieces or nephews. David's brother (John) was a regular user before he passed away last year. The extended family represented fourteen households currently using the shack.

7. The Clemons-Benson Shack: Heads and Core Network



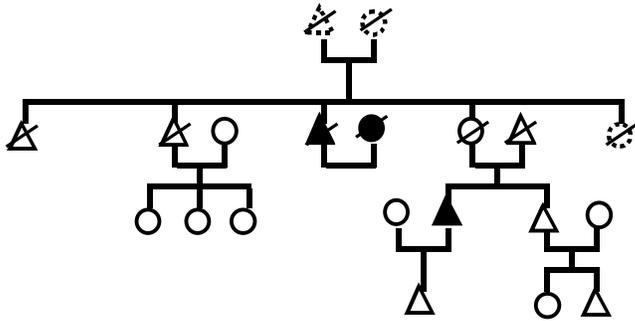
The current heads of the Clemons-Benson shack were Peter Clemons and Marianne Benson, whose second home was in the Boston area. The former heads were Andy Fuller and Grace Bessay, who were like grandparents to the Clemons-Benson children, with Andy being the godfather of the second son, his namesake (David Andrew Clemons). Three generations from this extended family have used the shack, including Marianne’s parents, Peter and Marianne, and their three unmarried children. Others in this core of users included Peter’s two siblings and two nieces with their partners, and Marianne’s sister, her sister’s two partners, and a nephew with a partner. Other users connected by kinship included a brother-in-law’s sister, her son, and her daughter-in-law.

8. The Beebe-Simon Shack: Heads and Core Network



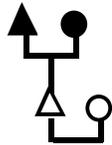
The current heads of the Beebe-Simon shack were Emily Beebe and Evelyn Simon, jointly chosen by the Park as residents for the Fleurant shack in 1993. Also included in the core network of consistent users of the Beebe-Simon shack were two children and Emily’s partner (pictured above), as well as thirty-one people not shown in the diagram – a mother, two siblings, and twelve close friends of Emily, and ten relatives and six close friends of Evelyn.

9. The Gelb-Margo-Zimiles Shack: Heads and Core Network



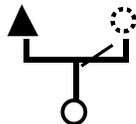
The former heads of the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack were Jan Gelb and her partner, Boris Margo, and their nephew, Murray Zimiles, reared like a son and bequeathed the shack by Boris. Three generations from this family have used the shack, including seven siblings or sibling-in-laws in Jan and Boris’ generation, seven in Murray Zimiles’ generation, and three in the third generation. Members of Murray Zimiles’ extended family have continued to use the shack annually, among others with allotted time (see Chapter 8). Currently, Peaked Hill Trust served as caretaker of the shack under an agreement with the Seashore.

10. The Dunn Shack: Heads and Core Network



The current heads of the Dunn shack were John Dunn (Scott) and Marsha Dunn, whose second and third homes were in New Mexico and Wellfleet. The Dunns were awarded a lease on their shack by the Park Service in 1993. There were two generations from this family who have used the shack, including Scott and Marsha, their son, and their son’s partner.

11. The Schuster Shack: Head and Core Network



The current head of the Schuster shack was Lawrence Schuster. Lawrence lived in the shack year-round. Of his family, the shack’s other common user was his daughter, who lived in Provincetown.

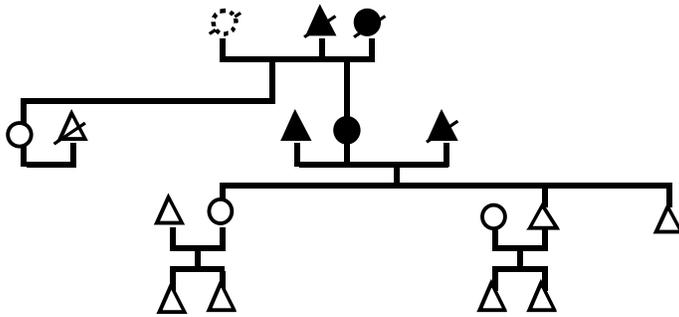
12. The Isaacson-Schechter Shack. (No diagram collected.)

The current heads of the Isaacson-Schechter shack were Gary Isaacson and Laurie Schechter, whose second home was in Florida. They were awarded a lease on their shack in 1993.

13. The Wells Shack. (No diagram collected.)

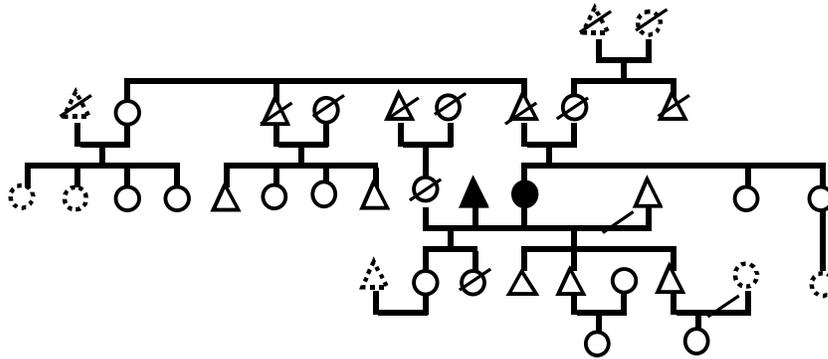
The current head of the Wells shack was Ray Martin Wells. I did not conduct a formal interview with Ray Wells to document the current users of her shack.

14. The Jackson Shack: Heads and Core Network



The current heads of the Jackson shack were Zara and Samuel Jackson, whose second home was in the New York area. Formerly, the shack was headed by Zara's parents, Alice Amitina Malkin and Martin Malkin of the New York-New Jersey area. When they died, Zara became head, eventually with Irving Ofsevit, her husband. There have been four generations of people from this extended family using the shack. Users have included the five people previously listed, as well as Zara's three children, two of the children's partners, and four grandchildren. Another relative connected to the shack has been Ray Wells, Zara's half-sister, who at times managed the shack with her husband, Nick Wells, at Zara's request. Ray and Nick Wells owned a neighboring shack.

## 15. The Fitts-Walker Family Network



The extended family of Bill Fitts and Harriet Walker Fitts (Hatty) is illustrated above. In 2004, Hatty Fitts was the legally-responsible occupant for three shacks (two Werner shacks and the Margo-Gelb-Zimiles shack) for Peaked Hill Trust and OCARC, through agreements with the Park Service. Hatty and Bill Fitts were part of an extended family centered in Provincetown whose members have used dune shacks as friends and guests of shack residents over the years, although none has owned shacks. In the Walker line, four generations of Provincetown residents have used the dunes and shacks. The diagram shows eighteen people currently living who have used shacks, and nine other users who have since passed away. The living users include Bill and Hatty, their four children, and two grandchildren, as well as Hatty's two sisters, aunt, and six cousins. In 2004, Bill and Hatty lived in Provincetown, and three of the four children were local (Truro or Provincetown). Bill and Hatty Fitts have used several shacks, including the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles, Dunn, and Malicoat shacks, among others. During the 1980s, Bill and Hatty played central roles in the administrative effort to find the shacks eligible for listing as historic places. They were prime movers in the reconstruction of the Jackson shack after it burned in 1990.

### Networks of Friends: The Secondary Organization of Dune Shack Society

While family networks comprised its core, dune shack society had another essential segment – networks of friends who used shacks as guests of core families. As I visited shacks, I commonly encountered shack users other than kin, people who were introduced as friends of the family. At times in the life history of certain shacks, the majority of shack users were friends of the core family, and not kin. I will present two examples to illustrate the networks of friends that used shacks: (1) friends drawn from the extended family of Harriet Walker Fitts over the last 84 years, and (2) friends connected to the Clemons-Benson shack during the last twelve months. There were many other friendship networks in addition to these two.

The family of Harriet Walker Fitts (Hatty), described above, provides a case illustrating the interconnections of some old Provincetown families with the dune shacks through friendships with core shack families. In the Fitts line, these connections extended back at least 84 years, to 1917. Hatty Fitts said she herself has used shacks since she was four years old up to the present (she was 64 years old), although no one in her family had ever owned a dune shack. She described the history of her family's connections with the dune shacks through friendships:

My grandmother and grandfather Gaul started coming here in 1917. My grandfather was a musician. My grandmother was a writer. They were all part of the Eugene O'Neill group, the playhouse group. That's really when they first started [using the dunes]. They used to be part of the group that would go out when Eugene O'Neill went out there. They would trek out and visit with him.

My grandparents never really stayed out there for any long periods of time. They were just visitors. My mother was Ione Gaul Walker. When she was growing up, she also was involved as a visitor. She had friends who lived out there. She became friends with a number of coastguardsmen who were at the Peaked Hill Station. Some of them lived in the East End of town, which was where she always lived. She knew them as local neighbors in town and would go out to visit with them in the dunes when they were on duty.

I started coming [to the dunes] in 1943, and have come ever since, and again, had friends. At that point there were two places we would go on a regular basis, the Jones shack, which is now leased by the Dunns, and the Malicoat's shack. We used to go out to visit. At the Jones shack we used to actually stay there, not my whole family, but my sisters and I would stay there with other friends. The Joneses were very good friends with the Thomases. Jimmy and Edith Thomas lived down the street from us. Jonathan was the son. Fred was the grandfather. Jimmy had a model A Ford truck jerry rigged for the dunes, a dune buggy. That's how I learned to drive, when I was thirteen. In the late 1940s, my uncle Philip Walker started going out on a regular basis. We were also friends with Art Costa who started the dune tours. They were all great buddies together. At that time you could drive anywhere on the dunes.

We used to have regular get-togethers with the kids from the East End. We would make blanket rolls and pack out to the dunes and sleep out there. We had food. We never had campfires in the dunes. We always took sandwiches, nothing that required any cooking. We'd do this on a pretty regular basis because living in the East End we were right down from Snail Road. At that time there was no main highway. Snail Road was a wooded path that went from what is now Highway 6A all the way into the dunes. You could drive it. That's the way people got into the dunes. Now there's just no way you could get up that hill. But then, there was no hill like that. You could get up without any problem at all. It was quite a trek through the woods, where we went blueberrying and so forth. My grandmother used to go out with us also and spend the night in her bedroll. If we got permission to go to the Jones', that's where we would go. Otherwise we would just go up on the big dune.

Now I have children, and Bill's daughter was virtually born using shacks. My kids have been going out and visiting people and staying in shacks almost since they were born, maybe one or two years old. And my granddaughter has now stayed out in the dunes a couple of times. So we're working on five generations.

As far as the shacks, the only ones I really got to know [as a child] were the Jones shack and the Malicoat shack. I was aware of Euphoria but I really didn't get to know that one until I was an adult. Hazel [Werner] was also a friend of my parents and had invited them to use the shacks too.

That's one of the things about Provincetown, this woven pattern of many, many families over generations. You try to take one family in town and keep it separate – it doesn't work. Everybody has connections to everybody else. And that's how people got out on the dunes in the first place. It was because of these connections. They are very strong connections,

very tight friendships that have gone on generation to generation. Then those friendships lead to marriages that intertwine everybody.

As shown above, the Gaul-Walker-Fitts family traditions directly descend from the activities of historically-significant figures on the dunes, including Eugene O'Neill, Hazel Hawthorne Werner, Phil Malicoat, the coastguards at the Peaked Hill station, among others. Even though none ever personally owned a dune shack, members of this extended family used the shacks through friendships with shack owners. Families like hers have continued to be important parts of dune shack society, using the shacks alongside core residents, and in more recent decades, working to preserve the shacks through political action and nonprofit organizations.

The second case illustrating friends using shacks is the Clemons-Benson shack, and its neighbor, the Fowler shack. One August evening, I encountered seven people at these shacks, four in the Benson-Clemons family and three friends of the family. The Clemons-Benson shack and Fowler shack are neighboring cottages, sitting several hundred steps from one another in the central cluster of dune shacks. They are reached by walking straight out Snail Road and taking the left hand branch almost to its end, the route called by some the O'Neill Path, the historic way to Eugene O'Neill's old summer home. The current head of the Fowler shack is Laura Fowler, an elderly woman living in Florida who no longer can visit her shack. She was a long, close friend of people in the neighboring shack: Grace Bessay, Andy Fuller, Peter Clemons, and Marianne Benson, and before them, Doey and Al Fearing. For several years, Laura Fowler has asked Peter Clemons to care for her shack, maintaining and using it. My interview in August began in the living room of the Fowler shack and then moved over to the neighboring Clemons-Benson shack. This mirrored the current use pattern of the paired shacks, as the Clemons-Benson family and invited guests were using both, shifting back and forth between them depending upon who was staying any particular week. In 2004, the Clemons-Benson shack was being used as a painting studio as well as for lodging.

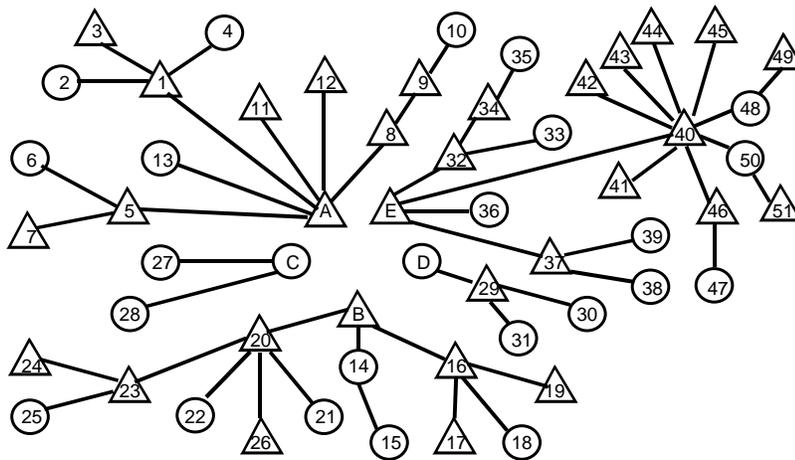
Four of five members of the Clemons-Benson's nuclear family were present that August evening – Peter Clemons and Marianne Benson and two sons, David Andrew Clemons (Andy) and Thomas John Clemons, single young men who had grown up at the shacks during summer. In addition, seated next to Benson and fully participating in our lively interview was David Forest Thompson, a tall, robust artist who was a friend and work associate of Peter. I learned that Thompson and Peter were painting together that summer. Thompson was working on a project to publish images of every dune shack on the Backshore, past and present. Some of his shack images were on display at the Backshore Gallery, Peter's art gallery at the center of Provincetown's art district. Thompson hosted a showing of some of Peter's artwork at his combined gallery-salon in Boston. Partway through our interview, a tall, muscular man in a tiny swimsuit entered the shack, toweling off from a late afternoon swim. This was Ray Carpenter, a friend of Thompson. He hung on the sidelines, an interested listener. Then a seventh person showed up, hiking across the dunes, young Harry Upsahl, a friend of Thomas and Andy. With a smile, he stated he was a ten-year Provincetown resident, but still considered a newcomer (a "washashore") by some. After the interview, the seven ate dinner together and conversed, and then lined up, shoulder to shoulder in front of the shack, posing for a group photograph for my project (see Fig. 9).

My encounter at this dune shack was not unusual. The group of people at the shack was a mix of family and friends. This was a common use pattern for shacks. Lawrence Schuster, a year-round dune shack resident and cultural anthropologist by training, summed up the traditional use pattern for shacks: "People had shacks. They stayed there. And they had friends out. That's the tradition." Schuster said there had never been a traditional use of artists-by-the-week, or of a

lottery system for an organization’s members. This was not the traditional way that shacks worked. The short-term, programmed experiences of artists and other visitors represented a different arrangement, products of cooperative agreements between nonprofit organizations and the federal government. Such programs were introduced and not part of the shacks’ usual cultural use patterns, he said. Traditionally, the people who had the shacks “stayed there” and “had friends out.”

I wanted to understand the set of friends who stayed at the Clemons-Benson and Fowler shacks and how they were connected to the heads who “had the shacks,” using Schuster’s language. Because she was willing, I requested help from Marianne Benson. I requested her to make a list of people who had used the Clemons-Benson and Fowler shacks during the last twelve months, to the best of her memory. She called me a week later with her list. I was astounded, perhaps because of my expectation of solitude at shacks. There were over fifty names, not counting relatives. “Who are all these people?” I asked. She laughed and simply said, “friends.” Working together, she and I traced out the linkages between the people on her list and her nuclear family of five members. The task took several hours, as there was a short story to tell about each linkage, its history and nature. Upon conclusion we had charted out a network of friends, illustrated below, who had used the Clemons-Benson and Fowler shacks last year. More details about links with the Clemons-Benson family are summarized in the accompanying table. In this table, Fr means “friend,” Hu means “husband,” Wi means “wife,” Si means “sister,” Br means “brother,” Da means “daughter,” and So means “Son.”

**Network of Friends Using the Clemons-Benson and Fowler Shacks Last Year**



<b>A. Thomas Clemons</b>				
1. Fr (Harry)	2. FrMo (Olga)	3. FrFa (Peter)	4. FrSi (Oden)	School
5. Fr (Adam)	6. FrMo (Ginny)	7. FrFa (Jim)		School
8. Fr (Kyle)	9. FrFr (Ben)	10. FrFrSi (Maggie)		School
11. Fr (Trevor)				School
12. Fr (James)				School
13. Fr (Annie)				School
<b>B. David Andrew Clemons</b>				
14. Fr (Julia)	15. FrMo (Anka)			Provincetown
16. Fr (Perry)	17. FrBr (Cyrus)	18. FrMo (Nora)	19. FrFa (David)	School
20. Fr (Reif)	21. FrFr (Kyle)	22. FrMo (Judith)	23. FrFa (Peila)	School
24. FrFaBr (Jasper)	25. FrFaFr (Victoria)	26. FrFr (Chris)		
<b>C. Elizabeth Clemons</b>				
27. Fr (Lizzie)				School
28. Fr (Sue)				School
<b>D. Marianne Benson</b>				
29. Fr (Ben)	30. FrMo (Lisa)	31. FrMo (Deb)		School
<b>E. Peter Clemons</b>				
32. Fr (Jerry)	33. FrWi (Phylis)	34. FrSo (Carl)	35. FrSoWi (JoAnn)	Work
36. Fr (Rebecca)				Work
37. Fr (Nick)	38. FrWi (Ann)	39. FrDa (JoJo)		Church
40. Fr (David Thompson)				Work
<b>40. David Thompson</b>				
41. Fr (Sonny)				
42. Fr (Ray)				
43. Fr (Richard)				
44. Fr (Bill)				
45. Fr (Frank)				
46. Fr (Paul)	47. FrWi (Debbie)			
48. Fr (Marsha)	49. FrHu (Skip)			
50. Fr (Brenda)	51. FrHu (Kevin)			

\* Source: Marianne Benson, August 2004

The diagram shows the five members of the Clemons-Benson at the center: the household heads, Peter (E) and Marianne (D), and their three young-adult children, Thomas (A), David Andrew (B), and Elizabeth (C). Friends that used the shacks during the last twelve months are shown. There were fifty-one, although Marianne stated she might have inadvertently forgotten some. Obviously, they did not come all at once, but singly or in small groups distributed over the course of the year. They were linked to the core family through school, work, and church. The figure and table identify the single, most-direct linkage between people and the core. For example, six people who came to the shack were school chums of Thomas, and they brought with them seven others, relatives-of-friends or friends-of-friends as reckoned from Thomas. “School” also provided the links for friends brought by the other two children. Marianne stated that the parents of several of her children’s school friends also were friends of Peter and herself. However, these additional connections are not depicted in the diagram, which intends to show the initial link with the family. “Work” was the most frequent link for six friends of Peter. “Church” was a connection for three friends. One work-related friend, David Thompson, brought with him eleven additional users.

The Clemons-Benson and Fowler shacks received a relatively large number of visitors compared with other shacks last year, in my assessment of information provided by other shack residents. Because the Clemons-Benson resided in two fairly commodious shacks, there was room for accommodating visitors. Lawrence Schuster, with one bed in his shack, said he

entertained a few guests but had little room for overnight visitors except in sleeping bags outside on the sand, which happened on occasion. So the size of a shack was partly related to numbers of friends who used it, though not determinant. The Tasha shack, the tiniest of all the shacks, drew relatively large numbers of visitors over the course of a summer, probably due to the connectedness of the Tasha family in Provincetown and the “open door” policy of the Tasha family, discussed elsewhere.

The Clemons-Benson shacks currently drew many guests from a pool of schoolmates. This was related to the older ages of the three children and the close friendships developed at their boarding schools over time. The frequency of such visitors could change as their children age, establish families, and perhaps move to other places. These types of life history dynamics in shack resident composition are discussed in Chapter 4.

In addition to large shack size and mid-life family stage, the Clemons-Benson family was gregarious, welcoming of visitors and spontaneous gatherings of people brought in by children and friends. However, I also heard Peter say a couple of times that he had to schedule time alone at his shack in order to paint. So there was a mix of solitude and social gatherings. Some shack residents were not as gregarious as the Clemons-Benson. Getting away from people was a central use of some shacks, such as Ray Wells’ shack. “Nobody bothers me at my shack,” she told me. Historically, Charlie Schmid’s shack was used primarily as a single-person home for him, where he observed swallows and other natural cycles on the Backshore. To many, he seemed to be a hermit. Fewer friends would be likely to be in evidence at these types of shacks.

#### Drop-In Strangers: The Occasional Visitors

Drop-in strangers comprised another set of users of the Backshore dune shacks, and accordingly, might be considered another segment of dune shack society. I have no firm estimates for the numbers of users in this category. However, this type of use is without a doubt substantially less than use by extended families and the friends of extended families. Drop-ins may actually be infrequent for most shacks. That it occurs is shown above by the narrative of Emily Beebe earlier in this chapter, who recounted walking among the shacks, not wanting to encroach on their privacy, but occasionally sitting on their decks. Most occasional dune users like hikers, fishers, and tour groups probably leave the shacks alone because they perceive the shacks to be private residences. They are not perceived to be public facilities like picnic tables, open for general use unless otherwise restricted. A couple of shacks, I noted, displayed signs saying, “private property” and “no trespassing,” but most did not. I was told that Park Service employees were instructed not to enter a dune shack without the permission of residents. Bill Burke, the Seashore’s historian with a keen interest in the shacks, told me he had not been inside many of the shacks yet. He was not a drop-in stranger. There is little historic evidence suggesting that drop-in use by strangers has ever been a substantial category of dune shack use, notwithstanding the shacks’ asserted origins in the “hospitality huts” along Cape Cod’s Outer Beach (see Chapter 2). Based on shack residents’ reports, drop-in use by strangers has never been a large use of shacks. More use by drop-in strangers probably occurred during the turbulent sixties and seventies, as discussed in later chapters. Currently, use by drop-in strangers is probably low for most shacks.

Most shack residents I interviewed stated they were uneasy of strangers who used shacks without permission, primarily because of the potential for accidents, vandalism, theft, and fire. Customarily, shack residents looked out for one another’s shacks, discussed in Chapter 5. Shack residents typically locked their shacks when gone for extended periods to protect the premises

from vandals, unless they were expecting guests. Two exceptions were the Tasha and Isaacson-Schecter shacks with “open-door” policies. But these were exceptions to the customary practice of protecting shacks from misfortune due to the carelessness or mischief of strangers. Nevertheless, it appeared to me that shack residents displayed a high tolerance for intermittent use of shacks by drop-in strangers, as long as nothing was broken and courtesy shown. It happened. Strangers sat on decks. They pumped water from shack wells. They might even enter an unlocked door to look around. Shack residents expected this on an occasional basis. They were among the many expected, uncontrolled events inherent in having a life on the dunes, far from town and away from the public eye.

### Friendly Renters and Barterers: Established Social Forms

I concur with the general observation of Lawrence Schuster, that people had shacks, stayed there, and had friends over. That was the principal traditional use. However, historic patterns of shack use were more complicated than that, as attested by shack residents I interviewed, including Schuster. At times, some shacks rented. Historically, renters comprised another segment of dune shack society. Some dune shacks rented on an occasional basis when not in use by the core users. This was an old tradition on the Backshore, though not the predominate one. Historically, the rental arrangements for dune shacks commonly were relatively informal, greatly subject to personal relations between the shack owner and the renter, and not tied to the market of summer cottage rentals elsewhere on Cape Cod. Agreements commonly were extensions of personal relationships between the shack head and the renter, rather than a formal contract between strangers. However, for a time the Werner shacks and some of the early coastguard shacks did rent to strangers on a more formal basis. Currently, shack residents said that Seashore rules prohibited or substantially limited renting shacks, except for the shacks cared for by nonprofit organizations. Therefore, renting was a use pattern of family-centered shacks that primarily existed prior to the Seashore.

Rental arrangements were possible when dune shacks were used seasonally or intermittently by core residents. Families occupied them during some seasons and not in others. Families spent more time in the shacks on some years than on others, depending on circumstances. For particular shacks and families, there arose times of extended vacancies by principal users, when the shack might lay fallow. In these instances, some shack residents made arrangements with people to care, maintain, and use the shack in their absence. There were several types of arrangements – labor exchanged for rent, other exchanges of services, and outright gifts. But not uncommonly, a nominal monetary rent was charged for the temporary residents. Because these were often based on personal relationships, sometimes the rents were not even collected. For example, Barbara Baker lived in two of the dune shacks when she had young children. She said she stayed in the Jackson shack for a couple of years and in the Wells shack for one year. She was supposed to be renting from the owners, however she believes she wasn’t ever charged because she and her husband had so little money. However, they maintained the shacks for the owners while there. Examples of shacks commonly rented included the Werner shacks, the Jackson shack, the Wells shack, and the Braaten shack (Schuster shack). Hazel Werner came to rent her shacks when she fell into poor health. Lawrence Schuster reported he was a renter of a Werner shack and later, the Braaten shack when it lay empty.

As illustrated by the Baker case, many shack users were given time in a shack in compensation for work on the shack. This was a form of barter, an exchange of shack occupancy for in-kind services. This historic use of shacks may be even more common than renting for money. The exchanges were examples of transactions within the traditional, informal economy

of cash-poor Provincetown, called an “underground economy” by Jay Critchley, a shack user. Labor exchanges for shack time has been an extremely important mechanism for the survival of the dune shacks, as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 11. As shown in Beebe’s account of her initiation into dune shack society, people volunteered to help her renovate Leo’s shack. She rewarded many with opportunities to stay at the shack. This was one of many examples of this type of arrangement I heard of during the course of interviews. When a person voluntarily worked on a shack, that person often was invited to use the shack in the future. Some workers specifically asked for shack use in lieu of monetary payment. The reciprocity of shack use for labor most often occurred when friends and associates volunteered work and then received chances to use a shack from the shack’s heads. Of course, family members commonly worked on their own shacks while staying in them. However, this labor was rationalized as part of familial obligations, rather than a type of reciprocal barter of labor-for-shack use.

Peaked Hill Trust and Provincetown Community Compact, two nonprofits associated with the shacks, commonly used barter in their programs for caring for and managing shacks. Members or associates of the nonprofits who voluntarily worked on shack upkeep and maintenance commonly were compensated with shack occupancies when shacks were not used by winners of lotteries and artist-in-residence grants. The arrangement for the C-Scape shack program was described for me by Tom Boland, who managed the shack used by the Provincetown Community Compact:

I have a running list that I keep of people who have helped out. If someone cancels or leaves early or comes late, it’s pretty common, I’ll call them and say, “I have a night here and I have a night there,” and if their schedule allows they’ll go out. Also, if people do a major job, they get time. Like I have two women going in October. One of them is a contractor. Last spring, not this past spring but the one before, she and I went out there with another friend of mine who works here. The three of us built a deck, in exchange for her to get a week.

This arrangement was more formalized with shacks cared for by the Peaked Hill Trust. As described below, about a dozen caretakers in the organization maintained the shacks and transported shack users in exchange for shack time. This was in lieu of workers paid with money. The nonprofits relied on this type of traditional arrangement with workers for maintaining shacks.

Some shack owners, such as the Champlins and Murray Zimiles, said they avoided renting their shacks. Zimiles stated that the shack was like “holy ground,” and he did not believe in renting it. The Champlins and Adams said they did not trust people other than family to care for the shacks, because of risks like fire:

Mildred Champlin: The Adams were gone for several years because David [Adams] was working on his doctorate, and Marcia was teaching, so they didn’t come out here. We took care of their house. We had our friends use that house and we maintained it. We did rent it out to Conrad Malicoat’s family who’s next door. This was, oh, in the very early 60s.

Andrea Champlin: Remember something happened to his first one.

Mildred: Right. It burned down.

David Adams: Our current agreement with the Park Service, or the Department of the Interior, prohibits renting.

Mildred: But this was in...

David: Prior to the acquisition by the Park.

Mildred: Hawthorne's son...oh, what was his name? He was the orchestra conductor for the Provincetown Symphony and also the Toledo Symphony. He and his wife came out and rented the house for the summer, for several weeks. It was just because they asked us and we said, "Sure."

Andrea: It was never the intent to rent these houses out.

Mildred: Because of our jobs – we were teachers so we were able to take summers off. We came out and spent the summer.

Maia Champlin Peck: We also found that it was harder to rent the houses out here than it is a house in suburbia, because you have to know the water system and you have to know the gas system.

Nat Champlin: I decided to never, ever rent.

David: I would never ever trust anyone but my son, Tom, or John, or Sally.

In this case, people whom the shack heads knew were allowed to stay in the shacks. But they did not feel comfortable with strangers renting their shacks.

### Nonprofit Organizations: Innovative Social Forms

As described in the history chapter, nonprofit organizational involvement with dune shacks developed in response to National Park Service activities, rather than being an historic organizational form in dune shack society. Currently, two nonprofit organizations (Peaked Hill Trust and Provincetown Community Compact) were caretakers of four shacks. Peaked Hill Trust came into existence when dune shack users, shocked by the bulldozing of Charlie Schmid's shack, organized with the goal of protecting the remaining shacks and their uses against removal by the National Park Service. The core of that organization (leaders such as Bill and Hatty Fitts, Barbara Mayo, Julie Schecter, and Josephine Del Deo) has been drawn primarily from the network of friends of dune shack resident families, that is, friends who have developed a passion for dune shacks as invited users, but who personally never owned a shack. Provincetown Community Compact, the other nonprofit involved with the shacks, developed not with dune shacks in mind, but to promote the art, natural environment, and culture of Provincetown. The organization became a caretaker of a dune shack by winning a solicitation from the National Park Service to manage the Cohen shack. Its core leaders, Jay Critchley and Tom Boland, were year-round residents of Provincetown.

According to Hatty Fitts, the core organization of Peaked Hill Trust was composed of a twelve-member board and two additional caretakers. This core did most of the planning, scheduling, and week-to-week caretaking of the shacks, such as cleaning, hauling out trash, driving people to and from the shacks during the main season, and so forth. She differentiated this core from a pool of volunteer workers (about 100 members) who intermittently helped during two scheduled workweeks. As described by Hatty Fitts, the remainder of the organization's membership (about 600 members) might be interested in the shacks, but did not normally contribute labor to the program:

The board [of Peaked Hill Trust] is an active working board. It's not just people who sit around and make policy. They actually are involved in the maintenance of the shacks, getting the supplies, and all of that. Of the twelve board members, ten of them are caretakers. The caretakers are the real core. Then we have a couple of others who aren't on the board who are also caretakers. For the most part, these people have been involved with Peaked Hill Trust since the beginning. They're the ones who are willing to put in days at a time to do whatever is necessary to keep things going.

Then there is a secondary group of members who just like to be out there pounding nails, sweeping, cleaning, whatever. They aren't necessarily the same group all the time. It depends on who is doing what at the time we have major work.

In the spring, about the first week of May, we have what we call "workweek." That's when we not only open the shacks, but we do whatever major repairing of whatever happened during the winter that requires repairs, like replacing rot, repainting outhouses, that sort of thing. That stuff is done during the workweek. The other work session that we have is "closing," which is the end of October or beginning of November. That's just a matter of packing things away so the mice don't have something to play with, and closing things up. We don't do a whole lot of repairs at that time, so we don't need as big a group. Those are the two main periods.

The workers are the board, the few others who are also caretakers, and this secondary ring. The secondary ring can be made of up most anybody. There are a few who are regulars, but every year it's a different group that comes to help, depending on what their schedules are. We have 700 members. I would say of the 400 members that I consider are truly interested and involved in the dunes, probably 100 of those are the pool that would be drawn from [for workweek]. Most of the active workers are local or from the area, Boston south to Connecticut.

Though Peaked Hill Trust and the Provincetown Community Compact are recent innovative social forms in dune shack society, their caretaking activities find roots in the traditional culture. As stated above, the core of the organizations are drawn primarily from the network of families and friends with long-term ties to the dune shacks. To a large extent, the boards of the two organizations perform functions that parallel those of the extended family groups at the cores of the family-based shacks. By contrast, the pool of applicants for shack time outside the cores represents a relatively new, atypical segment of dune shack society. Many applicants for stays at a shack have had no previous ties to dune shack culture. This growing group of first-time shack users, selected by a random draw, was the least traditional aspect of the nonprofit programs, as described in the next section.

### Lottery and Artist-in-Residence Winners: Non-Traditional Social Forms

The newest type of dune shack user, existing since about the late 1980s, consisted of winners of lotteries and artist-in-residence awards. Generally, these were short-term users participating in one of several programs offered by nonprofit organizations caring for certain dune shacks. As described by Schuster, this was not a traditional use of dune shacks. This type of user developed because of programs run by nonprofit organizations at the request of the Seashore. The uses emerged out of formal arrangements between the nonprofit organizations and the Seashore.

The Provincetown Community Compact ran both an artist-in-residence program and an open lottery program for the C-Scape shack (the former Jean Cohen shack). The Seashore specifically requested an artist-in-residence program in their solicitation for proposals for managing the shack. The C-Scape shack is the most westerly shack in the western group, a thirty-minute walk from the Province Lands Visitor Center. As part of the current artist-in-residence program at the C-Scape shack, the Seashore offered to visitors twice-weekly guided walking tours of the dunes that stopped at the shack. The Seashore's guide interpreted the dunes and shack for tourists, who then had an opportunity to meet the artist-in-residence and learn of his or her work at the shack.

Jay Critchley and Tom Boland, heads of the Provincetown Community Compact, described to me how the lottery and artist-in-residence programs operated for the C-Scape shack:

Critchley: Provincetown Community Compact was formed in 1993. It's a nonprofit organization whose mission is to enhance the arts, environment, and culture of Provincetown. The organization was formed as a vehicle for artists and other grassroots projects to have a fiscal agent for funds to develop projects for artists, or other community projects, one of them being the Provincetown Swim for Life. One of the projects we took on is the C-Scape dune shack lease with the National Park Service.

Boland: The Park Service, from what I was led to understand, has a goal of trying to do artists-in-residency programs in all of their parks where they have historic buildings. They realized that they needed to do one here. This shack was a logical fit for a number of reasons – its size, its accessibility, its being not quite as rustic as some of the other shacks. They put that out to bid, for people to come back with creative proposals.

Under our lease agreement we do three, three-week “artist residencies” in the summer. The artists are selected by jury review. The jury is composed of a number of artists in the community and usually a couple of people representing the Park Service. It's an arduous process of reviewing the applications.

The rest of the year, meaning spring and fall, we do “community residencies.” Those are one-week stays. The people who stay then are selected by a week-by-week lottery. People apply. They tell us what weeks they are interested in, and then we pull their names out of a hat.

Critchley: We really see this program as a community program. To us, it's the community getting time in the shack. So anyone can apply. We have a sliding fee scale. For the nine-week artists-in-residency program, one of the three-week periods we offer a \$500 fellowship and free rent for three weeks. In the other two three-week residencies, the artists pay from \$100 to \$400 a week, which generally turns up being \$100 a week. It's a sliding scale as well for the community residencies. Provincetown is such an artist's community that nobody pays artists for anything. Artists are always asked to donate pieces of work, of art, to all these auctions and benefits. This goes on and on and on. So we felt very strongly that at least one artist should get paid, which is another way that this program connects to the town

So the C-Scape shack operated two types of shack occupancies. One was the artist-in-residence program, a three-week stay. Awards were made through a juried selection of proposals. The other was an open lottery to anyone for one-week stays during spring and fall. Rents were charged, except for one artist-in-residence who received a fellowship. In addition, the shack was sometimes opened during winter. As previously described, a third type of user of the C-Scape shack consisted of people receiving shack time for labor.

According to Hatty Fitts, there were about 60 slots of time available under the lottery programs and artist-in-residence program operated by Peaked Hill Trust, after the time for caretakers and shack heads were filled. Julie Schecter described this program, beginning with a description of the shacks currently being cared for by the organization:

There are four shacks. Hazel's two shacks were the first two – Thalassa and Euphoria. The third one we manage is Boris's shack, known as the Margo-Gelb. It was the same kind of

situation as Hazel's. He wasn't really using it anymore and gave us permission. We were doing all of this by way of a demonstration, to show that the shacks could be used in a fair and low impact way. Then Zara Ofsevit's shack [the Jackson shack] burned down. She had a timed lease which included the ability to rebuild should anything happen. So Peaked Hill did the fundraising and the physical labor of rebuilding. The agreement was that she would get to use it for a specific time every year, and that the Peaked Hill would get to use it for the rest of the time.

The Margo-Gelb shack, Boris's, is managed somewhat differently from the others. It has the artist-in-residency program that's part of the Park Service. In that program, artists apply for two-week stints in the shack. Five or six artists each year are given some time out there. We have had artists who have gone out there and leave after a week, because it's not their style, or they had other pressing engagements, but those are two-week slots that are saved for the artists. Peaked Hill uses the rest of the time for its members.

In the other shacks, a different guest will go out to each shack each week. Those individuals are sort of subject to a series of hurdles if you will. If you want to have shack time, if you want to have a week in a shack, you have to be a member of the organization as of January 1 of that year. You must respond to a letter asking you if you want to use time in the shack this year and tell us when and where you would like to be. All the names go into a metaphorical hat. We stir the names around and pull them out. Random number generator now, but originally it was a hat. If you asked for time last year and you didn't get it, and you ask again this year, your name goes in twice. If you've been denied two years in a row and you ask for the third year, your name goes in three times. So over time, you get time in the shack. We have a waiting list of about five years. There's about five times the applicants as space available. There are only about twice as many applicants for the space available for the artists' shack time.

Peaked Hill was designed from the beginning to allow for public access even though it's a membership organization. Anybody can join. The membership part of it has to do with trying to organize, not just putting "Shack For Rent" out on the street, trying to allow people to plan their time, and allowing Peaked Hill to plan things. You're just not inviting anybody in, but anybody can come in. The artist-in-residence program is for artists only, but it is for any artist.

As described by Schecter, the Peaked Hill Trust programs resembled that of the C-Scape shack, with two tracks – one designed to accommodate artists-in-residence and one designed for anyone. A jury selected the artists. A randomized process selected applicants from the general public. With the Peaked Hill Trust program, a person joined the organization to participate, requiring a \$25 membership fee.

Peaked Hill Trust counted the numbers and origins of persons awarded time at their shacks during a ten-year period, from 1986-1995. This summary counted 310 visitor awards. The greatest number of visitor awards (115, or 37 percent) was to people who gave Cape Cod resident addresses, including Provincetown (69 awards with 87 people), Truro-North Truro-Wellfleet (26 awards with 29 people), and other cape communities (20 awards with 22 people). In addition, visitor awards drew from Other Massachusetts (85), New York (35), Connecticut (16), and 55 from 33 other states. These numbers did not include shack time given to caretakers.

As stated above, the uses of lotteries and juries for placing occupants in dune shacks are not traditional practices. These selection mechanisms have no historic counterparts prior to the

formation of the Seashore. The impersonal lotteries and juries contrast with two underlying features of dune shack society: the personal nature of extended families and friendship networks, and the knowledge base of long-term residents versed in dune shack history and culture. The lotteries and juries potentially placed in the nonprofit's shacks a different type of user – short-term occupants drawn from the general public with no historic ties to, or personal knowledge of, the local culture and its traditions. The impersonal selection processes represented a potentially significant impact on shack society if the general public substantially replaced or eliminated long-term residents of dune shacks, the core set of people who were the tradition bearers of the dune shack culture. Without tradition bearers to pass on customary patterns at the shacks, dune shack culture would probably cease as a living tradition.

### Contrasting Forms

In looking at the organization of dune shack society, I did not observe a number of social forms that were common elsewhere on Cape Cod. Missing on the Backshore were the “summer vacation rental,” “timeshare condo,” “motel,” “hotel,” “hostel,” and “government bunkhouse.” These types of lodging were not part of dune shack patterns. The summer vacation rental was a prevalent form elsewhere on Cape Cod. It was short-term lodging for visitors paying money rent, operated as a business within the cape’s large summer tourism industry. As stated above, certain dune shacks occasionally rented historically, typically as extensions of personal relationships between shack users involving informal exchanges of money, labor, or services. But this traditional dune shack pattern was substantially different from the impersonal rental markets serving the crowds of summer visitors to Cape Cod, where today’s lodging was advertised to the general public on the Internet.

I learned of “timeshare condos” at a Laundromat in Orleans, chatting with a middle-aged social worker from Washington D.C. who regularly vacationed on Cape Cod. That afternoon the Laundromat was filled with vacationers doing wash, including herself. She said that this year she was renting a timeshare condo at \$500 per week. The building was originally run as a motel. The former motel owners recently had converted it into a condominium, offering tiny efficiency units that sold for about \$130,000 each. To new condo owners who purchased a unit, the former motel owners sold additional services, such as maintenance and reservation booking to fill dead time. For them it was like “having your cake and eating it too,” she said. The social worker was exploring the pros and cons of investing in such an arrangement, to see if she could have a vacation place while making a profit renting to others. In the meantime, she was “scoping out” new places for renting next year. She was searching for a cottage near a beach “without a tall seawall to climb over.” She said the competition for good spots was “fierce.” The types of social arrangements described by this vacationer were not found on the Backshore. As discussed in the historic chapter, grassroots political action at Provincetown during 1959-61 was directed toward protecting the Province Lands and Backshore dunes against this kind of real estate development.

Another institutional arrangement not found on the Backshore was the “government bunkhouse.” Historically, for brief periods during the Second World War, certain dune shacks were used to house military personnel. The Braaten shack (now the Schuster shack) was used to support torpedo testing by the Navy, according to Lawrence Schuster, the current resident. Other shacks, such as the Avila shack (now the Champlin shack), may also have briefly assisted the military (handing out food to beach patrols). With these types of exceptions, the dune shacks have not been institutional housing for government workers. During this project, I learned firsthand of government housing by staying at a cottage in Eastham on the shore of Nauset Marsh owned by the National Park Service. It had been a family-owned cottage. The Seashore

purchased it to house seasonal researchers on government-related projects. From its picture windows, I looked directly across the beautiful tidal marsh to the sand spit where Henry Beston's famous Outermost House once sat. During my month-long occupancy, I shared the bunkhouse, off-and-on, with several other research groups, including university researchers conducting a public-opinion survey on hunting on the Seashore, a biological team sampling fish in nearby wetlands, and a geomorphologist who turned out to have once owned a dune shack outside Provincetown. The shuffling of people in and out of the house was efficiently scheduled from the Seashore's headquarters. This type of social arrangement is common within institutional cultures that support seasonal research. As stated above, the social form was foreign to dune shack traditions.



Fig. 1. Beach homes and rentals at Provincetown, August 2004. Housing costs in Provincetown have sky-rocketed in recent years, squeezing poorer segments of the town's population, particularly artists, writers, and long-established families with Portuguese and Yankee roots. (Wolfe)



Fig. 2. Recreational vehicles and fishing boats camped on the beach near the western group of dune shacks, August 2004. The Cape Cod National Seashore issued sand permits allowing beach use by vehicles. The "beach buggies" and surf-casters, who are users of recreational beach vehicles, comprised a social group distinct from dune shack society. (Wolfe)

Fig. 3. (Right) A billboard advertising Art's Dune Tours in Provincetown, August 2004. The dune shacks were promoted as dune sights, as well as the "awesome scenery" and "the history of life saving stations." While valuing their privacy, dune shack residents appeared to be tolerant of taxi tours, operated by a Provincetown family with long, friendly relations with dune residents. The taxis drove near the shacks in the central group and allowed tourists to photograph from vantage points, but did not stop at or visit the shacks. (Wolfe)

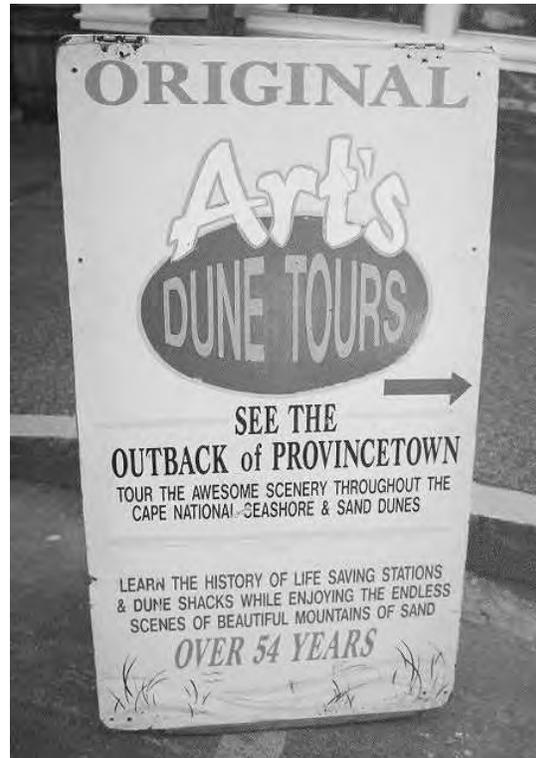


Fig. 4. (Below) An interpretive sign of the Cape Cod National Seashore near Nauset Beach at Eastham, August 2004. Henry Beston occupied a dune cottage in 1927 at Nauset Marsh, publishing a year's observations in *The Outermost House*, "a classic chronicle of the rhythms of nature on the outer Cape" according to the display marker. His shack was lost to a storm in 1978.

Some dune shacks in the central group predate Beston's stay at Nauset Beach by several years. Eugene O'Neill used the old Peaked Hill station from 1919-24. Beston was counted as a compatriot by some dune shack residents, as he lived on the dunes in a simple shack making few impacts on the natural systems of the outer beach. (Wolfe)

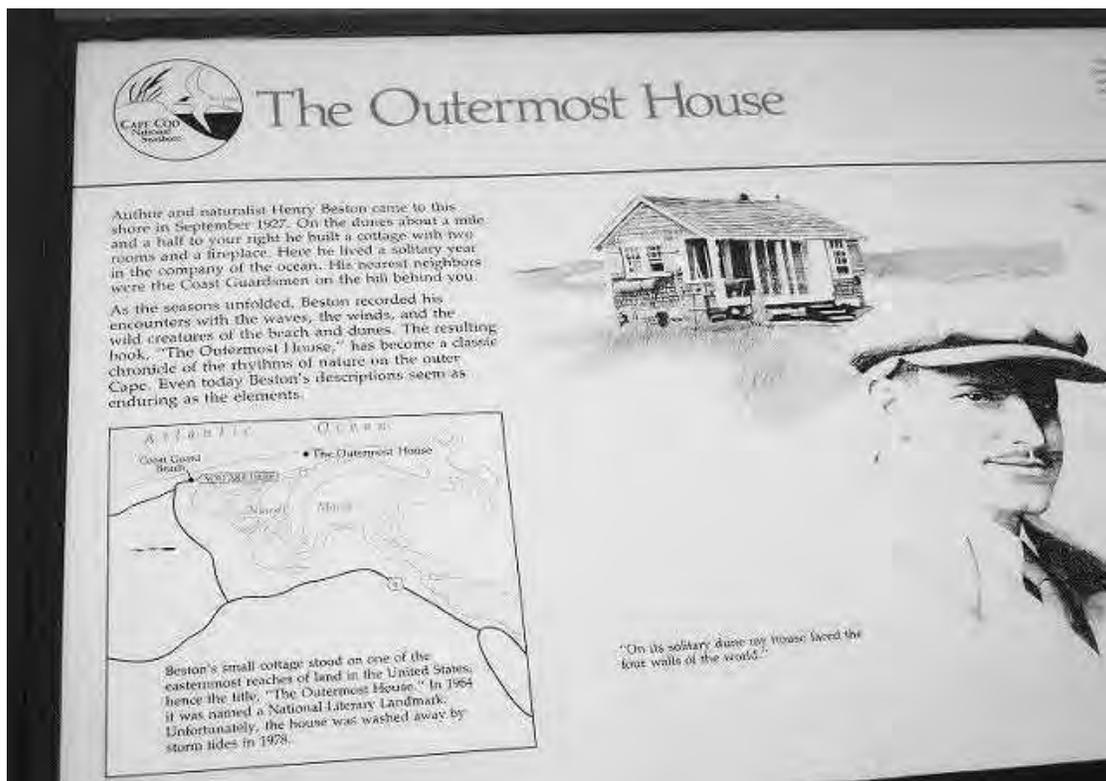




Fig. 5. Paul Tasha beside Charlies' Patch on the dunes, August 2004. Tasha, a dune shack resident, called this woodland "Charlies' Patch," after Charlie Schmid's nearby shack. Formerly a salt run between dune ridges, the valley contained small scrub oaks, pitch pines, beach plums, rosehips, and berries (hog cranberry, true cranberry, blueberry, shadbush, and huckleberry), supporting deer and other wildlife, according to Tasha. A jeep trail passes through the patch toward the Armstrong shack in the eastern group. (Wolfe)

Fig. 6. Dune trail through a "blowout" along old Snail Road, looking north to the central group of shacks and the Atlantic Ocean, August 2004. The oldest dune residents remember this route as a plank-lined road for horse-drawn wagons and motor vehicles, connecting Provincetown with the coast guard station and its shacks. Now it is a footpath to the dunes. Blowouts are bowls in the dunes created by wind, sometimes related to foot traffic. (Wolfe)





Fig. 7. Two families and three generations of dune residents at the Champlin shack, August 2004 (l to r): Nathaniel Champlin (Nat), Mildred Champlin, Maia Champlin Peck, Andrea Champlin, Katherine Peck, Paul Champlin, Tracy Champlin, Sarah Peck, Sally Adams, Marcia Adams, and David Adams. The two families occupied neighboring shacks in the western group, using the dunes since 1948. Tracy Champlin was a “beach buggy girl” who married into dune shack society. For these two extended families, the family shacks were consistent gathering places, focal points for relatives and friends. (Wolfe)

Fig 8. Genevieve Martin at her Provincetown home, August 2004. A schoolteacher and long-time shack user, Martin was one of several people who helped Hazel Hawthorne Werner care for her two shacks in the central group. She currently was serving on the board of Peaked Hill Trust. (Wolfe)



Fig. 9. (*Right*) Family and friends at the Fowler shack in the central group, August 2004 (back l to r): Peter Clemons, Ray Carpenter, David Forest Thompson, Marianne Benson, and David Andrew Clemons; (front l to r): Thomas John Clemons and Harry Upsahl. The shack's head, 95-year-old Laura Fowler, lived in Florida, but when she left the dunes in 1991, she asked her neighbors, Peter Clemons and Marianne Benson, to care for and use the shack. (Wolfe)



Fig 10. (*Below*) Jay Critchley, a conceptual artist, emerging from the septic tank of his Provincetown house, August 2004. Critchley headed the Provincetown Community Compact, the non-profit organization with oversight of the C-Scape shack, used for community residence and artist-in-residence programs. The septic tank figured in Critchley's proposal for low-cost underground housing for poor artists in response to exorbitant housing costs in Provincetown that threatened its art colony. (Wolfe)





Fig.11. (Above) Family and friends at the Armstrong shack, the eastern group, September 2004 (l to r): Richard Arenstrup, John Cheetham, Janet Armstrong, David G. Armstrong, and Constance Armstrong. Originally at the site of a half-way house on the lifesaver's walking route, the cottage was moved by the Armstrongs to a more inland dune called "Old Baldy" to save it from being lost to ocean storms and barrier dune erosion. The Armstrongs were the only remaining family of what used to be an eastern group of shacks. (Wolfe)



Fig. 12 (Right) Julie Schecter at her Provincetown studio, August 2004. Schecter, an early leader in Peaked Hill Trust, spearheaded a grass-roots effort to protect shacks with historic place designations. (Wolfe)



Fig. 13. (Above) Laurie Schecter and Gary Isaacson at the Isaacson-Schecter shack, central group, August 2004. With volunteers and small-scale technology, they lifted their shack onto tall vertical supports like that shown between them, freeing it from its burial place inside a growing barrier dune. Because of the fluid dune system, shacks must be repositioned every few decades. (Wolfe)



Fig. 14. (Right) Irene Briga's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday gift, an outhouse door autographed by dune shack enthusiasts, at her Provincetown home, August 2004. Briga, a whale naturalist and videographer, has been a long-term user of dune shacks, also serving as a shack caretaker and board member with Peaked Hill Trust. (Wolfe)



Fig. 15. (Above) Zara and Samuel Jackson standing above what was once a tall oak, now nearly buried by sand, August 2004. Zara Jackson, a dune resident in the central group of shacks since 1929, has observed changes in the dunes and its woodlands for 75 years. (Wolfe)

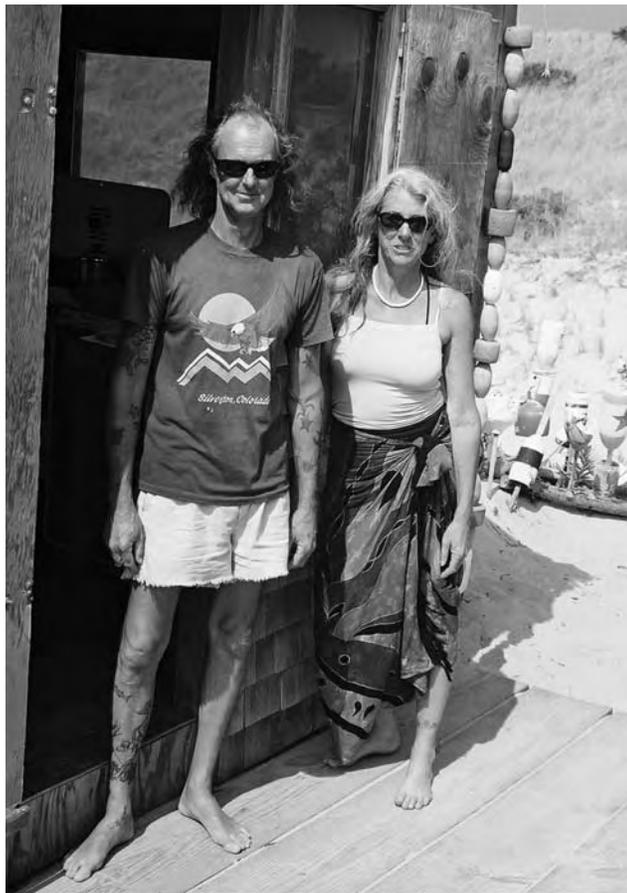


Fig. 16. (Right) Scott and Marsha Dunn at the Dunn shack in the central group, August 2004. During shack renovations, the Dunns discovered the ashes of a former resident beneath the shack. Requesting their ashes be placed on the dunes has been a common practice among long-term dune residents, signifying special connections with the dunes continuing even after a resident's death. (Wolfe)



Fig. 17. Four friends at the Tasha shack, central group, August 2004 (l to r): Theo Cozzi Poulin, Kathie Joseph Meads, Maureen Joseph Hurst, and Susan Leonard. From Portuguese and old Yankee families, Meads, Hurst, and Leonard have long roots at Provincetown. Poulin's parents came to Provincetown as artists. As small children, the four were schooled at the shack by Sunny Tasha. They have continued to use it as close friends of the Tasha family. (Wolfe)

Fig. 18. (Right) Lawrence Schuster at his shack, central group, August 2004. Schuster has been a year-round dune resident for 22 years. During WW II, the Navy used the shack for coast watch and torpedo testing, making substandard shack modifications that Schuster is still correcting, he said. Because of the encroaching barrier dune, he said his shack probably will need to be lifted in upcoming years.





Fig. 19. (Above) The Champlin shack (also called “Mission Bell”) in the western group, August 2004. The Champlins acquired the cottage in 1953 from Domimic Avila, a Provincetown carpenter, who built it as a place for parties and fishing about 1934. Almost lost in the “Perfect Storm” of 1978, the cottage was saved and moved inland. One of the more elaborate shacks, the cottage was originally built with an electrical generator, now replaced with solar panels. (Wolfe)



Fig. 20. (Right) Paul Tasha at the Tasha shack, central group, August 2004. Originally the chicken coop of the old coast guard station, the shack was the dune home of the poet, Harry Kemp. He gave it to Sunny Tasha and her family. The smallest of the dune shacks, it rests on log skids that can be jacked up or moved to adapt to the shifting landscape. (Wolfe)



Fig. 21. The Clemons-Benson shack in the central group, August 2004. Originally built in the late 1920s by Raymond Brown near the Peaked Hill station, it was moved inland to protect it from storms. Subsequently it has housed Al and Doey Fearing, then Andy Fuller and Grace Bessay, and currently, the family of Peter Clemons and Marianne Benson. The sand fences, salt roses, and grass help to stabilize the dune against wind erosion. Strategic placement of fences and plants in this way was a common practice of shack dwellers to protect shacks. (Wolfe)

Fig. 22. (Right) David Andrew Clemons, a resident of the Clemons-Benson shack, at a place on the dunes he used for solitary reflection, August 2004. Clemons has grown up spending summers on the dunes. (Wolfe)





Fig. 23. Dawn Zimiles, an artist, points to sand writing on a panel created by her great uncle, Boris Margo, at the family house in Provincetown, August 2004. Three generations of artists in her family line has found inspiration at the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack. The dunes commonly find expression as subjects or materials in works by dune artists, such as in this sand panel. (Wolfe)

Fig. 24. A tiny frog and toad pond formed by dune taxi traffic. To protect polliwogs, Paul Tasha, a dune resident, placed concrete debris in the pond, taken from the nearby coast guard station site. Rocks this size are rare on the dunes. This type of cultural site probably would go unnoticed by a newcomer to the dunes, unless pointed out by dune residents. (Wolfe)



## Chapter 4. Social Formation

As described in Chapters 2 and 3, dune shack society was built of kinship groups and friendship networks whose members occasionally banded together in associations or nonprofit organizations. This chapter details the dynamic aspects of this society, particularly how people entered and left, and how kinship groups commonly have changed over time. Among the tens of thousands of people who have personally experienced the dunes of the lower cape, only a small number wind up residing in shacks. Of those gaining connections to shacks, only some come to make long-term commitments to the dunes and shacks, joining with the core of the society.

This chapter discusses the formation and reproduction of dune shack society. It illustrates the social processes with examples from selected dune shack residents and families. It identifies a kind of conversion experience in the stories told by some shack residents about their first encounters with the dunes. The chapter shows that shack use patterns change over time with the maturational cycles of family groups. And it describes how shacks sometime become viewed as symbolic centers for families.

### Gateways into Shacks: The Case of the Jackson Shack

The history of Zara Jackson's family contains examples of all access routes into dune society – kinship links, friendships, and shack acquisitions. Her case provides a more detailed picture of these dynamic social processes. This extended family has lived on the dunes from 1926 to the present, some 78 years, including four generations from Zara Jackson's mother through Zara's grandchildren.

Alice Malkin was the first to acquire the shack as an art student. She first came to Provincetown in 1926 to study art at the summer classes offered by Charles Hawthorne, the American impressionist painter who taught at the National Academy in New York and at Provincetown. During our interview, Zara showed to me family photos of Charles Hawthorne's *en plein air* painting classes attended by her mother. "He was an excellent teacher, he was revered here," said Zara. "My mother came here, really, because she loved painting, and once she saw the dunes, she was smitten." Charles Rogers, the town clerk, built the cottage in 1917. He had some difficulties in the town, according to Zara. He sold the cottage to Alice Malkin through a third party, the deed dated in 1926. That was the family's entrance into dune shack society, at that time a collection of coastguards, writers, artists, and fishers. The shack became known as Malkin's shack.

Zara was born two years earlier in 1924. Her mother brought her young daughter to the dunes in 1929. As Alice Malkin sat on the beach sketching, Zara played nearby with other children. Zara showed me a series of black-and-white photographs of herself as a young child, brown as a nut, playing on the sands by her family's shack. The medical advice at that time was that full sun during summer helped to keep a child healthy the rest of the year. Zara's mother believed this. Alice Malkin had Joe Morris, chief mate at the neighboring coast guard station, build a frame with rings and a trapeze. There are pictures of Zara swinging on it. The family wintered in New York and New Jersey. She and her family came out after school finished in June and stayed until early September, about Labor Day, when school resumed. Alice Malkin was not employed at that time, so she was free to do this. "My mother had the privilege of coming up," said Zara. Until she was eighteen, Zara remembers spending every one of her

summers living on the dunes at the cottage. So Zara was born into a shack society. She cannot remember a childhood separate from the dunes. Her father made brief visits. He was a pharmacist and couldn't take off much time. Ray Wells, Zara's half sister, also spent time on the dunes in her own shack. Alice Malkin was Zara Jackson's father's second marriage. Ray Wells, older than Zara, lived in California some of the time that Zara Jackson grew up on the dunes.

Alice Malkin died in 1943 when Zara was nineteen. At twenty, Zara worked in Provincetown to support herself, saving money for college the rest of the year. She rented the shack out to others for a while. Zara married in 1950, bringing her husband, Irving Ofsevit, to the shack that first year. In this way, Irving became a part of dune shack society through marriage, and the shack became known as Ofsevit's shack. In 1953 Zara spent six weeks at the shack with her first daughter, Lissie, who was about a year old. Like Zara, Lissie was born into shack society. "She learned to walk out here," recalled Zara fondly. Cloth diapers were cleaned on a washboard. As a young family, Zara came with her family for two weeks at a time, as that was what her husband could do, and not every summer, as they sometimes went other places. When her own children married, they followed a similar pattern. They came out with their small children, Alice Malkin's great-grandchildren. They came with two kids each, sleeping on the floor. Zara's daughter and oldest son, both with children, took time most years. Her other son in San Francisco came out more occasionally. The oldest of this fourth generation are now college-aged. Irving Ofsevit died in 1987, and Zara remarried. Zara continued to come to the shack with her second husband, Samuel Jackson. By my naming system, the shack now may be called the Jackson shack, but others still knew it by previous names.

Zara's pattern of use presented times when the shack was unused by the family. Frequently, Ray Wells and Nicky Wells, Zara's half-sister and brother-in-law, arranged for other people to stay in the shack during those times. Typically, these other shack residents were personally known, connected to the Wells family through the art community in Provincetown. The artists and writers accessed the shack through personal invitation, another common route of entry into dune shack society. Nominal rents were sometimes charged, and occupants also paid for their stays by shack upkeep. Shack residents have included Harry Kemp, the poet, Frank Milby, a Provincetown painter, Barbara Baker, former director of Castle Hill, Truro Center for the Arts, and Joyce Johnson, founder of Castle Hill. For some in shack society, the shack was known by the names of these invited residents, variously named Milby's shack, Barbara's shack, or Joyce's shack, rather than by names from Zara Jackson's extended family. The names reflect the shack's dual pattern of use as a long-term, seasonal residence for a multi-generational family, and at the same time, a summer abode for invited friends connected to the fine arts colony in Provincetown.

#### Finding Shacks as an Invited Friend: Irene Briga

A case example of entry into dune shack society through personal invitation is illustrated with Irene Briga, a resident of Provincetown and a dune shack user for twenty-three years. Irene Briga recounted how she came to live in shacks. She was introduced by a friend to one of Hazel Werner's shacks (Thalassa), and then came to live and use a variety of shacks, including a year in the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack. She described how she became connected.

Briga: First it was through Genevieve [Martin]. She was living out there with her daughter and her friend Jerry. She invited me out there. I was very depressed to move here from Woods Hole. My partner at the time was asked to come to the Center for Coastal Studies, so that's why we moved here. Provincetown was really crazy in the summer. I found this place [in the dunes] that was incredible so that I could get away from the scene

here. Quite honestly, the dunes got me out of that depression. I found that there was a place to get away, the dune shack Thalassa where Genevieve was staying... Thalassa was an escape for me at the time.

Then I met all of these other dune people. I'm an outdoors person. I also need solitude. I met Hazel Hawthorne [Werner]. I would help her clean the cottages and get them ready, working with people like Genevieve, and oh, loads of people. There's a list that goes on forever. Hazel owned Thalassa and Euphoria. So I had this connection with these little shacks. Whenever I needed to get away I'd come up through that little wooded area and go up to the big dune and here I would have this horizon of shacks and I would see Euphoria.

Genevieve introduced me to the shacks through Thalassa. But then I saw all the other shacks, and I saw this one that was just sitting there... just like nobody was using it – Boris's shack. I got to have that for a whole summer. Boris [Margo] was the owner. He was an artist here. Jan Gelb was his wife, though I didn't know her [she was deceased]. I befriended him a little bit, not too much because he died within two years. But his shack had just been sitting out there. It's right next to the Tasha shack. No one was using it. It was falling apart. There were mice in there. It was a mess... And so I said, can't we, can we use it? I asked if we could use it. And he said sure, no one's using it. I walked out with Pierre, a friend of mine who has since died. We had the screens [for repairs] and everything. We went out there and we were so happy to have a little place to be. I just made it available to whoever wanted to come and spend the night. And someone left me a little note, someone staying at the Kemp shack. They said, "It's really nice to see how you brought the shack back to the way it was." This is before Peaked Hill Trust.

Wolfe: So Boris said it was empty and just offered it to you?

Briga: Yeah.

Wolfe: Were you a starving artist at that time? Why did you want to stay in that shack?

Briga: Because I really didn't want to leave my community in Woods Hole. I was very much part of it. It was my first year in Provincetown. And I found a place that I fell in love with. It helped me to cope with the move of my home and from my community in Woods Hole... I've stayed in almost every single shack. I used to go out there all the time.

Then Peaked Hill Trust came into the picture. Barbara Mayo [a founder] was a good friend of mine. I stayed at her house when David and I first came to Provincetown from Woods Hole. When Peaked Hill came, it was like, oh, now we're going to have [a lottery]. In nine years, I've only won the lottery once. My brother, sister-in-law, and kids have won twice. So that's great. They live in Connecticut. I introduced them to the dune shacks. My nephew was just there. He's just going into high school. They call him "shack boy." They'd even like him to be a caretaker, because he helped carry the equipment to the other shacks and everything.

Wolfe: How often do you get out on the dunes?

Briga: As often as I can. I can't stay in a shack now. My dad's been sick. I used to go everyday. Now, when I'm here I would say I go twice a week. It's just my sanity to run out there.

In this account, Briga credits the introduction to the dune shacks to another dune shack resident, Genevieve Martin, who was staying at the Thalassa shack with her daughter. It was this

personal invitation that connected her to the dunes. She became a shack resident herself when Boris Margo allowed her to stay in his shack for a year. Since then, Briga said she has stayed in almost every shack at one time or another, while taking almost daily visits to the dunes. During this time, Briga met “all these other dune people,” others dune shack users who predated her, including Hazel Werner and Barbara Mayo, “loads of people, the list goes on and on.” Briga increased the shack society by introducing her own brother, sister-in-law, and nephew to the lottery system. Her nephew received an affectionate nickname (“shack boy”) within Briga’s group of friends. During this whole time, Briga never owned a shack. But she has stayed in shacks through the network of dune shack residents and friends. In recent years she has worked to maintain shacks managed through the Peaked Hills Trust. This also gives her some time in shacks as compensation, even though she has never been granted shack time through the organization’s lottery.

### Conversion and Commitment in First Encounter Stories

The dune shacks are commonly perceived as special places by dune residents. Their experiences at the dune shacks are perceived as special events in their personal and social lives, set apart from the greater society, engendering strong attachments to the dune district, contributing to a person’s identity, and substantially influencing choices about the course of a person’s life. The dune shacks have been life-changing places for these residents.

That contact with the dunes is a life-changing event for some individuals is shown in *first-encounter stories*. These are accounts told by some shack residents about discovering the dunes and the dune shacks. In the stories, it’s possible to learn about the circumstances of a person’s first discovery and the person’s motivation to commit to the dunes, the shacks, and the dune residents.

The *first-encounter story* told by David Thompson is a story of love-at-first-sight. He recounted the event to several listeners (Peter Clemons, Marianne Benson, David Clemons, and me) at the Fowler shack. David Thompson lived in Boston and Provincetown when he first discovered the dune shacks. It was an irresistible encounter. He was captured emotionally by the dunes, like falling enthralled under a spell. The encounter was life-changing, propelling him into dunes, personally committed to preserving the dune shacks. He began his story by describing how he was a “late-comer” into dune shack society:

I’m a late-comer. I’ve only been coming out here since 1996. And the way that I feel about coming out here in such a short period of time, I can only imagine the history that you have had [speaking to Marianne Benson and Peter Clemons], being out here for all this time. I came out here for the first time in 1996 and it’s a story that basically changed the way I looked at everything to do with my life. Honestly, it changed everything.

I came out with a guest of somebody who was staying at Thalassa. It was on a Sunday afternoon. A group of us came out to visit her. She was in a shack. We spent the whole day. It was a beautiful day. And at the end of the day we all had to leave to go back, except that I was off [work] the next day. So Debbie said to me, “If you’d like to come back tomorrow morning to see the sunrise, feel free.” So I went back into Provincetown.

All of our friends left. I was sitting [at home]. It was eight thirty. It was a full moon. I was sitting at the kitchen table and I thought [*agitated*], ‘I can’t wait until tomorrow! I have to go back!’ I told my friend Richard. He said, “What are you going to do?” I said, “I have to

go!” *[The narrator speaks rushed, as if late for a train.]* I got on my bicycle. I went to Clem and Ursy’s. I got two boiled lobsters. I went and got a bottle of wine. I rode my bike from Shank Painter Road down Route 6 to Snail Road. I locked my bike to a tree. By now it’s nine o’clock, under a full moon. And I hoofed it across the dunes with two lobsters and a bottle of wine in my backpack and a little Styrofoam container of drawn butter. I get to the dunes. I get to the base of Thalassa. And I just went... *[loudly whistles]*. And I hear a laugh like only Debbie can laugh and a screen door slam.

I came up over the dune. I don’t know if you’ve been to Thalassa yet, but there’s this one window with a table that looks out at the ocean. She had brought out a white tablecloth. She had these oil lamps. She was sitting writing in her journal. And the moon cast this blue glow on the shingles of the roof, and an orange glow from the lanterns onto the sand. I said, “I just couldn’t wait until tomorrow to come back!” And she said, “I was just looking out at the ocean thinking, ‘All that seafood – I wish I had some!’” And I took the two lobsters out of my backpack at that moment.

So we had a good time. We sat and we had lobster and we had our wine, and we sat on the edge of the dune. I slept on the floor of the shack that night and got up the next morning. That’s when I met Peter [Clemons] out on the beach, the very next day on Monday. I was taking photographs of my shadow in the sand. Peter was sitting on a dune having his morning coffee and I must have looked like I was crazy, just dancing around. I was just jumping around because I thought I was all alone and just trying to be as creative as I could. And the next thing I knew, I felt, ‘that was it, I was done for.’

As he portrays it, Thompson was captured emotionally by the dunes and the shacks. He couldn’t stay away that first night. After that night and morning, as he expressed it, “I was done for.” In his highly romantic telling, it was the dunes and its shacks that seduced Thompson, not Debbie. The chance encounter with Peter Clemons the next day led to a friendship and a long-term connection to the Clemons-Benson shack. The dune shacks changed his life, as shown in Thompson’s response to living on the dunes:

So, I started painting. Since 1996, I think I’m the only artist to paint every shack. I’ve been to all of them. I’ve been in most of them. I have nine photo albums. Basically, I’ve become an historian, indirectly, just out of the love of the life out here. I come out here in the middle of the winter. I come year round. I come out, turn on the oven, heat up the room, go take a walk on the beach, come back. It’s all boarded up. There’s only a little bit of light coming in. Take off one shutter. Have some hot chocolate and a sandwich. Then go back out again. It’s just... you can’t explain the life, I guess. The people that are out here, they really want to be out here. There’s something that draws you out here, that makes you have to be out here. I feel like I’ve always been here. I can’t remember a time before. Everything revolves around this. I can’t remember a time before this that was more important to me than my experiences out here.

Thompson committed himself to create and preserve painted images of all the shacks, like an historian, “just out of the love of the life out here.” It was not just the one shack, Thalassa, that became an object of devotion, but every dune shack in the district.

Thompson’s extremely personal encounter, an emotional, life-changing event, resonated with Marianne Benson. Her immediate response to his story was whole-hearted agreement. She said it described something common among dune dwellers. To Benson, Thompson’s personal commitment to the dunes was emblematic of dune dwellers as a group:

Benson. Really well put! That's what I think all of the dune dwellers really have in common.

Thompson. It's an emotional thing.

Benson. It's the focus of the universe. It's our passion. It's the focus of our lives.

Wolfe. More so than Boston?

Benson. Oh! We could go anywhere in the world, I think. We're, you know, independent.

We don't have real jobs. We could move anywhere, much cheaper places than Boston, but we don't because of the dunes. It's what keeps us here.

Thompson. When I'm overwhelmed, stressed out, and all of that, I just bring myself out here. All the time...

Benson. Me too.

Peter Clemons concurred with the life-changing quality of the dunes. He offered his own experience as another example of being radically changed by the dune shacks:

Just along those lines. I actually spent a year dealing with cancer. And I was undergoing a lot of chemotherapy and radiation and stuff. This was eighteen, twenty years ago. At the time, maybe they still do it, they asked me visualize, to try to think of something positive. I swear, for that year, whenever I was under drugs, and not the good drugs, but all the chemo stuff, this place was what kept me alive. I just had all kinds of images that I took with me through that whole journey. And that's not unusual. A lot of us out here... it's just very weird.

As he portrays his personal experience, the dunes were not just life-changing, but life-saving. He believes the dunes kept him alive. It is this type of experience that can lead to deep-felt loyalties to the dunes, the shacks, and shack people. He concurred with Benson that strong attachments were "not unusual" within the dune shack society. However, he acknowledged that from an outsider's perspective, it might seem "very weird." In this, he reiterated a view expressed by many in interviews, that the dune shack people were an exceptional group, distinct in their relationships with the dunes after living among them.

Some first-encounter tales circulate among the dune shack people. The tale of Hazel Hawthorne Werner's first encounter with the dune shacks was recounted in Cynthia Huntington's book, *The Salt House*. According to oral tradition, Hazel first encountered her shack in a dream, a premonition that led to a quest, bringing her to discover the shacks. In this retold tale by Huntington, Hazel's connection to the dunes seems almost preordained:

Hazel [Hawthorne Werner] always claims she dreamed the shacks before she ever saw them. She was working in New York as an artists' model in the early 1920s while her husband was away crewing on a sailboat. It was a terribly hot summer, and during the long, sweltering nights alone, she would dream of the ocean, picturing a sand bank with a shack perched at the top, and when her husband came back she made him go with her to look for the place she had been dreaming. Having very little money, they walked down the coast from Portsmouth, sleeping on the beach, until they reached Provincetown. At Snail Road, Hazel spotted Agnes O'Neill, who she knew from New York, coming out of the woods with a suitcase. 'Hazel, what are you doing here?' she exclaimed, and Hazel recounted her dream. It so happened that Agnes and Eugene O'Neill were living in the old Peaked Hills Life Saving Station that summer, and Agnes directed them to walk out to the new Coast Guard station. 'Tell Mr. Mayo, who's the skipper there, that Gene and I said you were to have one of those little cottages,' Agnes told her. The 'cottages' rented for twelve dollars a month. Hazel and her

husband moved straight into the shack Thalassa, which she later bought for seventy-five dollars. Euphoria came later, years after the husband had gone away for good, and Hazel was firmly enmeshed in another life. But I do think that beginning made her sympathetic to anyone who was actively looking for what they most desired, and ready to take it when they found it. (Huntington 1999:12-14)

From the '20s on into the 1960s, Hazel spent her summers in the dunes, walking out from town and back at all hours... In her sixties a slow, crippling illness forced her to stop walking the dunes and she moved into a cottage in Provincetown woods and began to rent her shacks by the fortnight. Finally, at eighty, she talked of closing them down. Unless, perhaps, someone would like to take them over, stay out there all season... Thalassa was spoken for, in fact, but did we [Cynthia Huntington and Bert Yarborough] want Euphoria? It was a hint, an invitation – no, it was an outright gift. We said yes without taking a breath. (Huntington 1999:12-14)

Like Hazel, Cynthia Huntington's own encounter with the dune shacks also began with a dream. But she affirmed it was desire and love and a chance invitation that brought her into the embrace of the dunes:

I always wanted to live here, even before I knew such a place existed. I dreamed of a cabin: a miniature, makeshift home, and of being a writer and living alone beside the sea... (Huntington 1999:8)

The Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown had offered me a writing fellowship for seven months: this distinction afforded me a room above an old lumber yard, with bare floors and ancient, noisy plumbing, two hundred and fifty dollars a month, and the company of other writers and artists in similar straits. This gift of time and good company, which I accepted warily and with little expectation, turned out to be one that would change my life. This break caught me by surprise and seemed to my mind an unprecedented revelation; I soon learned that it happens quite regularly to people who come here. (Huntington 1999:9)

Bert [Yarborough] was one of the artists who had come and stayed... His voice rose and his gestures spilled away from him in all directions as he talked about the landscape where he worked, its miles of dunes and bogs, beaches and scrub woods, insisting that it could not be described. 'When I take you out there you'll see,' he promised. (Huntington 1999:10)

The back country drew me, with its open, austere spaces; its silences seemed to nurture a suspended life, a place containing more than it revealed. There were no roads there, no electric wires, and because of that, hardly any people, and if it did belong to the federal government, they were mostly leaving it alone. Feeling I could walk there forever, I set out to try. (Huntington 1999:11)

Hazel's offer [to stay at one of her shacks] came seemingly from nowhere and seemed to be the very sign I had prayed for. Perhaps she saw in us a shimmer of the passion she had always had, a love of this place itself, along with the longing for freedom which had become almost a first principle of her being. She let us have Euphoria because we were artists, and poor, and in love; because she already knew and liked Bert. But mostly we were right there in front of her and ready to say yes without hesitation. I think I have never wanted anything so much. And so, in fact, it was desire that brought us here, and the dream proved more powerful than any logic, after all. (Huntington 1999:12-14)

So we got married and moved to the dunes, joining the ranks of those who lived here before, who built, begged, or borrowed their shacks, stayed as long as they could, then handed them on. I know their names, and some of their stories; many of them have died. There are Frenchie Chanel, Sunny Tasha, Peg Watson, Boris Margo, Dune Charlie, Phil Malicoat, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Hunzinger, and of course, Hazel... and a man I know only as Louie sat in a fetid single room piled high with paperback detective novels and empty soup cans, its windows scrubbed opaque by years of blowing sand, and listened to a shortwave radio eighteen hours a day. Anything was possible. Surely there was room here for our own story to begin. (Huntington 1999:12-14)

Huntington lived for three years during summers in Werner's dune shack, described in *The Salt House*, entitled for one of Werner's own novels written on the dunes. By gaining access to a shack, Huntington came to identify herself with an historic dune shack community, "joining the ranks of those who lived here before," adding her personal story to the histories of others.

Marianne Benson and Peter Clemons told their first-encounter story during our interview. They were brought out to the dunes by a shack owner, Andy Fuller, a work associate of Peter's, who eventually became their son's godfather. Fuller was an old man, and the young couple was skeptical about what they were going to find on the dunes, as related by Benson:

We walked out with Andy Fuller. Andy described this place. He wanted to introduce us to it. It sounded so fantastic we couldn't quite believe it was going to be out here. Maybe he was getting to be a little forgetful or something, you know. He was probably in his early seventies at that point. We drove and drove and drove and parked our car at Snail Road and then started this hike out over this sand. We were thinking, 'Oh my God, this is a wild goose chase, there is nothing out here.' And he was going slow, you know, saying, "You just gotta pace yourself." It took us for-e-ver. We were thinking, 'we were going to wind up, Lord knows where?' And finally we hit the top of the mother dune and look over and he says [*in an old man's voice*], "There she is, there she is." And so we began to get very excited. We picked up speed, climbed over the dunes, climbed over the very last dune, about to descend on the Grail, when out of this other shack comes this wild woman in her underwear [*screaming*], "Get away from the shack!" Screaming her head off. "Get away from the shack!" [*Peter Clemons is laughing in the background.*] And Andy says [*old man's voice*], "Laura, it's me, old Andy, Andy Fuller." [*Screaming voice is happy now.*] "Oh Andy, Come on down!" She brings us all down, her tone changes one hundred eighty, "Come on in for a gin and tonic." Here we come marching over the dunes, thinking there is nothing here, parched, and she brought us in here. I remember her sitting in that rocking chair right there in her underwear, serving us gin and tonic with ice cubes because they had a refrigerator. It was the most surreal experience. And then, that was it for us. We never looked back.

So Clemons and Benson became committed after their first encounter with the dunes and its non-conformist culture. As Benson portrays it, "that was it for us," and "we never looked back." The dunes and its way of living became, as Benson characterized it, "our passion," "the focus of our lives."

One common element to these first-encounter stories is a personal invitation into the dunes by a dune shack user. Hazel Hawthorne Werner was invited to rent a cottage by Agnes O'Neill, a friend from New York. Cynthia Huntington was invited to use a shack by Hazel Hawthorne Werner, after being introduced to the dunes by Bert Yarborough. David Thompson was brought out with a group of friends invited to a gathering at a shack, re-invited out by the shack user, and eventually, invited to use the Clemons-Benson shack by Peter Clemons. Marianne Benson and

Peter Clemons were invited out by Andrew Fuller, a shack resident, and invited into the Fowler shack (for which they eventually became caretakers) by Laura Fowler. These particular shack residents became introduced to dune shack society at the invitations of other shack users. There was a personal connection to dune shack people that preceded their entry into shack society. A second common element to this set of stories has been that contact with the dune shacks changed or saved a person's life. The person commits to the dunes after the encounter. Commonly, the person restructures his or her life in order to remain attached to the area and the shacks.

Ray Wells, the oldest living dune shack resident, told me that a person should never be driven out to the dune shacks the first time. They should be made to walk to them. I asked why? She said this was the only proper way to see a shack the first time. I believe her proscription relates to the profound first encounters of many dune dwellers, recounted and shared within the community. The search and discovery, the personal effort and reward, these are things that dune dwellers report experiencing. Such experiences happen on foot, walking across the dunes to find the shacks. Wells' preferred mode of introduction would seem to be a type of ritualized encounter, designed to recreate proper feelings and associations with newcomers, designed to make converts.

#### Maturational Cycles and Shack Uses

Over time, use patterns of particular shacks commonly evolve with the maturational cycles of its resident families. As described in Chapter 4, kinship and friendships are the central organizational principles of dune shack society. The core groups using shacks typically have been families. Shacks commonly became the symbolic centers of families. Other shack users typically gained access through personal invitations of family members. The uses of the dunes and dune shacks, first and foremost, have been uses by family units. The numbers of people, scheduling, and interconnections within shack society have been strongly influenced by the composition of those family units. The use patterns at particular points in time are tightly linked to the circumstances of families, circumstances that change over time in regular ways. Consequently, use patterns in a shack can be seen to evolve over time in response to the normal maturation cycles of core families.

The Armstrong shack illustrates changing use patterns of dune shacks connected to developmental cycles of its core family. The Armstrong shack is the last remaining shack in the eastern group of shacks. Because of the deterioration of jeep trails connecting neighborhoods, it is now the most isolated of the dune shacks. Connie and David Armstrong, the current shack heads, described the uses at their shack over time. Janet Armstrong, their adult daughter, joined in this discussion. In this case example we see illustrated use patterns molded by a family's changing configuration of members, including babies, teens, adult children, and grandchildren, as the kinship group develops over time.

The Armstrongs began their residency in 1948 as a young family with two little daughters, Ruth and Janet. Connie Armstrong had summers off because she worked an academic year, so she found herself at the shack during summers with her two girls, visited on weekends by David, who worked off cape. Because she didn't want to be alone, she often brought along a close friend who also had two children of similar ages. As she explained, "That was how I could stay here. A friend would come to be with me. I wasn't anxious to be here alone with my kids." Also, she spent time with her friend, Grace Bessay, when Grace was on the dunes. So the composition of people at the shack at that time was clearly influenced by the ages of the family's children, and by the work schedules of the household heads:

Connie: I'd be here the whole summer. I worked in the school system or in health systems or in a church, so I would have the academic year. When school was out, I'd come down here.

David: Connie and her best friend Connie Murdock, with all four children, would come down here through the week. I'd be coming weekends with Logan [Murdock].

Janet: For us it was the whole summer. In those days you just couldn't hop down to A&P and grab another day's food. You had to wait until Daddy came out. We'd carry ice out on our backs for the icebox, because we didn't have gas.

Connie: If you purchased things that needed ice, you knew by the third night, forget that, and you'd switch over to something that was packaged.

David: We didn't have a refrigerator at that point, just an icebox. When Janet was little and needed to have cold milk, every two or three days I'd walk down to the parking lot, get in the car, and go off to get a big block of ice, put it in a backpack, and hike across the dunes, so she could have cold milk. I can say that that was the only load I ever carried that got lighter as I went along.

I offered the opinion that a lot of young mothers wouldn't want to come out to a place like the dunes, because of the special hardships involved. But both Connie and her daughter, Janet, said they brought their babies out right away, because of the special opportunities the dunes provided young children:

Janet: Oh! I took my baby here as soon as I could. Two weeks.

Connie: Why, as a mother, would I want to bring two little girls out here? They were raised first in Cambridge and then in Sudbury, Massachusetts, and went to proper schools. But they had the freedom of being out here. They had adventures of just the open space you couldn't get living in a close community. It didn't mean we didn't love our close community, but out here they could pack their own little lunch and go down and have a picnic in this little miniature pine forest here. Everything was just their height. It's truly a child's forest. We'd come here Easter. The Easter eggs hunts here were remarkably wonderful.

Janet: They were fabulous. Plus, usually Elaine was out here too, and my mother's best friend, Connie [McCarthy]. Her daughter, Elaine, was my same age. I'd have a companion my own age.

Connie: And you're missing the voice of Ruth, our oldest daughter, who would say similar things.

Janet: We had similar adventures. We'd make houses out of sand and make blueprint rooms and dig down in the valleys to make pools the same way the foxes did.

Connie: They had the freedom to do that, not knowing that their mothers were sketching and painting on the roof, watching every single move that they made.

Janet: The whole world was ours, as far as you could see.

Connie Armstrong soon became acquainted with other dune residents, who she visited at their shacks, including Jan Gelb, Harry Kemp, Peg Watson, and eventually, Charlie Schmid when he moved in. The Armstrongs became a part of the dune shack society at that time:

Connie: David would go back with the car and I would be here without the four-wheel drive. But I would walk up to Peg Watson's. Gracie [Bessay] and I would walk up there. We'd walk up to Charlie's. Walk up to the Margo's.

Wolfe: Who did you visit at Margo's? Was it Jan or was it Boris?

Connie: I never saw Boris in his own place. But Grace and I would go there many times to chat with Jan, who also painted. I was a beginning painter. We just enjoyed each other's company. Jan was quite often making spaghetti sauce for a crowd who would turn up that night and we'd help her chop onions and that sort of thing, making the sauce. Then we'd go on our way, which was usually walking down Snail Road into town. Art Costa would give us a lift back here. So it wasn't a complete roundabout. We'd have a plan.

David: Connie and Grace would have quite a bit of conversation with Harry Kemp. I would always envy them, because that would never happen when I was here on a weekend. For interactions, Charlie's was always the closest.

Connie: I met Harry Kemp through Grace and Andy [Fuller]. Harry would like to come down about as far as Charlie Schmid's, which at that time belonged to Peg Watson. We'd get together there. Charlie wasn't here yet. Harry would recite poetry. I never saw him in his toga and his wonderful laurel leaf crown. He just was a regular person. He loved to walk home, back that way. We'd sometimes say, "We'll walk half-way with you." Or we'd be coming back, and he'd say, "I'll walk half-way with you," walking and talking.

As shown here, Connie Armstrong and Grace Bessay were part of a dune shack society where there was occasional visiting between shacks in the central and eastern groups. Common interests for this group included art and literature, besides the dune shacks themselves. Art Costa, the owner of the dune taxi business in Provincetown, participated in that society. He was friendly with dune shack residents, giving them free rides back to their shacks, indicative of transactions in the local underground barter economy. At that time, jeeps trails linked all the shacks and there were few restrictions on travel. Shack residents tended to be tolerant of Art's tours, probably in part because of these personal friendships and mutual favors.

When the two Armstrong children became teens, this pattern continued, but it included a wider number of people. The family invited other friends of the same age to stay at the shack, to keep them company:

Connie: The children brought friends. They never felt isolated out here.

Janet: In the old house, on the double top bunk in the bedroom, on the ceiling there, much older gray boards than these, I wrote down everyone who stayed there of my friends. The list was long, long, long.

Connie: I've kept those boards, by the way.

Janet: We came out for cranberry season, October. We did a couple of New Years here too, wild and woolly.

Connie: Spring vacation in April was another wonderful thing. As the kids got older and there was Outward Bound for high school boys, Connie [McCarthy] and I did "outward bound" here several times with kids, only girls, our own personal one. Where else would you learn how to smack a moon snail, take the flesh out, pound it flat, and cook it over a campfire on a stick? It's tender and wonderful. Girls who would ordinarily go, "Ewww!" said, "OK, we'll learn this thing."

At this time, Connie used the dunes to train her young, female charges in living confidently, independently, and carefully within a natural environment. This pattern of instruction resembles that described for Sunny Tasha and her children in a later chapter.

Other segments of the Armstrongs' extended family also used the shack at this time. It was a center for a much larger set of people. On occasion the family would have large gatherings, with the young cousins and their friends sleeping in tents pitched around the shack. But more typically, relatives and friends scheduled visits when Connie and David were not using the shack:

Janet: There used to be times when we'd have 24 people making spaghetti dinner, with tents pitched out. The kids would be out in the tents. There were a lot of extended family times for a week or two weeks.

Connie: A lot of people used this house. I'll start with my parents, my brother and his family, and their large extended family of about 22 people. And the Coppenhagens and the McCartheys. And then let's not forget for whole months at a time at least three Unitarian ministers have come down here, taking the summer month off, just to write and to read and to not have the phone jingling all the time. For at least eight years for Michael Bordman, and eight years for Jerry Goddard, and at least four or five for Carl Skogal, but he didn't come to be alone, he brought his whole family. Peggy came with Jerry. Michael came alone.

David: My brother, John, came down a lot when we couldn't be here. His job was one that he could get free of for long periods of time. He'd be down here by himself. He was sitting out on the beach one time with nothing on but a pair of shorts. There was an old cable reel that had rolled up on the beach that he was using as a table. He had a manual typewriter there, typing away, and the beach taxis went by and we heard subsequently that there was some rumor in town that Ernest Hemingway's son was out there on the beach.

Janet: Because Uncle John looks like Hemingway.

The use of the shack was scheduled so there was an efficient "crossover" between successive occupants, similar to that described previously for the Tasha shack.

The pattern of use described above continues to this day. But in addition, Janet has now established a practice of bringing her own children out. This current use by the third generation does not as yet involve large numbers of people for her. Connie and her daughter discussed these changes in configuration of shack residents over the course of time:

Connie: It was what we called "crossover." I never was here for any length of time when my brother and family were here. We would just not have to turn off the gas refrigerator and crossover. We would overlap. We do this to this day with Janet and her husband and her family.

Janet: Back when I was a kid, there would be mass groups maybe for a week, and there would be the tent pitch. But ever since I've been here as an adult, I don't have groups of people out here. I might have for a day or two, two or three friends.

Connie: When you were teenagers, you wanted to bring friends, and so you did.

Janet: And you had your own friends who had kids.

Connie: That was how I could stay here.

Janet: I really don't have the luxury of time where I can take weeks off, or my friends too. That hasn't been how it's been for me.

Wolfe: So really, over time, one thing that happens is as the family goes through these cycles, with little kids, to teens, to grownups, that you get different configurations of use and people.

Connie: Yes. You eat differently. You shop differently. I would say solitude here would be for those times when the kids were at camp and David and I would come down by ourselves, which was frequent.

Janet: As far as being a mother and having your children out here, as soon as I could get in a car I was out here with my babies, for months because I was able to take that much time off. The treasures, the richness that I experienced out here as a child! There'd be times of the year, spans of time when I wouldn't be able to be out here, doing something else. But I'd always come back, and the first thing I would think of was, 'This is absolutely where my children have to be' – learning the elements, getting your own water, not just pushing a magic button and everything comes to you, really finding out what the elements are. I think that's hugely valuable. Both kids loved it. You didn't have electricity. You didn't have running water. You didn't have these things, and that was a plus!

As shown above, the love for the dunes and the dune shack has been learned within three generations of Armstrongs. As soon as she was able, Janet brought her own children out to the dune shack, just as her own mother had brought her. The youngest set of kids "loved it," according to Janet.

Over time, the shack became a center for the Armstrong family. Not just a center, the shack was perceived as their primary home:

Connie: Of all the places we have been, before or since, this has been home – a touchwood.

David: Yes, that's true. We moved from Cambridge to West Newton, then to Sudbury.

Connie: Before that we moved from Maine to Massachusetts. From there to California, then to the Philippines, and then back here.

David: We were both from Newark, Maine. I first met Connie when she was seven years old and I was nine. It's been a long relationship with us.

Wolfe: But the shack has been a constant, here?

David: Yes.

Connie: Yes. Absolutely.

Janet: I'll pipe up and say for me too. And much more. It's not just a house. It's a spiritual home. Wherever else I've lived, no matter how wonderful or meaningful, this is the place I can consider my absolute spiritual home. Whenever I think of a special place in the world, and I have gone all around the world, this is really where I think of as the true essence of earth and my connection to it. Just six weeks ago I scattered my uncle's ashes out in these waters, and that's where my ashes will be joining him when the time comes.

The deep commitment to the dune shack is shown in these statements. While individuals may move around for work and education, the shack remains a constant for the family; it comes to be perceived the primary family home. For members of the Armstrong family, the dune shack is called a "spiritual home," a "touchwood," and "the true essence of earth and my connection to it." The dunes hold such importance that it is the place of choice for John Armstrong and Janet Armstrong for scattering their ashes after death.

The Armstrong shack illustrates family development cycles and changing shack use patterns. A number of other shacks displayed similar patterns, including the Beebe-Simon shack, the Adams shack, the Champlin shack, the Malicoat shack, the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack, the Tasha shack, the Clemons-Benson shack, the Jackson shack, the Schuster shack, the Dunn shack, and the Schnell-Del Deo shack (see Chapter 3 for kinship diagrams of the core networks for these shacks). All displayed use patterns influenced by family development cycles. Any of these dune shacks also would illustrate family-based use patterns over time.

## Ashes and Symbolic Centers

The dunes provide the final resting places for the remains of a number of dune shack residents. This ultimate decision, to be left in the dunes by family members or friends, is an indication of the strong attachments of many dune shack residents for the dunes. A center in life, the dunes are chosen as the permanent resting place for the body after death. The dunes and some shacks hold the remains of people loved and honored by people currently using the shacks. For current residents, the bodily remains and memories of the dead become permanently fused with the dunes and its dwellings. Coming to the shacks for these families have an additional special meaning: they are coming back to physical memorials of loved ones.

I asked Paul Tasha about burials and ashes on the dunes during the course of our interview at his shack. He spoke in specifics and in general terms about the practice:

Harry's ashes, some of them are out there. And my mother's at our shack. I don't know all their names, but over the years there have been plenty of people who have said, 'Scatter my ashes over the dunes.' Nick Wells might be partly out there, for instance.

It appeared to me that it was general knowledge among dune residents that there are remains of former dune residents among them. Dune residents probably knew the locations of their own loved ones, but not the precise locations of the ashes of others. None of the places were marked with headstones or other memorials, to my knowledge. No one I interviewed mentioned interred bodies, just ashes.

During interviews, some names came up of dune shack residents who had their ashes placed among the dunes. People mentioned to me included Harry Kemp (placed by his friend, Sunny Tasha), Sunny Tasha (placed by her family), Nick Wells (placed by his wife, Ray Wells), Jan Gelb (placed by her husband, Boris Margo), Boris Margo (placed by his nephew, Murray Zimiles and his family), Grace Bessay (placed by her close friends, Peter Clemons and Marianne Benson), Kira Fitts (placed by her husband, Bill Fitts), Leo Fleurant (placed by the Champlins and Adams), John Armstrong (placed by David Armstrong and family), and Randolph Jones (placed by someone not known to me, but eventually scattered by Scott and Marsha Dunn). Undoubtedly there are others.

I learned some details about the scattering of Harry Kemp's ashes. Half of the ashes of Harry Kemp's body were scattered near the old Kemp shack by Sunny Tasha, fulfilling a pledge she made to Harry. The other half were scattered along the streets of Greenwich Village in New York City, another favorite haunt of the bohemian poet. The story of the fight for Harry Kemp's body is part of the Tasha family's oral history. It is a poignant story of friendship, loyalty, resolve, and the keeping of promises, as told to me by Paula Tasha:

Telling this story is better asked of the elder two children. Paul and I were small, so we only saw what we wanted to see through eight-year-old eyes. Harry Kemp. In my memory – alcoholic, diabetic, friendless, not... I hate the word... "cool" enough to be in town. Bohemian.

My mother was also bohemian, but she could float the two lines. Harry Kemp could not. People did not want him at their door. My mother did and felt it was shameful that he was

turned away, as I understand it, from rooms to let for the winter, that sort of thing. I remember her dressing his ulcerated skin. I remember him walking down to that beach where the whale was, in front of St. Mary's, everyday that he was in town, to walk in the salt water because it was good for the skin.

So mother, finally knowing that he needed a place, a winter place, designed and built him a little cottage so he could come in for the winter and have a roof over his head. I'm sure that you've heard she built almost all of those cottages at Howland Street with only her two hands. She just felt that he was worthwhile, a worthwhile human being, and needed more than he could get. There weren't social services. He was probably the wrong religion. And the wrong look. He didn't fit well. And there weren't enough bohemians year round. There was the little summer theater set. He was certainly brought to all the cocktail parties then. But after they all left, he was alone. So she took him in, as it were, but not into the house, but in a little place of his own. My older brother now lives in that cottage and it's still, was always, Harry's cottage. She actually tucked some of his manuscripts and things in behind the insulation to make sure they would be there. I presume they still are, but I don't know.

Then there was a great argument over the death. Provincetown is hard on the living but they sure spoke well of the dead. Everybody wanted him, once he was dead. The Catholics insisted that they would keep him. My mother said, "No! Harry Kemp did not want to join you. He did not want a Portuguese burial. He did not want to lay in the ground."

And this is still through my very young eyes. Mother had the body sent away to be cremated. Back in those days you did not do that. State police stopped the hearse. They escorted it back. Someone in town had enough power to do this, bring the body back and say, "No, the body is to go in the ground." And my mother had to continue to argue this, simply put it in the face of... I don't even know who they were. "You had no use for him when he was alive. You will not take his body and put it in the cold, cold ground. He will not tolerate this. I will not tolerate this. You will have to stand between me and my gun to get to that coffin." She won. The body was cremated. And she did spread the ashes.

The ashes of Harry Kemp's body were spread near the shack. The memory of where is passed on within the Tasha family. After her own death, Sunny Tasha's ashes were placed in the dune shack by her children, the tiny shack that Harry Kemp gave to Sunny's family before his death. When I visited the shack for the first time with Paul Tasha, he pointed out his mother's remains to me, saying, "There's my mom." When members of the Tasha family visit the Tasha shack, in a real sense they are paying a visit to Sunny Tasha, their mother or grandmother, the matriarch of their extended family, enshrined in the simple shack.

Other poignant life and death stories are passed down among dune shack residents about ancestors whose ashes were scattered among the dunes. Dawn Zimiles, a young artist living in Provincetown, shared her family's history with me, sitting in the family's house that once belonged to her great uncle, Boris Margo. For Zimiles, the family's history has infused their family's shack with deep personal feelings. She articulated these emotional attachments during our interview, bringing out the poem of her great aunt requesting her memorial service at the family's shack:

I was trying to describe the feeling that was passed down through my family to my brother and I from my great aunt and uncle, the feeling of what it meant to be there [at the shack] and how it was inspirational for artists. My aunt Jan died in 1978 at the age of 72. She must have known that she was going to die because she wrote this last testament, I assume,

because it was found on her desk. She wrote what mattered most to her in her whole life. What she wrote was what she wanted when she died, how she wanted us to experience that. It's all about the ceremony that she wanted to take place on the dunes:

Last Testament, by Jan Gelb

Gather driftwood for my funeral pyre  
Along the wild backshore. Salt-silvered wood.  
Pile it high as the sun goes down. But if you crave  
A piece of complex curve or textured plane,  
Take it. Keep it. I shall not mind; I'd do the same.  
Light the fragrant sticks, the plank with barnacles  
And seaweed clinging to its thighs. Let them flare up  
As sun dips into water's hush. And if your gaze  
Strays from the burning place to sunflames  
On scalloped edge of beach, don't feel contrite.  
Enjoy the brief bright glory: so would I.  
Night will be long. Firewood. Is there wood enough?  
Gather more as the dunes smolder, ash violet in the haze.  
Lay on more wood for my wish is that the fire  
Burn through the night. But should you pause while gathering  
To watch the tern's curved flight, don't be abashed.  
Those lovely arcs would stop me too, if I were you.  
The tide will pulse. There'll be no moon. My fire  
Will keep you warm until the stars snuff out.  
Then let the flames die down and as the sky grows soft  
Toss off your clothes and swim my morning swim for me.  
You'll want to shout a dayspring shout, defiant as you emerge.  
Don't hold back for me. EXULT!  
Run naked, glad, along the polished wet packed sand  
And give the burning place no glance.  
Or rather, do. You built it on the steep-sloped shore  
Below high water mark, I hope. Then – look.  
The waves have washed it clean. And now, forget.

Zimiles: The whole thing is about the wood – it's so beautiful, there's driftwood everywhere. It's all about appreciating the beauty of the wood and the area. It's about the swim, what it's like to light the fire, how much she just loved that. The birds. The whole thing was for her family to experience that. And maybe she imagined that we would be able to keep that going. She didn't know necessarily about what was going to happen.

Wolfe: Are they buried close by here?

Zimiles: Both my aunt and uncle, their ashes are on the dunes. That's where we all want to go.

The scattering of ashes near their shack feels like a family tradition to her. The dune shack has been a center for this family of artists for so many years, in life and in death, that she stated with tears in her eyes, "that's where we all want to go."

Like Jan Gelb's, other memorial services have been held on the dunes for residents. Peter Clemons and Marianne Benson held a memorial service for Grace Bessay near their shack at the foundations of the old coast guard station. Because of this service, the station has become an important spot for their family, who call its inner chamber "The Chapel." Memorial services have been held for Ken Adams at the Adams shack, John Armstrong at the Armstrong shack, and Hazel Hawthorne Werner at her shack. Murray Zimiles told a humorous story connected to the service he held for his uncle, Boris Margo, by the family shack:

The ashes of Boris Margo and Jan Gelb are out there, around that shack. They left instructions about it. It wasn't my idea, it was their idea. We sprinkled them from the high dune, to around the shack, and into the ocean, and in my son's mouth. *[Laughs]*

Downwind. It was incredible.

We did it as a large family. The whole family was there. Everybody had a little spoon to sprinkle ashes. My son was a little guy then. He threw it into the wind, like this, and it went right back into his mouth. So literally, Boris is literally part of him. Because he ate him. *[Laughs]*

When a family line connected to a shack gets broken, memories of funerary events like that told by the Zimiles may become lost to dune residents. This occurred with the Jones shack, leased to Scott and Marsha Dunn by the Seashore. The memories about the placement of human remains beneath the shack became lost. Scott and Marsha Scott explained events during our interview:

Wolfe: Who had the shack before you?

Marsha: Randolph and Anabelle Jones. She was the poet, right?

Scott: She was a poet, yeah, as far as we know. We didn't know them. I don't know if you've talked with the Del Deos yet, Sal and Josephine Del Deo? She has a lot of the history of this shack and the others.

Marsha: She gave me a copy of Anabelle's diary, which I have a Xeroxed copy of, not here, but in my house in Wellfleet. The two of them know so much. They're older. They've been out here for so many years. I love listening to them. When we got the shack we excavated it.

Scott: To clean it up.

Marsha: Well, there was a bunch of trash underneath and stuff. So we took out all the trash. And in the midst of all the trash we found a crematory statement and Randolph's ashes buried under the shack.

Wolfe: Really?

Marsha: Yeah.

Scott: Which we then spread around.

Marsha: We just spread them in the dunes. So I don't know how they got here, or who.

In this case, the Dunns discovered the ashes of Randolph Jones beneath the house. They had some information about Anabelle Jones, the previous shack resident, from Anabelle's diary, provided by Josephine Del Deo. But the story of how the ashes came to be placed under the shack was lost to memory, at least to the oral history known by them. The Dunns believed that it was better that the ashes be scattered among the dunes, rather than kept in the urn beneath the shack.

Given these intimate connections, there is little wonder that long-term residents ascribe special significance to the dunes and the shacks. It's a special place, set apart, contributing to personal and group identities, molding the course of individual lives and family histories. For some of the members of extended families, the dunes are described as the consistent center of their family, their true home, the focal point of their collective lives. The dune shacks are viewed as symbolic centers, physically represented by the drawing of its members back to it year after year. Shacks hold the family's memories, like the penciled names, dates, and heights of children and children's children along the vertical support beam in the main room of the Champlin shack. Or the names of all the daughter's visitors on the bunk boards, specially preserved at the Armstrong shack. Shacks carry timelines documenting the growth of the extended family. The shacks are restorative, lifting spirits after a major life crisis like Briga's, or preserving the hope of living with cancer for Clemons. Ray Wells told me her dune shack "saved her life" emotionally and intellectually for more than 80 years. Every moment at her shack is "a meditation," she explained. And for the writers and visual artists, the dunes are described as a special place of renewal and creation, through solitary reflection, work, and associations with its bohemian residents. For many of the shacks, these are intimate connections that reach across multiple generations, holding family lines together. Ashes of the older generation find places among the dune shacks expressing the enduring connections. In a real sense, coming to the shack brings a family back to its source, "to Mother," "to Grandma's shack," "to home."

## Chapter 5. Customary Practices

The previous chapter identified the social core of dune shack society as extended family groups with coteries of friends. For long-term resident families, living on the dunes in a shack was a practice handed down across several generations. For many in the second and third generations, growing up on the dunes during summers was normal, the only summer life they knew. As small children, they learned from family members and personal experience about their rustic shacks, their unconventional neighborhoods, and the fluid earth of the Backshore. They learned how to successfully live on the dunes. Friends invited to shacks, especially those who stayed on the dunes for extended periods, learned in a similar fashion. Within such a society, a culture specific to the dunes emerged.

This chapter and the next describe some of the customary practices I observed within dune shack society. They comprised conventions, systems of knowledge, and standards of behavior known by many dune dwellers. Such practices may be termed “customary” because many in the social group had adopted them. Some were traditional patterns, having been developed in previous generations and passed on, according to dune residents. Dune dwellers took pride in the unconventional, expressed by living in shacks at the edge of things. But even in this unconventionality, there were many shared practices within the social group. Of course, like cultural practices elsewhere, not every dune shack user followed any particular convention. And as will be shown, common practices revealed shades of variation across the group. Dune customs were not codified in writing. They were passed along by word of mouth and observation, expressed individually within a society that valued creativity and tolerated idiosyncrasies. The chapter covers several customs, including shack naming conventions, seasonal residency patterns, privacy and solitude, gatherings, security, mutual assistance, and the transference of shacks. There were many other customary practices within dune shack society, some described in later chapters, but this small set provides a taste of contemporary cultural patterns on the dunes.

### Shack Naming Conventions

The dune shacks of the Backshore differed from other residences on Cape Cod in how they were identified, named, and located. The dune shacks were not located on any named streets. Nor were the shacks numbered. Five shacks had building names known to some people (Thalassa, Euphoria, The Grail, Mission Bell, and C-Scape), a practice discussed below, but most did not. Most commonly, shacks were talked about without streets, numbers, or building names. The customary practice for identifying particular shacks in everyday conversation was to name shacks for people. Speakers most commonly referred to shacks by the name of owners or users, past and present. The convention of naming shacks for people created neighborhoods that were personal and social, contemporary and historic, and at times, idiosyncratic and confusing, especially to an uninformed outsider like me.

Designating shacks by people is illustrated by the shack names given to me by Paul Tasha on our first walk out onto the dunes. We were standing atop a tall dune on a brilliantly clear day with a view of many of the shacks, small specks in the distance. The terrain was new to me. I could hardly see the shacks, blending with the dunescape, so I asked Tasha to point out the shacks to me and to tell me which ones they were. What Tasha provided was a succession of names of shack residents, with snippets of histories and personal observations about the shack or person

named. An excerpt of Paul Tasha's impromptu listing is given below to illustrate the customary naming system, each line representing a different shack as he named it, with its thumbnail profile:

Evelyn Simon's. She got it through a Parks program. Nice woman.  
Then the Champlin's, we call it the Mission Bell. It used to have a cross tree with a big bell.  
At some point they would bang the bell in foggy weather for the mariners not to get too close to shore.  
One down in the valley is Leo Fleurant's. It doesn't have a water view. It's cool, though, it's almost like a real house. He lived there year round, old-timer. He died in his shack.  
They found his body, stiff and cold.  
Malicoat's. They own the property. Phil Malicoat. A nice guy, a hell-of-a-nice guy.  
They're the only ones who own their land.  
Hazel Hawthorne's. One of Hazel's. She had some kind of fancy names for them. I always get the names mixed up.  
The flat roofed one there is Boris Margo's. But the Peaked Hill Trust has that now. They rent it out by the week.  
Ours is to the right. You can see the edge of the peaked roof.  
This one down in the hollows, down in the woods, I can't even remember the people that were there when I was a kid, but for years a well-known artist, Frank and Karen [Milby], and the kids stayed there. I'd go over and have blueberry pancakes sometimes. There were a lot of good blueberry bushes in that hollow behind them.  
You can see one poking up there. That used to be Mrs. Bessay's. Right now Peter Clemons and his family have that shack. She turned it over to them.  
They are also caretakers of a shack you can't see that used to belong to The Grouch, because he always was really grouchy.  
Then going to the right, there's another one of Hazel's. She had two.  
Then there's the one that Lawrence [Schuster] stays in now. I don't remember whose that one was.  
Then there's Ray Wells. You can't actually see it. Nicky and Ray Wells, but Nick died.  
Ray's still alive, but she lets other people use it, she's so old.

From the dune top, Paul Tasha pointed out and named thirteen of the eighteen dune shacks. Five went unnamed, most likely because they were hidden from view and Tasha was not pressed by me to name each and every shack.

I found several interesting features of the list of shacks given by Paul Tasha, standing on a dune top and explaining the district to an outsider. Of particular note was that Tasha named a shack by a person or family. Shacks were personalized. Tasha attached an 's' to the end of a person's name, so Hazel became Hazel's and Margo became Margo's. Presumably, Tasha was using a shortened form for "Hazel's shack" and "Boris Margo's shack." Tasha consistently gave a personal name in possessive form to designate a shack. For the shack used by his family group, Tasha simply named it, "ours."

Second, for Tasha the naming elicited a personal memory or feeling connected with the shack or the person. Speaking the name brought to mind a history associated with each of the shacks. The names were part of a local history, encoded and retrieved by the name. Tasha provided snippets of these histories during the listing.

Third, the names included people both living and dead, which varied across shacks. The dead in Tasha's list included Leo Fleurant, Hazel Werner, Boris Margo, Grace Bessay, and Nick Wells. The living included Evelyn Simon, Nathaniel and Mildred Champlin, Conrad Malicoat,

Peter Clemons, Frank Milby, Lawrence Schuster, and Ray Wells. By combining the dead and living, the list is both historical and contemporary. For Tasha, the shacks taken as a whole embraced both a past and present, a compression of time, a continuation of tradition. Some names were up-to-date, representing persons currently using the shack (such as Evelyn Simon and Peter Clemons), whereas other names were former notable users (such as Frank Milby and Hazel Werner) or past features (such as the mission bell, a structure not standing in 2004). In his extemporaneous listing, Tasha named only certain key people associated with each shack. He left unnamed a much larger number of other users, current and historic.

Paul Tasha's naming system resembled that used by Emily Beebe, another shack dweller. Beebe described herself as a relative newcomer to the dune shack district. She named shacks in the vicinity of her own shack during an interview at the Flying Fish Café in Wellfleet. Beebe said she divided the shacks into a north neighborhood and a south neighborhood. She drew a rough map of the shacks on a notebook sheet for my benefit. She placed herself in the north neighborhood. Emily Beebe named seven places, excerpted from that interview:

C-Scape shack. It's the first one. I think it's under a short-term lease that an art association has. I'm not sure of the name of the art association. We've met some really cool folks who have stayed at that place. It was originally two cottages moved from town, put together at a time wood was so expensive it cost a lot less money to simply relocate it than to build something fresh. Depending on who is staying at the C-Scape, we get together with whoever is out there at times. I've helped people who've stayed out there. Traveling on the fire road you pass the C-Scape. The next place you see is ours, Leo's Place. His shack is kept exactly as he kept it, as a tidy neat little cottage. We just call it Leo's Place because I think it always will be Leo's Place. When you are at the visitor's center and you climb up on the observation deck, you can see our place pretty clearly. Then we live right next door to the Adamses. They have a cottage, and they have their house. And then, further down from that, is the Champlin's. Nat and Mildred Champlin. Also known as the Mission Bell. The scaffold for the mission bell is fallen, so they're trying to rebuild it. The Malicoat's. The Malicoat shack is in between the north and the south neighborhoods. They are just great people. We can see Euphoria and Boris Margo's place pretty clearly from our place.

Beebe's approach of designating shacks was similar to Paul Tasha's. Many were personal names of users, with personal comments about the building or occupants. Others were names given to particular shacks by users (C-Scape, Mission Bell, and Euphoria).

Identifying residences by their users is possible in small communities where neighbors have the occasion to know one another. In small Alaskan villages, places where I have done other ethnographic research, residents commonly were able to sketch the village's houses and identify each by the name of its main occupants. This conceptual map of houses and family names, drawn out for the anthropologist's benefit, was a useful approach for finding people in a village, for negotiating a social space. Such a personalized system can work within a small community of people who are on familiar terms. In larger towns and cities, such a system can be used for identifying and distinguishing some residences, particularly those of close neighbors and friends. But the convention breaks down as a general system because people cannot know one another in large populations with substantial turnover. An impersonal system of street names and house numbers works better for locating structures first, and then the people second. The street-number system used on most of Cape Cod is suited for the anonymity of large populations.

The convention of designating dune shacks with people's names introduces an idiosyncratic complexity in dune shack maps. Some shacks have had a single family over decades, such as those of the Champlins, Adams, Malicoats, and Armstrongs. But others have housed a multitude of occupants with different names. Consequently, among dune dwellers, I found that some shacks were known by multiple names that changed over time. The personal naming convention resulted in a shifting cultural landscape depending upon the speaker and the time period, much like the dune environment itself. The list of names opened a window to the speaker's own shack history and social connections to the shacks. The lists of names provided by Paul Tasha and Emily Beebe differ in some respects from one another because of each of their personal histories with the shacks. Naming Stanley and Laura Fowler's shack as "The Grouch" came from Paul Tasha's experiences as a child with the shack's occupants. Emily Beebe would not likely call it that. Emily Beebe called her shack "Leo's Place" and "our shack," while Paul Tasha called it "Evelyn Simon's," the current co-resident with Emily Beebe. And so it goes. Such names make sense within the social network and personal history of the speaker.

I asked Paula Tasha and her husband, Don Brazil, about names given their family's shack. It was previously used by Harry Kemp, the so-called Poet of the Dunes, and some dune dwellers called it Kemp's shack or Harry's shack. Yet I had heard most people refer to it as Tasha's shack. In probing about names, I learned how social connections influenced the name a person used for a shack.

Wolfe: It's called the Tasha shack now, and not the Kemp shack?

Don Brazil: By some.

Paula Tasha: No fault of our own.

Don Brazil: Only by some people.

Paula Tasha: That's right. In fact someone called to us the other night while we were sitting and having our dinner [at the shack] and said, "Is this the Stefani shack?" And I said, "No, this is the Kemp-Tasha shack." Stefani is my sister's last name by marriage. So you see how people will do this through whom they know. This was not someone I knew. They were my nephew's wife's relatives from Canada walking the dune shacks looking for the shack. But the name they had was the last name, Stefani.

Wolfe: Yeah, the connection there...

Paula Tasha: Exactly. That's right. The only connection they knew. Exactly.

Wolfe. And the shack, you've never wanted to call it something like Euphoria or Thalassa?

Paula Tasha: Oh please, no.

Don Brazil: Oh, no, no. *[Laughs.]*

Tasha: No, no, not at all.

Wolfe: Because?

Tasha: Because I don't name buildings. A building is simply a building. It simply is the shack. It is never an estate. It is never the "chicken coop." It is nothing cute. We just don't do that. It never even occurred to me until you mentioned it, to give it a name. Hazel Werner had two shacks and it probably behooved her to give them names. And they are marvelous names out of mythology. She chose well. But it just doesn't interest me.

This exchange illustrates how a shack can be named after the person through which the speaker is connected to the shack. The Canadian searchers on the dune that night were looking for a shack described to them by someone from the Stefani family. The Stefanis are part of the Tasha's extended family. Therefore, from the perspective of the Canadian visitors, they were looking for Stefani's shack. This idiosyncratic name was unique to them.

Uncertainty over how to name certain shacks was not uncommon during my interviews. Speakers tended to be familiar with the use and history of some shacks but not others. Emily Beebe said she was most familiar with the north neighborhood of shacks. She did not volunteer names for most shacks in the south neighborhood. Paul Tasha, who was very familiar with the dune district from a lifetime of close association, admitted he could not remember the names Hazel Werner gave to her two shacks, nor the names of the historic owners of the shacks used by the Milbys and Lawrence Schuster. He knew each shack well and these particular users, but could not recall the names of the owners at that moment we stood on the dune top. His listing also appears to name Leo Fleurant's shack separately from Evelyn Simon's shack, when they are the same place with different names.

At least five dune shacks had building names other than a person's name. Hazel Werner, who ran two shacks as rental units for a time, named one Thalassa and the other Euphoria. The Peaked Hill Trust, the current caretaker organization, and several persons I interviewed, used these names, while other speakers like Paul Tasha referred to the shacks by personal names such as Hazel's or Peaked Hill's. According to Mildred Champlin, her family's shack came to be called the Mission Bell by dune buggy enthusiasts who used their bell as a landmark while running the Race Point beaches. The Champlins did not object to the name and it came into general use. Grace Bessay and Peter Clemons named their shack "The Grail" because Park Service paperwork asked for the name of their shack. They considered this a funny question at the time. Nevertheless, they came up with a name, "The Grail," in order to fill in the blank on the form. The name associates the heroic Arthurian quest for the Holy Grail with Grace Bessay's long effort to secure legal title for the shack.

In addition to identifying and distinguishing among shacks, naming systems are linked to issues of purpose and control. Institutionalizing a shack name can establish conceptual boundaries regarding a preferred use of the property. For instance, Emily Beebe stated that she had chosen to consider her shack "Leo's Place" as well as "our place," and consistent with that designation, she maintained certain standards as memorials to Leo Fleurant's time and place:

His shack is kept exactly as he kept it, as a tidy neat little cottage. We keep the trim painted. We keep the storm door painted.... We just call it Leo's Place because I think it always will be Leo's Place.

Emily Beebe named the western-most shack the "C-Scape" shack, a designation given to the shack by Eddie and Mary Nunes that dates from about the middle 1930s. Eddie and Albert Nunes, brothers from Provincetown, originally built the shack and its nearest neighbor and sold them to Howard Lewis about 1952-53 for \$75 each – this is how the Adams and Champlin families recounted the shack's early history. Eddie Nunes was the owner of the Ford dealership in Provincetown (which later become Peter Cook's garage and more recently the home of Provincetown's new stage theatre). The C-Scape shack eventually sold to John Crillo and Jean Cohen (who later became Jean Burns). Burns later sold it to Robert Abramson and Lawrence McCready, a well-known psychiatrist. Other occupants have included Marcia Marcus and Jan Muller, according to Josephine del Deo's shack history written in 1986. When the Provincetown Community Compact became caretakers and managers in 1996, Tom Boland and Jay Critchley applied the old name "C-Scape" to the shack, rather than use any of the names of the shack's residents over the years, such as the "Howard Lewis shack" or the "Jean Cohen shack" (names that certain other people use). The choice of Peaked Hill Trust to use the names of Thalassa and Euphoria appears consistent with their perceived mandate to manage the shacks as a legacy to Hazel Werner, who designated them as caretakers. They modeled their programs in part on their

understanding of how she ran them as residences for artists and others wanting solitude for creative work. Therefore, the choice of a shack name may be in part an intentional statement regarding current and future uses of a shack.

In general, it seems to me that the cultural practice of identifying shacks with personal names of contemporary people expresses the pattern of use of the shacks as abodes for families and other users, living and changing rather than historic and fixed. Also speaking generally, identifying shacks with a single, fixed name unconnected to current occupants may express other values or patterns of use, such as an artist's program, a symbolic representation of an historic person or time period, or simply the conservatism of certain speakers. Both patterns of naming were currently in use for particular shacks at the time of my study, although the first (naming for contemporary users) seemed more prevalent. Finally, some shack residents feel strongly about certain names for shacks, asserting it's a shack's "correct name" (or conversely, "incorrect name"). For this group, using "incorrect names" devalues the shack by losing its association with particular occupants or historic events. But overall, most shack residents seem to deal easily with a fluid naming system in which shacks have no one standard set of designations.

### Seasonal Residency Patterns

Over time, dune shack society has displayed a seasonal rhythm, forming during late spring, peaking during summer, and waning during late fall. This corresponds with the seasonal occupancies of most shacks. Most shack residents closed up their shacks during the winter, leaving them unoccupied. Weather determined the winter closures to a large extent. According to shack residents, winters on the exposed Backshore were "brutal," with frequent, frigid, gale-force northeasterly winds roaring over the treeless beaches like sandblasters. Periodic snowfalls and blowing snow buried jeep trails, making tricky sand passages even more difficult. Sand and snow mixed, according to Sally Adams who stayed out into December one year: "it looks like a nice roadway but it turns out that it's just a snow bank underneath, becoming very difficult to get back and forth, very dangerous." Most shacks had poor insulation, as owners never intended them for winter use, except for periodic short visits to inspect their integrity.

The winter hiatus in dune shack occupancy also mirrored the seasonality of art and tourism on the cape. Charles Hawthorne and other artists held their art schools primarily during the warm, light days of summer. Artists, students, and galleries swelled in numbers during the spring, summer, and fall seasons, and disappeared during winters. Likewise, with the growth of tourism and summer cottages on Cape Cod, the populations of Provincetown and other cape towns have developed substantial seasonal swings. Throughout the last century, vacationers have filled up the cape during summers and emptied it out during winters. The year-round residents on the lower cape have come to represent a small portion of the total population during the vacation season.

On the dunes, there have been exceptions to the mid-winter closures. Lawrence Schuster asserted that at least one full-time shack resident has always resided on the dunes. He was that person currently, he said. He had no other abode. Other historic year-round residents have included Harry Kemp, Charlie Schmid, Leo Fleurant, Ray Wells, and Peg Watson. While living on the dunes, full-time residents walked or drove back and forth between their shacks and town on a regular basis. In his later years, Harry Kemp moved into Provincetown when winters made shack life too harsh, staying at a cottage built by Sunny Tasha. Of course, the surfmen of the lifesaving and coastguard stations was another group of year-round residents on the Backshore. They also moved back and forth between the station and town. In addition to the historic full-

time notables, other shack residents have tried winter shack living from time to time. Overall, however, winter's wind chills and a shack's poor heating have proved too taxing for year-round dune dwelling as a general pattern.

During the habitable seasons, shacks commonly showed pulses in occupancy depending upon the life circumstances of the core residents. Residents typically came and went from shacks over the course of a season and over their span of ownership. There were several notable types of seasonal use. For full-time residents of the lower cape with homes near the shacks, the shacks commonly were used off and on during a week, on evenings, on weekends, during stretches of good (or bad) weather, or when personal activities allowed or recommended it (such as getting away for writing or painting). Close proximity made it possible to efficiently move back and forth between homes in this manner. Time at the shack was scheduled around employment and other activities in town. Currently, this use pattern characterized four shacks: the Malicoat shack, the Tasha shack, the Schnell-Del Deo shack, and the Beebe-Simon shack.

A second type of seasonal use characterized shack residents with homes and employment outside the lower cape. For the main employed workers, shack occupancy was scheduled for extended vacations, weekends, and holidays, while other family members commonly resided at the shack for longer stretches of time. For example, Zara Jackson recalled that she and her mother stayed at the shack during summers while her father, employed as a pharmacist in New York, visited occasionally as work permitted. Zara Jackson used her shack more occasionally when her own children were older and her family responsibilities kept her away from the cape. Other examples include Gary Isaacson and Laurie Schecter, living and working in Florida and using the shack for several weeks during summer, and Murray Zimiles, living and working in the New York area, coming to his shack for a couple of weeks every year. At another extreme, as university professors working an academic year, Nathaniel Champlin and David Adams have been able to spend entire summers with their families at their shacks. Because of substantial year-to-year stability in occupancy, the dune district came to be viewed as the family's primary home for their children.

A third pattern is found with shack residents working the summer season in Provincetown while living at the shack. For example, John Dunn worked in construction and Marsha Dunn in a whale watch enterprise during summers at Provincetown, returning to their shack at nights. During winter, they lived and worked from a second home in rural New Mexico. During this study, Peter Clemons and Marianne Benson ran an art gallery in downtown Provincetown with a second-floor apartment. Family members spent nights at the shack or at the gallery. For a time, Stanley and Laura Fowler worked in town in motel services while living at the shack. Unmarried teen and young-adult residents of family shacks frequently found summer jobs in Provincetown, returning to the shack at night and off-days. Examples of summer employment for teens and young-adults have included the Clemons-Benson shack, the Adams shack, the Champlin shack, and the Armstrong shack.

A fourth seasonal pattern is found with retired shack residents. Retired residents may spend long stretches of the spring-summer-fall seasons at their shack while wintering elsewhere. Examples of this have included the Fuller shack, the Fowler shack, the Armstrong shack, the Adams shack, and the Champlin shack.

Seasonal use patterns of particular shacks typically change over the maturational cycle of a resident family or over the course of life of a single resident. Scheduling is adapted to the current employment demands of core residents and family members, as well as the ages and school requirements of children. As children age, marry, and become employed, their uses of the shack

change as well, becoming scheduled with others in the family group. With failing health, a shack resident may spend less and less time at the shack. Examples include Hazel Werner, Boris Margo, Laura Fowler, and Ray Wells.

The seasonal pulses in shack use by core residents allow for potential vacancies in shack occupancy. As discussed previously, one prevalent pattern is for shacks to be occupied by friends, relatives, and other guests rather than being left vacant by core residents. Invited guests may be asked to serve as shack caretakers for extended periods, living in the shack while employed in Provincetown, or while working in the fine arts or literature as part of the Provincetown art colony. For example, Cynthia Huntington, author of the *Salt House*, stayed at the one of Werner's shack for several seasons. Others who have lived at shacks for extended periods as caretakers have included Genevieve Martin, Julie Schecter, Irene Briga, Joyce Johnson, Lawrence Schuster, and Barbara Baker. Another common seasonal pattern is for guests to use a shack for shorter periods, such as a week, weekend, or holiday, scheduled among the uses of core residents. The combined uses by core residents and by guests result in a rather constant ebb and flow in the population of the dune district over the course of the habitable season.

Provincetown Community Compact has developed its own seasonal use pattern with regard to the shack they cared for. As described in a previous chapter, the Compact offered three, three-week artist residencies in summer, the occupants selected by a jury. In spring and fall, the Compact offered one-week stays through an open lottery, called a "community residency." There were also winter occupancies occasionally. Tom Boland and Jay Critchley discussed the types of people attracted under these programs, and the challenges of winter stays:

Boland: One of the cultural traditions here in Provincetown is that many people have numerous jobs in the summertime. In fact, it's very unusual for year-rounders to not work much more in the summer than they do in the winter. The community residency is perfect for Provincetowners in that they could never stay in the summer months. They're scheduled. And the way the economy works here would never allow it. By running the spring and fall stays, they can. Provincetowners really can only stay in the early spring and late fall based on that cultural way of life here.

Critchley: And the winter. We've had a number of winter residencies. There's a wood stove in this shack, and I was really adamant about [keeping it]. The Park Service wanted us to take it out. I was really adamant about it. I said, "If you're asking us to have artists interpret the experience of being in the dunes, then why do you limit it to the summer?" They really were only interested in those nine summer weeks, because then they can bring in these walking tours [from the visitor center]. I said, "We have to keep the stove in here." So we have had winter residents. We had a whole group of artists, ten artists, sharing the shack for three winters.

Boland: We've had people from all over the world. I've done evaluations at the end of the year. It shakes out that around thirty to forty percent are what I'd call "local," meaning outer cape. And again, they are generally not in the summertime. The program runs mid-March through Thanksgiving. The winter stays are more flexible. We do that as it comes along.

Critchley: People who want to stay in the winter have to write or talk to us personally about any proposal or project they might have. We have to make sure they know how to run a stove.

Boland: [*Laughs.*] And how to survive.

Critchley: That they're not going to freak out when the snowstorm comes.

So Critchley and Boland visualized the C-Scape program as providing shack time for two named groups. One group consisted of serious artists, accommodated by the artist residencies. The other group contained everyone else, whom Boland and Critchley called “the community,” probably in reference to outer cape residents who applied, though in fact the program drew applicants “from all over the world.” The observation by Boland that Provincetown residents “could never stay in the summer months” because summer work schedules “would never allow it” probably was in reference to a segment of Provincetown residents heavily committed to summer work. In practice I observed that major users of dune shacks during summer included many local Provincetown residents, most of whom were employed.

### Privacy and Solitude

Dune shack residents said they valued privacy and solitude. Getting away from town and being alone with one’s own thoughts and pursuits within nature were primary reasons for living in a dune shack. According to the David Armstrong, Harry Kemp had over his shack’s door a little sign that said, ‘This house is occupied, please do not break in, nothing of value here except solitude.’ David added, “That was how many of us felt.”

Solitude was in part geographic and in part a frame of mind, for although the shacks gave the appearance of physical isolation, they in fact were quite close to Provincetown. This was clarified during my first walk into the dunes with Paul Tasha as a guide. I pointed out that Provincetown’s water tank, a large grayish structure sitting atop a tall dune, was visible on the horizon for much of the way. Paul Tasha concurred, discussing the interplay of geography and perception:

Tasha: Yeah, you’re never far from it [the water tank]. But you can forget about it. Yeah, it’s there. And I know the whole town’s there. But you can really get lost in this place out here, and forget that it’s all just a half-mile away, condos, you know.

Wolfe: Well, we haven’t seen another person, and we’ve been walking here for about fifty minutes.

Tasha: There’s still some privacy to be had out here. Yeah, it has that. You can still come out here and sit down here in the sun and enjoy yourself, and kind of forget that that whole world exists. There were times when I was a kid, when all you could see was the [Pilgrim] monument, which looks like a medieval tower. I would be out here and think I was in some past age.

When I asked Genevieve Martin, a Provincetown resident and long-time shack user, what drew her to the dunes, her first response was “solitude,” a solitude within nature. In addition, it was a solitude punctuated with visits by other dune friends. For her, the solitude was exciting and regenerative:

Wolfe: What draws you to the dunes. Can you say?

Martin: Well, you know – solitude. You don’t see people. As you see in August, you have so many people in town, but then you go out there, it’s just you. Especially when you know where to walk where nobody walks, the Backshore. This is especially when they close the beaches to the cars, from June until the third week of July. I have been many times the only one on the beach. I mean, where else can you find that? This is unique. I like to see birds. I always observe those things – foxes and coyotes. I always look for tracks in the sand. It’s always exciting! Each time you go it’s like a new page. I never take the dunes and the shack for granted. I mean they are always a present, every time I

go. And really when I'm depressed, this is my best counselor. It's like the best place for me.

Wolfe: Solitude is regenerative.

Martin: Yeah, you can talk about this stuff forever.

Julie Schecter also emphasized the attribute of solitude and dune society. She linked the dune's solitude with artistic creativity, attributing this as a reason for use of the shacks by members of the Provincetown art colony:

The art community in general, and it's not just Provincetown, it's a broader arts community, has made use of the shacks, used them both as material [subjects of art and literature] and for their isolation – the whole solitude and creativity thing. A lot of the people who are out there are artists. A reason that people seek this out is for the solitude. It's for getting your own peace of mind, for collecting your thoughts, having the time to be quiet and having to focus. Even though you can go home and turn off your telephone and your TV, you don't have that sense of an almost enforced peace that you have out in the shacks. I think for a lot of creative people that's a vital part of what they do. And even if they are not actively producing work out there, they are collecting the quiet to use when they get back to their studios.

Because of the high value placed on privacy and solitude, certain practices in dune shack society are said to have developed to preserve these attributes of dune living. One practice was not to bother other people at their shacks, according to Paul and Paula Tasha. They described learning this as children from their mother, Sunny Tasha, when they went out on the dunes to their shack:

Paul: One thing you've got to understand, when we were kids we had specific orders: "Don't bother anybody in the shacks. They didn't come out here to see you."

Paula: That's the truth.

Paul: They came out here to be alone and to have some privacy. We were not supposed to be going and bugging them. And my mother didn't. There wasn't a heck of a lot of visiting. That's not what you went there for. You didn't go there for socializing. You went to get the hell away from that. So we didn't know some people. But I got to know "the Grouches" [Laura and Stanley Fowler in a neighboring shack], because they yelled at us.

Paula: Uh huh, that's what we called the Fowlers – "the Grouches."

Paul Tasha also recalled getting yelled at by Charlie Schmid, his neighbor to the south, who he never got to know well because Paul found him intimidating:

Paul: Again, he was one of those guys I never knew well. He was always a grouchy bastard. So as a kid I never got to really know him. He was all right, but Christ, he was touchy as hell. I think those are the kind of people who like to be in the dunes. They didn't like society that much.

Wolfe: Maybe it was just you he didn't like.

Tasha: Yeah, that could be it. *[Laughter.]* I set myself up for that.

But as stated previously, as a child Paul did visit other shacks, including the nearby Jackson shack (to eat blueberry pancakes with the kids of Frank and Karen Milby), Boris Margo (who "was always friendly"), and Hazel Hawthorne Werner.

One practice in dune shack society is not to appear unannounced at another person's shack, or so some shack residents told me. Irene Briga, a Provincetown resident and long-time shack user, explained local shack etiquette about paying unscheduled visits to a shack:

Wolfe: Tell me about shack etiquette. Can you just knock on Lawrence's shack and pay him a visit? How does that work?

Briga: Well, you always announce yourself. There aren't phones. You always holler, and this I learned through tradition, [*loudly*] "You-hooo!" [*Laughs.*] If they're busy doing something and don't want to be interrupted [they can ignore you]. You try to give people space out there. You're not out there to party. You're out there for that solitude. You're out there to learn to write, to paint, video, whatever you do.

You've heard about the white sheet? If somebody was in trouble they'd hang up a white sheet. In the old days when Hazel [*Werner*] was out there, and Ray Wells would tell you, if you needed something be it sugar or help, you would do a white sheet. I don't know if it was sugar, but I know it was at least help. That was one of their little traditions that they passed down to each other.

Sometimes if I was home in my shack – our shack – I would hang out one of my sarongs and that meant that you could interrupt. That's a tradition within friends. You tell them, "OK, if the sheet is up you can come, if it's not, don't, that means I want to be alone." It's just a little respect.

Other shack residents confirmed Irene Briga's etiquette about signaling shacks with a shout or a whistle. Signaling with sheets between shacks appears to have been a practice for just a few shacks with friendly neighbors within eyeshot, like the Jackson, Werner, and Wells shacks. Doey Fearing and Laura Fowler used flags to send messages back and forth between the Fearing and Fowler shacks regarding their children, according to Marianne Benson. Briga adapted the practice using a sarong at her shack to inform friends walking the dunes as to whether or not she wanted company.

Peter Clemons, Marianne Benson, and David Thompson discussed privacy among shack residents. Even though their shack sat a few hundred paces from the Fowler shack, and they became very close friends with the Fowlers, the Clemons-Benson family did not go "back and forth all the time" between the two shacks:

Clemons: Dune dwellers basically respect the privacy. We're all out here to get away from the neighbors. Well, maybe not quite that severely. We were very respectful of the Fowlers. They were very respectful of us. You just don't appear. I can't think of any other dune resident coming like that. You know, Paul [Tasha] might come down once every two years.

Benson: It took us years to know them.

Clemons: What brought us together was primarily the age of the Fowlers. Occasionally they needed a little help with something. You have a hundred pound propane tank that you're dragging around, and they did it, they did it. But there were times when they might say, "If you're around could you give us a hand?" Or if there was something large that they needed to do.

Benson: Like putting up the shutters.

Thompson: You'll see more of an interaction with your neighbors when you're on the road coming in, at the gate. You'll have interactions with them. You catch up. Like the Armstrongs. They are the furthest ones away and being really friendly with them we'll

talk on the phone and pay a visit. But it's never an unannounced visit. You don't just show up, because that's just not what you do. You don't do that in the city. Even if you see somebody on the beach, they'll say, "Why don't you come over?" It's by sort of an informal invitation. It's like we all live on the same street, but the street's a really, really, long street.

Clemons: There's a word, the Greeks have a word, *xenos*, and that means friends and strangers – friend and stranger. We don't have a word like that in English that I know of.

We know they are our friends out there, but we kind of like the stranger part, too.

Benson: It's also what I think of as the west, the wild west – people get together for barn raisings and stuff like that, or if there's a problem.

Thompson: Or if there's a brush fire. Remember the fire?

Benson: And people really rally. But day-to-day, people really want to be on their own.

Thompson: Well, there's no way to communicate. There's no phone system. It's not like you're in town and you can call up and say, "Hey, do you want to come over for dinner?"

Benson: But we all came out of the woodwork when we heard that some dune shack committee was making all of these decisions about the dune shacks and none of the dune shack dwellers were invited or informed or anything. Everybody came out, all of the dune dwellers came out.

In this interchange among shack residents we see agreement that respecting privacy and solitude of neighbors is considered the norm, but there are situations when shack residents convene for joint action: to assist one another in large tasks, like moving propane bottles; to assist one another in emergencies, like a fire; or to engage in political action against perceived threats to the group. Under the norm of respecting privacy and solitude, it took the Clemons-Bensons years to get to know their neighbors, the Tashas, whom they now count as friends. Thompson characterized the neighborhood as living on "a long, long block," while Clemons characterized it as "friend and stranger," or *xenos*, in the Greek meaning both a stranger/guest and a gracious host.

David Armstrong, a long-term shack resident, counted many personal friendships within dune shack society. He told a humorous story that illustrated the essential tension between both valued friends and solitude on the dunes:

I was talking with one dune dweller once many years ago, I can't remember which one it was, and I mentioned some other dune dweller to him. He said he didn't know him, hadn't heard of him. I said, "Well you know, he's really a nice fellow, you'd like him." And he said, "Well, all the people out here are pretty nice, and I don't see much of any of them, and that's why I love to be here."

It is far from correct to characterize shack residents as a society of friendly strangers, however. It was not uncommon for neighboring shacks to become closely associated through friendships between residents. The Champlin and Adams shacks were linked in this fashion. Both families bought and renovated adjoining shacks together, spending summers as close neighbors for years. A well-worn path connected the two shacks. The Adams and Champlins said they developed close friendships with Leo Fleurant in his nearby shack, before he died. Stan and Laura Fowler built their shack in the central cluster in order to live next to the shack of their close friends, Al and Doey Fearing. Other pairs of closely associated shacks have included the Fowler and Bessay shacks, Fuller-Bessay and Armstrong shacks (Bessay introduced the Armstrongs to the dunes), the Schuster and Schnell-Del Deo shacks (in recent years, Lawrence Schuster and Salvatore Del Deo have partnered to make wine with California grapes), the Wells and Werner shacks (they used to signal one another with sheets), and the Wells and Jackson shacks (Ray Wells and Zara Jackson are half sisters). There is also a close familial link between

the Werner shacks (managed by Peaked Hill Trust) and the Isaacson-Schechter shack, because Lauriee Schechter (of the Isaacson-Schechter shack) is the sister of Julie Schechter, a leader in the trust. The Armstrongs, residents of the eastern-most shack since 1948, said they were personal friends with a number of other dune dwellers, including Andy Fuller, Grace Bessay, Charlie Schmid, Peg Watson, Jan Gelb, the Champlins, and the Adams, all of whom they visited. Some of these were geographic neighbors, but others were not. With these types of linkages, it is not a case of “friendly strangers.” The friendly interactions are among people who know one another well over the years, but see each other occasionally during a year.

Lawrence Schuster, currently the one year-round resident on the dunes, characterized shack society as “a pretty loose community.” Like others I interviewed, he said shack residents respected each other’s privacy and solitude. They visited only occasionally. He said people got together for meals or shared work “plenty of times,” but these were usually arranged in advance. He felt he could “pop by and visit” his neighbors, Gary Isaacson and Lauriee Schechter, for instance, but this was usually not the practice. For shacks like Thalassa, managed with a weekly lottery under the Peaked Hill Trust, there would be different people week by week, so a shack resident normally wouldn’t visit there. He gave examples of appropriate and inappropriate visits. He said he had absolutely no problem coming home from work on the whale watch boat to find a note on the table from a friend saying they stopped by and used the shack while he was gone. But he was very unhappy with a winter visit by a couple of young adults he didn’t know. They knocked on his door, so to answer, he ripped open the seals of thermal plastic and asked, “What do you need? Are you cold? Do you need help?” They said, “Oh, we were just wondering who might live here.” This was an example of an inappropriate visit, he said. Schuster said he loved to cook, and told a winter story of thawing out venison steaks, cooking them up with eggs (from “Sal’s chickens”), coffee, and juice, the snow just starting to come down in gobs, and hearing a knock on his shack door. A friend who was taking his Malamute out for a run on the dunes stood at his doorstep. “You sure know your timing,” Schuster said, inviting him in for a bite to eat, having a great time. In this set of examples, friends are given dispensation for unannounced visits (and are even welcomed), while strangers are not, unless they are in need.

I observed examples of Lawrence Schuster visiting two other shacks the day I was at his shack for an interview. After our interview, Schuster drove his jeep over to the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack to pick up a couple who had stayed the night, one of whom was his work associate on the whale watch boats. The two had been lent a night at the shack by another couple who had won a week’s time through the shack lottery, but who did not use the last night. Schuster had offered to give them a ride into town. We pulled up to the shack and they piled into the jeep. That same afternoon, Schuster received a call from his daughter about a pair of sunglasses left in the Isaacson-Schechter shack. So on the drive back into town he made an additional stop at that shack, quickly going inside and coming out with the missing sunglasses. From my observation, the two visits were done without any reticence or “yoo-hooing,” illustrating that Schuster was confident visiting the shacks of friends, either prearranged (as with the pickup of people he knew) or unplanned (as with the sunglasses). It also illustrated what Schuster himself reported, that he knew the twelve shacks “within walking distance” of his own shack very well. For him, the central cluster of shacks was a familiar neighborhood. He quickly named them one by one for me, counting them on his fingers (he referred to the Schnell-Del Deo shack as “Sal’s place,” after his fellow winemaker, Salvatore Del Deo). But Schuster said he did not know the shacks “beyond Malicoat,” that is, in the north cluster accessed by a different jeep path. So it is not likely that he would visit these shacks in the same fashion.

As shown above, Genevieve Martin identified solitude as a valued attribute of dune shack living. In our interview, she affirmed that shack etiquette attempted to preserve the solitude of

shack dwellers. However, she also affirmed that for her the beauty of shack life was a balance of solitude in nature, and visits with other shack friends. It seems to me that Martin's characterization is an accurate description of the pattern that I observed within dune shack society, one that blended solitude and sociability among friends:

Martin: Well, one thing that I wanted to tell you, it is the tradition of the dune shackers to be un-traditionalist. We are not traditionalist, which means we don't hang out together.

Wolfe: You're saying "un – traditionalist."

Martin: Yes. That's the tradition – it's to be un-traditionalist.

Wolfe: Unconventional.

Martin: Yes, unconventional. That's the tradition. It's people who are not going to fit every image of the regular nine-to-five kind of thing. Or if they do, at least it's that time [on the dunes] to let it go. And I never hang out [with them]. I hang out with Peaked Hill Trust people because you sweat together, that makes you friends. But uh, I never hang out with Paul Tasha, ever. I mean, this was the first time, I think, that Paul actually talked to me for half an hour – it's never happened and I've known him twenty-five years. The Fowlers and I became friends, but you know it's not like everyday we would visit. And all the other people, let me think. Well, now I know Scott and Marsha [Dunn], and Laurie [Schecter] and Gary [Isaacson] because she's the sister of Julie Schecter. Um, but usually the people at the shacks don't mix very much.

Wolfe: The shack people are individualists?

Martin: Yeah, very. You would not dare to go visit, even me. When I have people to take out [to the Peaked Hill shacks], they have to tell me, "If you want to come by, it's OK." But even then I might not come by.

Wolfe: The custom out there is to allow people to have their solitude?

Martin: Yep, you want to respect their solitude, completely.

Wolfe: So, who made those rules? How do you learn those rules?

Martin: That's not "a rule." This is shack stuff. We know that. I always tell people, "Don't go to anybody else's [shack] unless you've been invited, unless you have an emergency, of course." So, if you meet them on the beach and they say, "Come and have a drink tonight for sunset," you go. But otherwise, you don't usually show up. You really don't.

But also what's nice, is like when I stay [at the shack] I never lock my door, and I went for a long walk, and came back and I had two friends with cheese and wine. Those are the shack people. I don't need to be there [for them to come in]. They already know, it's home. I am not surprised when they are there. It's like – great. And I like that. No phone. If they come, they come. If they don't come, they don't come. You have to let go of all those things that you plan.

Wolfe: Some people would be frightened of solitude, going out there by themselves, and they would say this is not where I want to be.

Martin: But you know it's interesting, I was reading the Peaked Hill Trust book, and Josephine Del Deo had visited Dune Charlie, Charlie Schmid, at his shack. They asked him, "Don't you feel lonely?" He said, "Lonely? I never feel lonely. I don't have time to feel lonely." And when I'm out there, I never, ever feel lonely. You have friends dropping by from town. And once in a great while we'll come over to visit my ex husband who lives next door to Thalassa. But um, no. I'm very happy. I love rainy days when nobody comes. And I love it when my friends come. It's this nice balance between having a lot of people or some people and no one. I'm a real early riser, especially at Thalassa in June when the sun rises, it's right on your face. So at five I can

be up and going. I have my spots where you have to go early because it gets too hot if you go late. And nobody's there, guaranteed. You don't see anybody.

I believe it is the balanced blending of solitude and sociability with friends and relatives at the shacks that is the ideal value within dune shack society. The shacks are used by residents for opportunities to be alone with nature and one's thoughts. But also, the shacks are used as centers for small gatherings of like-minded friends and relatives, for creative exchanges, for celebrations, and for simply being together. Each shack, or pair of closely-tied shacks, operated in much this fashion, independent of the other shacks, respectful of the other shack residents' privacy.

### Gatherings at Shacks

While it may seem to contradict the high value placed on solitude, the dune shacks commonly served as sites for gatherings, especially among members of extended families, members of the art colony on the lower cape, and of like-minded friends. Several dune shacks served as symbolic centers for extended families. They were places that drew members together year after year. They were places held in common by members using it individually over time. This was true for the Champlin shack, the two Adams shacks, the Armstrong shack, the Tasha shack, the Clemons-Benson shack, the Malicoat shack, and the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack. For children growing up living on the dunes during summers, the shack was considered the extended family's principal home, a constant in space and time even though family members pursued education and employment in a series of places at other times. For these families, the close association of the dune shack and the family line meant that threats to the shack were perceived as direct threats to the integrity of the family itself.

A shack's significance as a symbolic center is demonstrated by its choice for public rites of passage within families, particularly marriages and funerals. In many cases, shack residents have chosen to be married, memorialized, and laid to rest on the dunes near the family's shack, rituals commonly conducted by Americans in religious settings. The dunes and shacks filled this purpose. Funerals are discussed in a later chapter, but weddings and parties are illustrated below.

As examples, three weddings in the Champlin family took place at the Champlin shack, including Maia Champlin, Paul Champlin, and Andrea Champlin, and Mildred and Nat Champlin celebrated a 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary there. Andrea Champlin, explaining her choice of sites, said, "I wanted to be married on the sand dune next to the house because it was the most meaningful place on earth, and because of the incredible beauty, and because there are people here that I cared about and wanted to have present." In describing his choice of places, Paul Champlin said he married a "beach buggy girl" whom he met "over a pile of dead fish" on the beach when he was eleven years old. He always assumed that the dune shack was where they would be married:

Paul Champlin: It seemed that everybody, her family and my family, and just everybody we knew, or the majority of the people we knew, knew the house, knew what the place was like, they knew how to get here. Everybody liked it. It was just sort of the natural place to go to start the rest of our lives together. Of course we'd already spent fifteen years together. We've known each other a hell of a long time.

Andrea: It says something about the importance of this place, because the logistics of getting the guests, the food, out to the beach, are not trivial. You saw how you have to get out, so you can imagine getting 80 people out here. Sometime you have to camp out. So it was a commitment.

Paul: And on the day of the wedding, the water pump went out. Everybody made do. What a snafu! We had a nor'easter for the four days before the wedding. Even the evening of the wedding it was raining and we were lying in our beds saying, "This is a disaster." We don't want to get married with 80 people jammed in here. The other alternative was that we had put a deposit at the VFW, just in case, and we didn't want to do that. And we woke up and it was a nicer day than today. It was spectacular. And the next, the day after the wedding, we went on a sunset whale watch and as we were coming in there was another nor'easter for the next four days. It was just perfect timing. It was the 19<sup>th</sup> of August. August can be nasty. We can get really disgusting days. It'll be 65 degrees and rainy and northwest winds blowing in 25 to 30 miles an hour, really miserable – good reading days, all day.

Shacks commonly were centers for small parties. During Prohibition, some shacks were used for drinking. Fishermen sometimes partied on the Backshore while surf casting, using the shacks as bases. Kathie Meads, a Provincetown resident and shack user, retold a story she heard about a party held by Eugene O'Neill, now part of the local lore:

Joseph Nunes was the man who had the first beach taxi. He talked about coming across the dunes and coming upon Eugene O'Neill and one of his parties. They were having a beach party or something. He had all these schoolteachers from Boston in his beach buggy. So he thought, 'Well, this will be great. We'll go over and say hello to Eugene O'Neill, and they'll think this was the best thing that ever happened.' So, they start going across the dunes. When they start getting closer they realize that it's a nudist party. So now the teachers, the old maids from Boston, are like, "Oh my god!" And Eugene O'Neill is yelling to Joseph Nunes, "Joe! You can stop by anytime. But you're really cramping my parties bringing your dune tours over here! Don't bring the dune tours by anymore!" *[Laughter.]*

Historically, the largest and most famous parties were those held by Harry Kemp and Boris Margo at the first full moon of August. The mid-summer revelries drew substantial numbers from the art colony in Provincetown, as described by Julie Schecter, who learned about them from stories and old photographs:

They did something that was part of dune lore. This is something that was before my time. Every summer Boris would build a sculpture from the driftwood that he would pick up off the dunes. He was a stunning artist, just amazing. I never saw one of these things. I wish I had. He would spend the whole summer building this thing. It was huge. And on the full moon of August, he'd have a party. The party would be a great community gathering. Lots of artists. Other people would come in. People would hike in and some people would roll in on their dune buggies. You could drive anywhere then. People would haul all over the dunes. It would be a lovely family event, until it got to be a bit late and the families would go home. Then the hard-core partiers would stay, I understand. They'd light off the bonfire, the sculpture, I was told that there were some really, really, wild parties. The Howling of the Moon, they would call it.

Family pictures from the first full moon parties are shown in a later chapter, with other descriptions from the Zimiles extended family.

Conrad Malicoat and Anne Lord regularly hosted a gathering at the Malicoat shack for artists and writers selected for summer residencies at the Provincetown art colony. It was a continuation of a tradition established by the family to help young artists, as described by Anne Lord:

One of the ways we share it every year is this. You've heard about the Fine Arts Work Center [in Provincetown]? It grew out of several people. One person, Hudson Walker, who was not an artist but a patron of the arts, was really concerned about what was going to happen in Provincetown. Could the young artists keep coming here? And if they didn't keep coming here, what would happen to the legacy of the artists? He met with Conrad's dad [Phil Malicoat] and other people and brainstormed. They came up with the Fine Arts Work Center in about 1967 or 1968. That was the very beginning of it. Conrad's dad was involved in it all that time and subsequently. The first winter, the first Fellows might have been artists who lived here all the time. But very quickly people came from other places.

So he started this tradition: in the fall, one of the first events for these young artists and writers coming to the Fine Arts Works Center was to come out there [to his shack] for a BBQ or a picnic and get introduced to the environment out there. Sometimes people come to town and they could be here for years and maybe never go out there, not realize what's there. So Phil always did that, and we've continued doing that every year. That's one more organized way of introducing a lot of people. The Fellows are there for one year. Some of them are there for two years. Many of them come back and go out there, or they tell us how significant it was as part of their Provincetown stay. And a lot of those people do stay to live in Provincetown. The idea of continuing a legacy through living here and being able to use the environment successfully – it's a very big cultural contribution.

Clearly, dune shacks served not simply as retreats for solitude. The dune shacks also served as focal points for periodic gatherings of significant segments of dune shack society. The group events at the shacks tended to be memorable, and frequently high-spirited. They channeled and released creative energy. They served to reinforce the integrity of shack families and the artist colony in Provincetown. Today, the large howling moon events have been replaced by more modest gatherings, but the tradition of gathering to celebrate on the Backshore continues to the present.

### Security

While dune shack families were relatively autonomous entities and accorded great privacy within shack society, shack residents were said to watch out for one another's shacks. "Dune residents help one another with their shacks," stated Lawrence Schuster, a full-time dune dweller. "They check on other people's shacks. People feel responsible for the other places."

Because of the Backshore's physical isolation, shack break-ins by vandals were a potential problem. Conrad Malicoat reported that this happened more during the 1950s and 1960s compared with today:

A lot of shacks would get broken into back then, the 50s and the 60s, which they don't do much now, which is interesting. You constantly had to patrol your shack because people would break in. But now it rarely happens. It probably does, but I don't hear about it. It hasn't happened to our place.

Salvatore Del Deo, a Provincetown resident with a shack in the central group, confirmed the difficulties during the 1960s. He said he used to check four or five shacks regularly, evicting uninvited users:

It's a wonder any of those cottages are still up, because of the 60s, during the hippie revolution. I used to go out almost every day and kick kids out. They'd be on pot, and they'd have a fire in the middle of the floor. They didn't care. They were not intentionally destructive, but they were out of it, you know. Everywhere. I used to go to four or five cottages and say, "You guys have to leave. Come on, get out." It was amazing.

David Armstrong said break-ins had been a problem for the family's shack in the eastern shack group from time to time from fishermen's kids, hikers, and outright thieves. His shack had fewer problems since being moved from the edge of the beach to an inland dune, and since the Seashore regulated vehicular traffic on the beach. He and Connie Armstrong discussed security:

David: We lock it when we leave. We close all the shutters. We've worked over the years to improve the shutters, particularly when we were in the old location [nearer the beach], when there were hoards of fishermen with their RVs there. They would often bring their young sons with them who had no interest in fishing. They'd go rampaging around the dunes, trying to break into any shack they could. So over the years we've tried to improve the security of our shutters to the point that, since our move here, there's only been one attempt to break in. There were a few chips of wood out of the front shutter. The main door downstairs was pried open. And then he finally got a shutter open, broke a window, and came on in. He didn't take anything. But he left a few things knocked off the bureau, left on the floor, and so on. Terrible glass scattered everywhere.

Connie: The bad thing was that a lot of weather came in between him leaving and us finding out.

David: Of course, it was wide open to the mice who ran all around the place. It was a terrible cleanup after that.

Connie: Even if we weren't working toward security, we have to secure these shutters very, very well for the wind. If it's improperly bolted from the inside, whoomp! The slam against the wall with the wind is terrific. They have to be secured anyway because the glass would be sandblasted, in such a short time, in twenty minutes it would become all opaque. We know.

David: In the old days we made the shutters out of boards we found on the beach. There would be little gaps here and there. You can see little lines of frosted glass where the gaps were. Etched.

As an indication of our concern for security, if we went out for a fairly long walk on the beach, we wouldn't lock the doors, we'd just close them. If we went into town for supplies, we'd lock one of the two locks and secure this door, but we'd leave all the shutters open. The only time when everything was really shuttered up was when a severe nor'easter was on the way and we wanted to protect things, or going away for weeks at a time.

The initial door we had at the old place was quite fragile. We have some fragments of it still. It was broken into quite a number of times, four or five times altogether, I would guess. One was somebody who left us a note saying that it was a heavy storm, he decided he could break the door open fairly readily, and he was hungry, so he had a can of tuna fish. He thanked us very much for the tuna fish and for the shelter. And he said he propped the door shut as well as he could when he left. That's the extreme on one side. Now the extreme on the other side was someone who broke in, and they didn't know you had to take the cap off the chimney. So they lit a fire in the fireplace, and there was white powder all over where they had used the fire extinguisher when the house was

filling with smoke. They left excrement in all the cooking pots. They had thrown things against the plaster wall. They left graffiti on the wall. It was pure destructiveness. In between those two was an interesting break-in. People apparently broke in because they had some place of their own that they wanted to furnish. They were quite discriminating. They took the nicest things. We had a brand new trashcan and that's apparently what they carried it off in. We had a lovely little Japanese tea set, they took that.

Connie: They took my paintings. And the Indian blankets.

David: And a great copper urn that we kept water in.

Connie: So we'd have running water in the kitchen sink. Restaurant-size, copper coffee urn with a beautiful brass faucet on it.

David: Years later in an antiques store in Maine we saw a copper urn, and I was pretty sure that some of those dents were exactly the same. *[Laughter.]* But since we've moved here we've only had the one break-in.

Like the one incident described by the Armstrongs, the Fuller-Bessay shack was severely vandalized once, according to Peter Clemons. The shack was broken into and everything smashed, pure destructiveness. The Adams shack once was threatened during the 1970s by a group of drunks, standing outside the shack and shouting, according to Marcia Adams. Paul Tasha, whose family shack maintained an open-door policy, said that his shack had been vandalized only once, a remarkable record considering its use:

We've only gotten vandalized once over the years. That's pretty good over all that many years. No doubt in my mind that it was some local kids. When I was a kid if anything got trashed or hell got raised, it was always somebody I knew. When this happened, it was probably some local teenagers.

Zara Jackson, whose shack was near the old coastguard station, said there was no problem with vandalism of her shack when the station was operating. Presumably, the presence of the lifesavers served as a deterrent. Soon after the station closed, vandals broke into her shack and "destroyed just about everything" purchased by her mother, Alice Malkin, at auction from the Woodend Lighthouse, including a captain's chair, tables, kitchen cabinet, glass-door closet, and iron stone pitchers.

Fire was a big concern for shack residents, by the negligence of uninvited users. Josephine Del Deo said long-term residents carefully regulated access to shacks to avoid catastrophic fires and to help protect the dune environment:

Regarding access to the shacks, the dune dwellers are very fussy about who uses the cottages and how, because they always worry about fire. They also worry about how their cottage is being used. It has to be someone who understands. It just isn't "open sesame" to anybody, like an overnight thing. It's very very important. The people who are allowed to go out there through these family connections, always had to have an understanding of the way the cottage functions, of the way the dunes function. You just didn't let people out there who were going to tramp over the tern nests, who don't appreciate the things, or who are careless. In the 60s, for instance, it was terrible. We had a lot of problems. The Ford cottage burned down, a cottage next to Frenchies', in the late 50s. It burned to the ground by careless use. Frenchie never forgot this.

In 1990, the Jackson shack burned to the ground, probably deliberate arson by a mentally-ill person who had broken in. Zara Jackson told me the story:

This was after my husband's death. He died in 1987. Our shack was being cared for by a friend of Ray's, Joyce Johnson. She was using the shack, living in Truro. She's a sculptor and a photographer. So Joyce would come in and out of Truro. She came out one day and there was this guy living here, squatting here. She knew him from Truro, a very eccentric fellow. She said that she wanted him out by the weekend. He could stay until then, but she wanted him out by the weekend because she was going to use it. She came out on Friday and there was nothing left of it. I think that this guy took refuge in a church or something. It was someplace where he was swinging from a chandelier. He was mentally ill.

Before the shack burned, the squatter had carefully removed the shack's new windows and laid them out on the sand, an indication that the fire was premeditated.

Because of these potential problems, shack residents said they watched out for one another's shacks from vandalism or damage from weather. There has never been a formal program for this, such as a "neighborhood watch" organization. However, on an informal basis, dune dwellers said they commonly kept a watch on their neighborhoods. Like the account of Salvatore Del Deo's above, I was told of a number of instances when dune residents directly confronted outsiders in order to protect a neighbor's shacks, or took action when wind or surf endangered a shack. According to some, the dune shacks would not have survived to the present day except for this common vigilance and intervention.

According to the Champlins, Leo Fleurant, a full-time dune resident from about 1963 until he died in 1984, watched the cottages in the western neighborhood for problems with weather or vandals. He documented shack impacts of the so-called "perfect storm" in 1978 with a camera given him by the Champlins. Laura and Stan Fowler were active watchers of shacks in the central neighborhood. Laura's zealous efforts earned her the name, "the Grouch," by the Tashas, or the "wicked witch" by others, as related by Marianne Benson and Peter Clemons, whose shack (the old Fearing shack) was watched by her. Their first shack experience, recounted in a later chapter, described how Laura Fowler ran out of her shack and shouted at them, "Get away from that shack! Get away from that shack!"

Benson: Laura Fowler was considered the "wicked witch of the dunes." She kept people away from that Fearing shack she loved, all of the shacks, but especially that one because they were her best friends. She wasn't going to let anyone tamper with those. She just kept her evil eye out. One point she was just shut down by the government. They said, "No more yelling at people, not with guns, anyway." [*Laughs.*] They had a very bad reputation. But they were really wonderful to us, really wonderful to us. They were just trying to protect the remaining [shacks]. And they did. I don't think they'd be there if they didn't.

Clemons: That's what I said about the 60s. They really had a rough time out here, the infamous druggies of the 1960s.

Benson: It was nuts.

I observed the aftermath of vandalism near the shacks during the research project. On a Sunday afternoon (August 8), driving out with the Clemons-Benson family to their shacks, I passed the nearby foundations of the old coast guard station. We discovered large, spray-painted, stylized graffiti covering the foundations, perhaps done earlier that morning. Peter Clemons and Marianne Benson were shocked. That had never happened before, they asserted. We walked into the foundation to look at the graffiti, in the main room and an adjoining alcove. They said it was like "desecrating" a hallowed place. They called the alcove "the Chapel" because they had held a

memorial service there for Grace Bessay in 1996. They would not speculate who might have defaced the foundations, local or non-local, youth or adult. Peter Clemons called the Seashore to report the vandalism. Official law enforcement in the dune district is performed by Park rangers. The closest rangers worked from an office near the Provinceland Visitor Center near the northwest entrance to the dunes. I was told by rangers that they patrolled the dune district periodically, but not every day. They patrolled the public beaches as well as the Backshore. As an example of enforcement, two youths were recently investigated and apprehended for ripping up dune grass, joy-riding with off-road vehicles.

Josephine Del Deo saw protecting shacks as a partnership between long-term residents and the Seashore. She credited the formation of the Seashore for improving the problems with break-ins since the 1960s:

In a sense, the Park has been marvelous for that. It has protected us from just stray people going across there and breaking in. We understand very well what a wonderful partnership this has been. But I can tell you, anybody who has a place out there, they may seem to be a little bit lax about use, but they're not. Even the Tashas, who are probably the most lax, they know very well who's going out there. Not just anybody goes out there.

As shown in her statement, Josephine Del Deo observed that a shared vigilance on the part of long-term shack residents and the Seashore had helped to keep the dune shacks protected.

### Mutual Assistance

Shack residents said they provided assistance to their neighbors in emergencies, and for large tasks. As shown above, Peter Clemons willingly assisted the Fowlers in hauling propane bottles and putting up shutters, difficult tasks for elderly residents. Helping with fires was mentioned above by some respondents. As an example, the Champlins and Adams were asked to help when the Malicoats' first shack burned to the ground:

Mildred Champlin: When Maia [Champlin] was little, Joe Oliver comes up, knocks at the door [of our shack]. This was in the morning. And he said, "Nat, I'm in trouble." We looked out and there's this huge conflagration, this huge glow to the east. Joe Oliver was a legend in town and the dunes. He ran what is now the Fine Arts Work Center in town, and he was out there with his girlfriend, Edna. They were staying in Phil's house while Phil Malicoat was in Greece. They had a fireplace. And he said, "I have a problem." So we got in the jeep and drove out there. We became 911. But once something is on fire there, you just watch it.

Nat Champlin: There wasn't much we could do, it was so hot.

Sally Adams: Bring out the marshmallows and the Kleenex.

The example shows that these neighboring shack users knew one another. Though the Champlins did not live year-round in Provincetown, they knew the local artist (Joe Oliver, and his girlfriend), who were using the Malicoats' shack, and Joe Oliver knew them. As neighbors, they were the emergency help ("911") in an area without phones to dial for assistance. They quickly went to their neighbor's aid. But in this case, there was nothing they could do but watch the shack burn.

David Armstrong encouraged his wife, Connie, to relate a story of aid provided by Charlie Schmid during a storm. The Armstrong shack was just to the east of the Schmid shack:

David: Perhaps you want to tell the story of the storm, when Charlie came down to rescue you and Janet.

Connie: Yeah. School was going to begin and Janet was going to go into second grade. So we had a week before school started. Dad had to go home on Sunday night. We stayed behind. What happened was a great storm hit this part of Massachusetts. Dad didn't even know what was happening. And Grace [Bessay] didn't know what was happening. Grace eventually turned up. But Charlie knew. He had come by earlier and knew that Janet and I were here alone. Charlie had a playwright visiting him. Up he comes in his jeep with Balzac, his dog. He said, "There you are. You shouldn't be here alone." He helped us put the shutters to. Then he took us up to his place. He gave Janet a great big glass of milk and a peanut butter sandwich. He and I and the other gentleman talked about the great plays we had seen. Meanwhile, this fierce storm was absolutely screaming around our ears. I was really grateful that we weren't having to sit it out alone.

David: There were no cell phones then. I didn't know anything about this until Friday night when I came down. They talked about this great storm. I said, "Storm? What storm?"

Knowing that Connie and Janet were alone, Schmid took the initiative to help them in the storm, including battening their shack and housing them.

Shack residents provided other examples of mutual assistance. When the old coast guard station burned, shack residents arrived to put out fire spreading into the dune grass. When the 1978 storm threatened the shacks in the northern cluster, David Adams received a telephone call from Leo Fleurant that the Champlin shack was hanging over the edge. A local contractor, Pinky Silva and his crew, saved the shack by dragging it away from the eroding bank. The shack residents paid taxes to Provincetown each year. According to Nat Champlin, the taxes covered fire and police, but "no fire department can come out to help us, no police will come out here." Given the lack of services, shack residents said they were ready to help one another in emergencies.

Another form of mutual assistance was joint political action. As described in the historic chapter, dune shack residents on occasion have banded together in efforts to preserve the dunes and the dune shacks against perceived threats. When the dunes or dune shacks have appeared threatened, people turn out. The earliest effort was the Emergency Committee for the Preservation of the Province Land, a grassroots organization lobbying for the creation of a national seashore that included all of the Province Lands. Another effort was the formation of the Great Beach Cottage Owner's Association to challenge the dispossession and destruction of dune shacks. Another was the effort spearheaded by the Peaked Hill Trust to recognize the historic significance of the dune shacks. As described previously, these efforts mobilized a relatively large proportion of dune shack heads, as well as substantial numbers of dune shack users.

## Transference of Shacks

Historically, dune shacks changed hands. Ownerships for particular shacks on occasion transferred between people. This section describes these practices, summarizing information provided to me by dune shack residents. It identifies customary patterns in the transference of dune shacks.

Dune shacks commonly transferred between close kin, typically at the death of a shack head. This may be the most frequent pattern for transferring dune shacks when an extended family used a shack. A common practice was for shacks to stay with a spouse (or partner) at the death of a shack head. There have been numerous cases of this. When Jan Gelb died, the shack stayed with Boris Margo, her husband. When Andrew Fuller died, the shack stayed with Grace Bessay, his partner. When Stanley Fowler died, the shack stayed with Laura Fowler, his wife. When Irving Ofsevit died, the shack stayed with Zara Jackson, his wife. When Nick Wells died, the shack stayed with Ray Wells, his wife. When Randolph Jones died, the shack stayed with Anabelle Jones, his wife. When Herman Tasha died, the shack stayed with Sunny Tasha, his wife. In two of these cases (Zara Jackson and Ray Wells), the shack was owned by the surviving spouse prior to the marriage. In two other cases, the surviving spouse was said to be the primary shack user prior to the death: the Tasha shack was primarily Sunny Tasha's and not Herman Tasha's, and the Gelb-Margo shack was primarily Jan Gelb's while her husband resided in town. Given these types of differences among cases, it may not be entirely accurate to say the shacks were joint holdings of spouses or partners, but practically, this was the outcome after the death of a spouse or partner in these cases. The shack remained with the surviving spouse or partner.

A second common practice was for shacks to stay with children or other close kin at the death of a shack head, if the deceased shack head had no surviving spouse or partner. There have been several examples of this. When Alice Malkin died, the shack passed to Zara Malkin (Jackson), her daughter. When Sunny Tasha died, the shack passed to her children, Carla, Carl, Paul, and Paula. When Philip Malicoat died, the shack passed to Anne and Conrad Malicoat, his children; and later, when Anne died, the shack stayed with Conrad. When Jeanne Chanel (Frenchie) died, the shack went to Adrienne Schnell (Schatzi), her daughter (and also two friends, the Del Deos, described below). Boris Margo, who had no children, willed his shack to Murray Zimiles, a nephew he raised like a son. There might be more examples of parent-to-child transfers except that the heads of several shacks have been long lived, including David and Marcia Adams, David and Connie Armstrong, Nathaniel and Mildred Champlin, and Zara Jackson. In interviews with me, all indicated a preference for their shack to stay within their family, handed on to children.

In the near term for some shacks, particular reservations of use have allowed these types of transfers. Certain shack reservations were negotiated to allow for a shack to remain within a family group for the period of the reservation, the shack's use staying with designated spouses or children at the death of shack heads. In other cases, reservations or leases have not supported the customary practice. Most shack residents I interviewed were concerned that in the longer term, as reservations of use come to term, that shacks might be lost to families, breaking the customary practice of shack transfers and terminating the uses by extended families groups who form the core of dune shack society and culture.

Historically, certain shacks were transferred through bequests to persons other than close kin. By bequests, I mean that shack heads directed that the shack go to a particular person (or organization) without a sale. In these cases where the shack was bestowed to someone other than close kin, the person given the shack was someone especially close to the shack head, such as a

long-time personal friend or a kindred spirit. There have been several examples of this. Harry Kemp gave his shack to Sunny Tasha, who was a close friend, recounted in the tale of Harry's death elsewhere in this report. In this case, there was also an element of reciprocity, as Sunny Tasha had built a winter cottage for Kemp in Provincetown. Another example is Grace Bessay giving her shack to Peter Clemons and Marianne Benson. In this instance, the Clemons-Benson family had become extremely close friends with the Fuller-Bessay family, with Andy Fuller becoming the godfather and namesake of the Clemons-Benson's second son (a quasi-kinship link). Peter Clemons described the development of this friendship and its connection with the shack:

Andy Fuller was our original contact with the dunes. He brought Marianne and I out here in the early 1970s. Andy Fuller's relationship to the dunes was largely centered around Truro. There were two shacks he had [in the southern neighborhood]. One was called Joe Oliver's, and the other was a cement shack that he had purchased. He and Grace were very close friends of the Armstrongs, quite a ways from here. This cottage he purchased from the Fearings because they wanted to sell. The Fearings wanted to leave and Andy thought that he could save it. This was all during the Seashore coming in. Andy's goal was to protect it. All during this period he and his partner, Grace Bessay, were both taking care of their parents. Even though they themselves were pretty elderly, their parents were in their 90s. Taking care of elderly parents, he hadn't been out here for a couple of years. That's where we came in. He used us, saying, "OK, guys, why don't you treat this place as if it's yours? You can be my caretakers." We also became his way of getting here. He didn't drive at that point. And Grace was taking care of this 95-year-old parent of hers. We became part of the family. It was very much that they needed us and we needed them.

The caretaking of the shack began in the early 1970s. When Fuller died, the shack passed to Bessay, who resided in it with the Clemons-Benson family. When Bessay died, she passed it to the Clemons-Benson. In a similar fashion, Stan and Laura Fowler charged the Clemons-Benson with caretaking the Fowler shack. This also developed from close friendships, as described by Peter Clemons and Marianne Benson:

Clemons: Traditionally, the Fowlers were in one shack, and we and Grace were in the other. The Fowlers had become more than neighbors, they were our friends. They left in 1991. They were 81 years old. They had been spending summers in Provincetown and driving to Florida for the winter.

Benson: Stan needed Florida for his health at some point.

Clemons: So when they had to make the break from this place it was a major decision, 80 years old, knowing that you're about to leave the place that you built, that you love.

Benson: They couldn't do anything with it. They couldn't get anything for it.

Clemons: It had been taken by the government. They didn't get any money for it. They weren't allowed to rent it. They had a choice of abandoning it. But they came to us and they said, "Would you please take care of it for us?" "You're serious?" we said. "Yeah, we'd like you to have it." We said, "Know that if you decide to come back, it's yours. We'll take care of it for you." Well, fifteen years later, we're still taking care of it for them. They did not want it used by transients. They did not want it to be used by weekly visitors. They didn't want to turn it over to a lottery-based system. It was their home. They could not imagine strangers here. They knew us, and they had taught us everything we needed to know in a sense [about dune living]. They trusted us and our friendship. So they basically gave us what they had. And we've tried to help them out for fifteen years now, maintaining it, putting a roof on it...

Benson: Sending them pictures, writing, visiting.

Clemons. Eventually, Stan died. He had wicker Alzheimer's. She took care of him in Florida. She had a rough time. Imagine taking care of someone with Alzheimer's. But she's fine, sharp as a tack. She's 95 years old. But she has never been back to the shack.

Another example of a friendship transfer is the Schnell-Del Deo shack. Jeanne Chanel (Frenchie) bequeathed her shack to her close friends, Salvatore and Josephine Del Deo, as well as to Adrienne Schnell, her daughter, as described by Josephine Del Deo (1986):

Frenchie was, of course, a painter in her own right, a naïf whose work has found its way into many private collections as well as the permanent collection of the Town of Provincetown. My husband, Salvatore Del Deo, first visited Frenchie in 1948, and my own acquaintance with her dates from our meeting in 1953. Salvatore and I were married in 1953, and date our occupancy of Frenchie's cottage from that year to the present. We have been living at the cottage seasonally, year in and year out when weather and time permits for thirty-three years. Adrienne Schnell, Frenchie's daughter, at one time a professional singer and entertainer, generously accorded us this continuing privilege after her mother's death in 1983. Prior to the creation of the National Seashore Park, Frenchie had several times drawn up legal papers which would have allowed us to share ownership after her death with her daughter and, although these papers were never officially recorded, they indicate a trust in our care of the dune cottage. Our maintenance of the dune cottage has been continuous for thirty-three years. (Del Deo 1986).

Another case like this was Eunice Braaten, who chose Lawrence Schuster to continue her legacy in the dunes. According to Schuster, Eunice Eddy Braaten of Connecticut, part of the Mary Baker Eddy clan, bought the shack in 1934 for seventy-five dollars, perhaps from P. C. Cook and Joe Medeiros, two coastguards who originally built it in 1931 (Del Deo 1986). Her husband, Theodore Braaten, "never much liked the place" and came only occasionally. She and her two boys came to the shack to spend summers, especially when the boys were young. Schuster was introduced to the dune district through Genevieve Martin, who took care of Hazel Werner during her declining years. During that period, Schuster and Martin frequently stayed in one of the Werner shacks during summer, usually Thalassa. When they separated, he looked around for another shack to live in. He went to visit his daughter at the Thalassa shack and noticed the Braaten shack was empty. He got the names of the owners from Werner, contacted Theodore Braaten, and offered to take care of the shack for a chance to live in it. Theodore Braaten "didn't want to hear about it," said Schuster. Calling a second time, Schuster got Eunice Braaten who said it was her shack, not her husband's. She was outraged that her husband had anything to decide about her shack. According to Schuster, she was feisty, a "real pip." When young, she was a cub newspaper reporter out of Radcliffe who had made a number of scoops during her career. "They finally took away her jeep in her nineties," said Schuster. She agreed to Schuster's proposition after talking it over with David Braaten, her younger son, who liked to go to the shack only occasionally. Her older son had no interest in the shack any longer, she said. The arrangement was that David could come one week in August. This happened for a couple of years, him coming with his own son. Eunice Braaten and Schuster corresponded for many years, sharing books and other things, developing a warm friendship. She told him, "You'll be my spirit in the dunes." The correspondence eventually ended when her mind began to fail. She died in 1996 at the age of 98 years. Theodore Braaten died at the age of 102 ½ years. By this time, David Braaten was in his seventies and no longer involved with the shack, nor were his own children. After Theodore's death, Schuster negotiated a use permit with the Seashore for his continued residence in the shack, where he had been living full time. He pointed out that there had always been at least one full-time resident out on the dunes, previous examples being Charlie

Schmid and Leo Fleurant. Schuster stated that he had been living in the Braaten shack for twenty-two years.

Historically, many shacks changed hands through sales. There have been numerous examples of these kinds of transfers: Charles Rogers to Alice Malkin (1926), coastguards P.C. Cook and Joe Medeiros to Eunice Braaten (1934), Frank Henderson to Harry Kemp (1935 or 1936, but Kemp never paid for it according to some oral traditions), Raymond Brown to Al Fearing (1930s), Eddie Nunes to Howard Lewis (1952 or 1953), Jake Loring to David and Marcia Adams (1953), Dominic Avila to Nathaniel and Mildred Champlin (1953), Howard Lewis to Leo Fleurant (1963), and Al and Doey Fearing to Stanley Fuller (1960s). Others who bought their dune quarters include Eugene O'Neill (his father bought the old coast guard station), Hazel Hawthorne Werner, Al and Doey Fearing, and Charlie Schmid.

In three cases, I heard explanations as to why particular shacks were sold rather than bequeathed to family members or close friends. According to the Adams, the Lorings' one child had died. They had no direct descendents for their shack when they sold it to them. According to the Champlins, the Avilas had no children. Dominic Avila was working away from Provincetown in Boston. His wife in Provincetown did not like to use the primitive dune shack. His shack had deteriorated so much that he was just selling it for scrap. He was pleasantly surprised to discover that the Champlins intended to live in it and helped them renovate the shack the first year. According to Zara Jackson, Charles Rogers was in some sort of legal trouble in Provincetown when he sold the shack to Alice Malkin, her mother.

As stated in the history chapter, some of the first shacks around the coast guard station were constructed by the coastguards for use by visitors from Provincetown. Shack conditions were primitive, and to some Provincetown residents, unappealing. During this early period, the rough shacks may not have been viewed as significant family assets to bequeath. The rentals and sales of the shacks to seasonal artists during the early historic period by the coastguards might have been simply to derive some returns on shacks that had limited utility to family members as dwellings. Later, with the improvement of many shacks into more habitable seasonal abodes, the pattern of passing them to family members became more firmly established. Still, shacks continued to be sold even into the 1960s. Since the mid 1960s, shacks have not been sold. The sale of shacks has not been part of the Park's program of leases and reservations.

## Chapter 6. Cultural Patterns in the Landscape

This chapter continues the description of cultural patterns of dune shack residents, a subject begun in the previous chapter. It examines cultural practices as reflected in the dune landscape. By living on the dunes, long-term shack residents commonly gained familiarity with their surroundings. They became acquainted with places on the dunes with notable qualities or particular uses. The dune district comprised a cultural landscape for dune dwellers, an area filled with significant sites. This chapter describes this landscape. The chapter examines geographic information using maps produced with long-term residents. It identifies kinds of sites with significance to dune dwellers. And it examines how patterns of sites reflect cultural practices of dune dwellers.

### Water Spots and Culturally-Significant Sites

A “water spot” is a kind of culturally-significant site on the dunes. I learned about water spots from Paul Tasha when he took me out hiking, my first excursion guided by a long-term dune dweller. He said we didn’t need to bring water because the dunes had plenty of water if you knew where to dig. As children, they never carried water. The first thing Sunny Tasha did when they reached the shack was send the kids out to dig for it. It gave her a break from her charges, Paul chuckled. So he’d learned of water spots as a child.

Coming to a particular place along our trail, Paul Tasha demonstrated. Getting down on one knee in a dry sandy spot, he began digging into the sand with his hand:

Tasha: Now here’s one of my old water holes. It’s low now, but you could dig here and get good water to drink. I don’t know how far it would be right now, but probably pretty far because I know that the water table is wicked low, but... [He begins digging.]

Wolfe: Why do you say this is your watering hole? Is there a spring here?

Tasha: It’s the water table. It’s ground water. Usually by now you’re hitting water. The water table is way down.

Wolfe: This is fresh water, not brackish?

Tasha: Ah, this is good fresh water. Look, it’s starting to get wet... [Still digging, not yet to his elbow.] All through the dunes there were plenty of places where we used to do the same thing, to get water if we were out there walking. Ah, here we go... here we go... See the water? I mean the sand keeps dropping in and messing me up, but as I pull my hand up you can start to see water.

Wolfe: Ah, I do. So, how do you get it out of the bottom?

Tasha: You have to wait until it seeps enough, and then set your hand in like this, let it leak through your fingers and clamp it tight, and pull out a handful. I’d have to dig a little more sand out of the way if I was thirsty. Then you’ve got to let it settle a bit because I’ve got it all mucked up.

Wolfe: Is this the low point in this area?

Tasha: Yeah, in this little area this is about your lowest spot. [He reaches down and lifts out a handful of water and takes a drink.] And I’d go like that. Of course I’d wait, wait until that filtered out and settled. But you could get a good drink of water here. We had to do that in the dunes all the time.

Wolfe: You could drop a cup down there.

Tasha: Yeah, if you had one, but you didn’t need one though, really.

Wolfe: [Puts hand down and takes a sip.] It's got a little flavor. Iron, right?

Tasha: Yeah. If you'd let that set for a while, you'd get rid of a lot of that earthy flavor. You're getting a lot of earth with it.

Wolfe: That's not bad. There is a mineral to it.

Tasha: But that would settle out. It would be nice and clear.

Wolfe: Why is it that you'd have to rely on this going into the dunes? You didn't want to take your own water?

Tasha: You could but you didn't have to. There's plenty of water out there. Why carry it, if you could get it pretty much whenever you wanted it.

So Tasha introduced me to water spots, places close to the water table. When we mapped significant sites several days later, Tasha pointed out seven good water spots as examples, although he knew of many more (see Cultural Site Map No. 5, below).

The knowledge of particular places for water is an example of traditional ecological knowledge in a social group. This is knowledge about the natural systems learned by living on the land, transmitted across generations. Sunny Tasha taught her children particular places and sent them out to use them. Paul Tasha was teaching me too. I was far from adept at recognizing them. On a second hike through the dunes with Paul Tasha, he pointed out another instructor about water spots – coyotes. We were walking an old jeep trail. In its middle was a six-inch hole recently dug, filled with water. “Coyotes,” said Paul. He knelt, cleaned the basin's surface with his hand, and took a drink. So this coyote also dug watering holes, doing Paul's work. Nearby, the coyote left scat, partially dried by the sun. Paul picked it apart, saying, “Let's see what he's been eating.” It contained insects. This was how Paul developed ecological knowledge, through observation, close association, and dirty hands.

### Mapping Significant Sites

To document local knowledge of the dune landscape, I worked with key respondents to produce maps. The exercise was to document specific sites with significance to dune dwellers. As described in the first chapter, I huddled with dune shack residents over aerial photographs of the dunes. The residents marked the sites on transparent overlays. We gave each a number with its name or designation. The dune resident then described its significance. I call the places “cultural sites” because they are named places in a local knowledge system.

One example of a mapped site is shown in Fig. 24. This photograph, taken by me in August 2004, shows a small, wet, sandy depression and chunks of concrete. The tiny pool was near the ruined foundations of the coast guard station (the place is No. 45 on Tasha Map 5). Paul Tasha pointed out the place to me on our walk through the dunes toward the Tasha shack. On my own, I would not have perceived any significance to this small depression and its debris. But it was a significant site for him. According to Paul Tasha, it was a seasonally-flooded wetlands with wildlife worthy of protection:

This little wetland actually was created by the passage of vehicles. It didn't exist when I was a kid. When the sand was a little moist, the sand would stick to their tires. They'd carry the sand out. Eventually they brought it down low enough that there was a little wetland here. Every spring this will be full of two types of toads and peeper frogs. The peepers will be in here singing and the toads croaking, all that going on in the spring. In May you'd come and there'd be a real symphony here.

I took chunks of [concrete] blocks and dragged them over to stop people from driving through because in the spring this whole thing is loaded with tadpoles. They'd splash up the tadpoles, up onto the sand, and then they'd die. I hated to see it. It would piss me off, killing tadpoles, instead of driving through over there because it took a little more careful maneuvering. You can see the puddle there, see the stones, and you'll see on the other end more stones. I put the stones there.

A couple of times when the water hole was drying up and the egg clusters and tadpoles were going to die, we gathered them up and brought them home and put them in the fish tank. They'd hatch out and we'd take them out and let them go. We did that quite a few times. I know you're interfering with nature, but it's hard to just sit there and watch them drying up in the sun. So it turned out that there were not only peeper frogs, but at least two types of toads, maybe Fowlers toad or Eastern Spadefoots, or maybe one other type that's local. We thought they were all peepers at first, but we learned differently.

There was no way that a newcomer like me walking through the dunes could have discerned the significance of this site without help from a dune resident who knew about it. In August, it looked like a damp depression, not a productive wetland for frogs and toads. The stones looked like random rubble. The history of the formation of the site by dune taxi traffic was not knowable, nor were the activities of members of the Tasha family to protect its wildlife. A novice like me had to be taught how to see it. But once instructed, I understood its significance. It became a distinctive place, a piece of a larger, culturally-constituted landscape. In April 2005, I showed a picture of this spot at a preview of findings to invited dune shack residents. Two people at the session immediately recognized it. They approached me after the presentation to give me more information about it.

This information on cultural sites is summarized in five maps, five lists of sites, and five tables summarizing the sites. Maps 5 to 9 graphically depict the information gathered during five interviews from the following sources: Paul and Paula Tasha (Map 5, the Tasha shack), members of the Champlin and Adams families (Map 6, the Champlin shack and Adams shack), Zara and Sam Jackson (Map 7, the Jackson shack), Gary Isaacson and Laurie Schechter (Map 8, the Isaacson-Schechter shack), and members of the Armstrong family (Map 9, the Armstrong shack). Following each map are short descriptions of the significant places, summarizing information provided by shack residents, linked to the maps by their numbers. To assist in seeing general patterns, I categorized the sites into classes, such as "food gathering areas," "man-made features," "places with stories or events," and so forth, shown in five additional tables. Taken together, the maps, place descriptions, and category tables depict relationships between dune dwellers and the natural environment. They reflect life on the dunes and patterns of use.

Much might be said about cultural patterns from this body of information. But in this chapter, I focus on a few aspects of land use and knowledge: home ranges, food gathering sites, man-made features, sites of events, specialization of knowledge systems, and ecological knowledge.

## Home Ranges

Dune shack residents commonly have “home ranges” on the dunes, a geographic use pattern revealed by the maps of cultural sites. These are areas accessed from home bases used more regularly than other areas in the dune district. The home ranges differed across families, linked to their places of residency. Home ranges are revealed by the geographic clustering of place names, seen by comparing maps of different families. Most of the significant places identified by the Champlin-Adams (Map 6) clustered near their shacks in the western neighborhood. By contrast, most places identified by the Armstrongs (Map 9) clustered near their shack in the eastern neighborhood. In between, most places identified by the Jacksons (Map 7) clustered near their shack in the central neighborhood. The three clusters of significant places undoubtedly reflect the geographic areas of the dunes most commonly used by the families. The pattern represents localized geographic ranges around a home base. The places named by Isaacson and Schechter (Map 8) also clustered near their own shack, but their cluster of named places overlapped with the Jacksons’ cluster to the west (Map 7) and the Armstrongs’ cluster to the east (Map 9). The overlap was consistent with activities emanating from a home base, as the Isaacson-Schechter shack was located between the Jackson shack and the Armstrong shack. Activities spreading out from the Isaacson-Schechter shack resulted in overlaps in each direction with their neighbor’s use areas. Overall, the pattern of localized use areas around a home base was common to this set of dune dwellers.

Compared with the mapped places of these four shack families, significant places identified by Paul and Paula Tasha (Map 5) were distributed more widely across the dunes. The Tashas identified significant places throughout the dune district, with named places in the western, central, and eastern neighborhoods. This wider geographic spread of significant places also was consistent with a home range around a home base. In this case, the main home base was Tasha Hill in Provincetown, where Paul and Paula have lived for much of their lives. From this location, Paul and Paula have accessed the dunes from several routes on foot and horseback. By contrast, the dune shacks were the primary home bases on the dunes for the Adams, Champlins, Jacksons, and Armstrongs, all of whom had second homes away from Provincetown. Paul Tasha’s wider geographic range also reflects his use of the dunes for hunting and other food gathering activities, an historic pattern of some old Provincetown families. Paul Tasha’s active hunting, fishing, and gathering made him intimately acquainted with a wider area of the dunes compared with other shack residents.

## Food Gathering Sites

As shown by place names, foraging for wild foods was an activity of dune dwellers. Historically, the Backshore dunes were used for this purpose by families at Provincetown and Truro. Contemporary shack users continued in this tradition. A portion of cultural sites were places where dune dwellers harvested particular items.

The Tasha maps displayed the greatest number and variety of foraging locations (Map 5 and tables). With long roots in the Portuguese community at Provincetown, the Tasha family frequently used the dunes surrounding town for food gathering. For much of his life, Paul Tasha has been an active hunter of deer, birds, and small game, instructed by his father, and one of a cadre of local hunters. Ranging the dune district on horseback, Paul Tasha has acquired detailed knowledge of the local communities of plants and animals. In our interviews, he used a varied language identifying areas with wild foods. He identified twenty-five food gathering areas, including bogs, “holes” (fishing areas), marshes, oases, peninsulas, woods, hills, lakes, patches,

plateaus, ponds, and salt creeks. This list shows that the dunes are far from just sand, but a patchy landscape. My classification of wild foods he gathered by location included cranberries (eight sites), ducks (seven sites), deer (six sites), fish (five sites), other berries (four sites), rabbits (two sites), as well as clams, eels, nuts, and beach plums (one site each). The list of places and wild foods was partial, he explained, as there were many other places he and his family have used over time.

Other shack families listed food-gathering sites as well, although none as extensive as the Tasha family. The Champlin-Adams interview identified six food-gathering areas (including bogs, patches, a “rip,” and a valley) and four food types (blueberries, cranberries, fish, and water). The Armstrong interview identified seven food-gathering areas (patches, a bog, a hollow, and a sandbar) and seven food types (cranberries, beach plums, blueberries, fish, mushrooms, and shellfish). The Isaacson-Schecter interview identified three food-gathering areas (a bog and two “areas”) and four food types (cranberries, beach plums, blueberries, and mushrooms). The Jackson interview identified two food-gathering areas (a sandbar and a beach) and two food types (shellfish and fish). As with the Tasha case, these comprise partial counts of places and foods.

I judged that most dune shack families harvested wild foods for consumption as fresh products. Occasionally, more of a certain food item might be gathered requiring preservation by canning or freezing, but this was not the general practice at present. Historically, families in Provincetown harvested wild foods in larger amounts. Reportedly, some harvests of beach plums, cranberries, and bay berries were preserved or prepared into products for sale, the largest by volume being cranberries. However, this was no longer a common practice. Today, foraging for wild foods was a highly-valued activity that produced lower quantities of product. During interviews, some shack residents stated they were reluctant to disclose the locations of certain favorite food-gathering areas, for risk of exposing them to over-harvest by tourists or other dune users. The importance of traditional food gathering for the Tashas and their friends was conveyed in certain family stories, such as Sunny Tasha’s arrest for gathering beach plums, and Paul Tasha’s confrontation with enforcement officers over mushrooms. I heard the beach plum story from several sources outside the Tasha family, so apparently it is a story known fairly widely within dune shack society. A central message of these stories is that dune residents have struggled to preserve traditional ways of life, like gathering beach plums on the dunes. Another message is that wild foods are worth it.

### Man-Made Features

A number of sites identified during interviews were man-made features. These included features such as roads, shipwrecks, old coast guard buildings, sand mining pits, and shacks. These sites reveal that the memories of historic events sometimes become encoded in the local geography. When some places were named during interviews, it brought to mind a history associated with that place, commonly followed by a story. This was similar to the naming of shacks, described earlier, where shack names frequently triggered memories of former shack occupants, leading to a recounted event. So embedded in the physical landscape were stories of past occupancy and use. Looking at the landscape (or aerial photographs and maps of the landscape) brought to mind these places, peoples, and events. For very old sites, like a shipwreck, the names of the people involved in the incident might be lost, but the general event was remembered.

A few sites were associated with the activities of the coastguards on the Backshore – a watchtower, coal bin, boathouse, and several roads. For example, an old watchtower site was

identified by the Tashas and by Zara Jackson, along with short accounts of its history and what it looked like at points in time. Shipwreck sites were identified during the Tasha and Champlin-Adams interviews. As shown in the Tasha site descriptions, these were notable as sources of salvage. The Champlin-Adams interview identified underwater sites (an old torpedo and a ballast pile), as members of the Champlin family were scuba divers. Long-term residents frequently remembered the sites of demolished shacks or relocated shacks. For example, David and Connie Armstrong identified the locations of the shacks in the eastern group shown in Map No. 4. They provided information about their former occupants and histories. Old roads and access routes also were remembered, with stories linked to their historic uses. In the cultural landscapes within the cognitive maps of dune dwellers were repositories of historic people, places, and events.

### Sites of Events Without Man-Made Features

For some dune dwellers, the dunes contained locations of notable events that left no visible signs. Some sites identified through mapping were connected to events with significance to an individual or family. The Tasha family interview provided the largest number of sites (eight) that were significant principally because of an event that that happened there. Of these, six had to do with hunting, one with horses, and a third with turtles. The large number of hunting stories come in part from Paul Tasha's active hunting history on the dunes, and probably because Paul had found an audience, a cultural anthropologist who had worked with northern hunters. Other types of stories might have been related under different contexts. The Champlin-Adams interview identified two sites notable for events, a murder ("No Hands Valley") and finding a penny ("Penny Bowl"). A mortuary site was identified in the Armstrong interview (a place where human remains were placed).

Activities in the dune district other than food gathering also are evident in the significant places identified by dune dwellers. The Tasha interview identified places associated with riding horses, digging clay, and aesthetics. The Champlin-Adams interview identified camping areas used by fishermen. As stated above, they also identified scuba diving sites. The Isaacson-Schechter interview identified places associated with hiking (a regular walking circuit) and picnics. The Jackson interview identified places used for swimming, sunbathing, and tourism ("The Ant Hill," because the tourists snapping photographs looked like swarms of ants at a distance).

As stated above, naming a place commonly triggered the telling of a story. One example of this is the "creepy" story of "No Hands Valley," jointly told by Mildred and Nat Champlin, Maia Champlin Peck, and Marcia Adams during the mapping session:

Mildred Champlin: It's a creepy story, not just folklore. The way it started out was, Nat and I had this little jeep and we were coming from town. And here come the Douglasses, lickety-split for town. They stopped us on the road. They said, "We're going into town!" because... [she whispers]... their little girl had found a body in the bog. And the hands had been cut off. We can show you exactly where it was. You went by it when you came in.

Nat: The assumption was they cut the hands off so you couldn't get an ID on the body.

Mildred: Everyone looked horrified. They said, "We're going into town. We just found a body!" It was the little girl who was taking the dog out for a walk. At the time, the road wasn't there. This guy had apparently, maybe, enticed this woman there, because she was lying on a towel. And her hands were cut off. They never did find out who. This was an on-going mystery in town.

Marcia: The chief of police said that was the case of his lifetime and he hoped to solve it before he retired. They think it was a woman from Canada. They went by her dental work. They did the whole thing with the skull, putting clay over it, reworking her head. But nobody could recognize her. She was a redhead.

Nat: What a way to go.

Mildred: It's hard to think of him dragging this body through all that brush. So he must have enticed her there, laid the towel down, then did the deed and went. The night before the body was found, I was thinking, 'It's getting dark and Maia's not home from work yet, what are we going to do now?' So finally she shows up, and the next day they found the body. And I thought, 'She's been walking by that body for ten days.' It had been there for ten days.

Maia: Marcia may have found part of the hand, right?

Marcia: Oh, Tom found a bone out by the gate where we come in. That was this year. So we turned it in. They asked questions, where it came from, the whole thing. But it could have been a deer.

Mildred: We had this dummy's hand that we brought the next year. We stuck it in the dunes for you guys, so you could be all nervous. *[Laughter.]*

Mildred: Anyways, that's No Hands Valley. And it has an on-going history. Just a couple of years ago the television people came from Boston to do a story about the 25th anniversary or whatever it was of this whole incident. But they were in the wrong spot. The new chief took them to the wrong spot. Deliberately. I said to him, "You know, that wasn't the right spot." And he said, "I know."

When this story was finished, I noticed Mildred's young granddaughter staring off into space, eyes big like saucers. In this fashion, lore about the dunes gets transmitted to, and remembered by, the next generations.

### Natural Features Without Uses

Many sites identified in interviews were natural features not specifically associated with a use or event. Some were places of note because of special qualities, such as looks, size, quality of vegetation, animals, or other type of distinctiveness. The places named were varied, such as dune, forest, hill, mountain, pond, beach, salt marsh, bog, wood, blowout, notch, valley, vista, vegetation, and hollow, among others. An example is the Champlin-Adams Site No. 16, "Loaf of Bread," described as a "beautiful" dune formation near the middle of "The Great Desert" that used to resemble a "perfect loaf of bread, surrounded by nothing but sand." Another example is the Isaacson-Schechter Site No. 13, "Valley of the Orchids," described as a valley with orchids and blueberries. There were many others.

### Knowledge Systems: Specialization and Commonalities

Names of significant places on the dunes comprised a body of knowledge. As with most knowledge systems, some dune dwellers knew more than others about the dune district. Based on the interviews, I could see that some residents were very knowledgeable about natural features in areas they regularly frequented. Some were experts on the histories of particular shacks and people. Others knew the details of certain events. So knowledge within dune shack society showed considerable specialization. I learned about particular subjects if I asked certain people. By and large, among those I asked, most everyone could identify some places of significance within the dune system, from the youngest to oldest. But overall, older residents knew more

places than younger residents because of their longer personal associations with the dunes. Longer-term residents also had more knowledge about places on the dunes than shorter-term residents, particularly places with historic significance.

Some places were named by more than one respondent, commonly with variant names. For example, the jeep trail connecting shacks was called “Race Road” by Zara Jackson, recalling when it ran uninterrupted from High Head to Race Point. Paul Tasha called it the “Inner Route,” contrasting it with the “Outer Route” (the beach route) now closed seasonally by the Seashore to protect plovers. Gary Isaacson and Laurie Schecter called it the “Sand Road” or the “Fire Road.” Doubtless, many dune residents would recognize these variant names for the jeep trail, though some might not be familiar with some of the variants.

There were other examples. What the Champlin-Adams called “The Sand Pit” was called “Stark’s Pit” by Paul Tasha, who knew the owner of the commercial sand operation. What Paul Tasha called “Peaked Hill” was simply called “The Hill” by Zara Jackson. This was a large dune next to the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack that no longer existed. Paul Tasha identified a site he called “Charlies’ Model A,” and guided me to the site. The Armstrongs called this same site the “Ghost Ford,” asserting that it was a 1920 Model A Ford owned by Charlie Schmid. Both Tasha and the Armstrongs knew the site, the make of the wreck, and its owner. Paul Tasha and the Adams-Champlin both identified shipwreck sites that they believed might be the *HMS Somerset*. However, the sites were in different locations. No doubt each is a shipwreck site, but which ship it is appears uncertain. It’s not likely that they are both the same ship.

The site called the “Boathouse” by Paul Tasha and Zara Jackson was called the “Boat Station” by Isaacson and Schecter. The “Great Dune” of Zara Jackson was called the “Big Dune” by Isaacson and Schecter. These examples of variant names for places shows that names are part of oral traditions that are more varied and fluid than written records. At present, there is no standard set of place names. Like the naming of the dune shacks themselves, the names of places show personalized marks of the speakers.

The most named places collected in this study appear in one list, but not others. This suggests that significant places for one family commonly differed from significant places for other families. In part, the methodology employed in gathering the information may be responsible for some of these differences. The lists were spontaneous, made with no forewarning or preparation and without reference to a common list. If I had begun with a list of places and asked if a dune resident knew them, I may have documented a greater number of shared places. But even so, I could see that many places were probably known to segments of dune shack society because they were associated with a particular family’s home range on the dunes, or with personal or family histories. The special places might be known within one set of dune dwellers, but not another. For example, Paul Tasha identified several places associated with noteworthy hunting events. Paul Tasha said that hunting friends from Provincetown knew these places, having heard his stories, but the places likely would not be known outside this circle. As another example, the Clemons-Benson family called the inner chamber of the coast guard station foundation, “The Chapel,” because of Grace Bessay’s memorial service there. While most long-term dune residents undoubtedly knew the foundation site, and many knew of the memorial service, most would not call its inner chamber the “Chapel,” like the Clemons-Benson.

Because of the specialized character of the lists of places, it’s appropriate to describe them as representing a number of “cultural landscapes” contained within the dunes. Many places were known to segments of dune shack society, and a smaller set of places known to many dune residents. Because of this quality, to compile a relatively complete list of significant places on

the dunes would require doing mapping with a larger set of dune residents. The maps from the five families presented here is illustrative of patterns, but they do not completely catalog significant places.

### Ecological Knowledge

I was struck by the detailed ecological knowledge attached to particular places by long-term shack residents. The knowledge had been acquired over a period of years, at times passed down within segments of dune shack society. Much of the detail was historic, representing conditions of sand, vegetation, and water that no longer existed. It is correct to call this type of information “traditional” if it draws upon a historic memory within a group about the natural environment and it is transmitted over time between generations.

There were many examples of ecological knowledge in the site descriptions, particularly in the Tasha materials. One example is Tasha Site No. 21, the “Amphitheater,” described as follows:

A “strange, magical little spot” comprising a natural circular bowl in the dunes lined with bonsai trees. The trees are descendents of non-indigenous species planted in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The original plantings grow in rows, but at the amphitheater they have seeded and grown, very bonsai, spread out close to the ground, because the environment doesn’t suit the species of tree. There was one tree in the valley referred to as the Ponderosa Pine and another shaped like a lyre. There used to be a road allowing driving to the amphitheater.

In this description is found a wealth of information about this unusual place on the dunes above Provincetown. There is information about introduced tree species, when and how they came to be there, and why they grew so poorly in the location. There is information about changes in historic access to the area. And there is interesting cultural information that particular trees were named, and that the place is considered a “strange, magical little spot.”

Another example is Tasha Site No. 24, called “Oak Hill Behind Grassies,” described as follows:

A hill with oaks extending into the dunes next to an oasis. This is one of several places where deer, especially a smart buck, will try to stay in the cover as long as he can during the daylight hours, when hunters are out. In this spot, the deer feed in the oaks until sundown, and when it’s dark enough, they step out into the open and make way to the nearby oasis where there is more food. Deer then move up on the grassy plateau, where one finds a lot of buck fights for dominance. Does feed there and breed.

The description provides information on the ecology of deer in the dune district. The movement of bucks during day and night is identified related to ground cover (oaks, grassy plateaus, and peninsulas in the sand dunes) and security (avoidance of hunters). Several discrete areas are identified by their use by deer, including sleeping, feeding, breeding, and fighting for dominance.

A third example is Armstrong Site No. 8, called “Whale Area,” a section of ocean offshore from the Armstrong shack, described as follows:

An area for viewing whales in June and July, including Right, Humpback, and Finback whales, dolphins, seals, and nurse sharks. Janet Armstrong: “The seals have only been here since maybe the past eighteen years. Before that we never saw seals. Two or three times during the last month we have seen nurse sharks. Huge things. They are vegetarians with mouths like Volkswagens.”

The description provides information on the types of marine mammals observed by the family over time, including seasonality and historic trends.

Other examples of ecological knowledge were the dangerous areas on the dunes identified by Paul Tasha – quicksand areas (Tasha Sites No. 66 and 67) and hidden mud (Tasha Site No. 68). We passed by one of these areas walking on the dunes. The place triggered stories from Paul about his experiences with the place:

Do you see the base of this dune? Over there, where you see the edge of the cranberry bog and wetland? That’s a quicksand spot. After a hard rain, a good soaking two-day rain, the sand along that edge can become totally liquefied. I mean, it looks great and you walk on it – down you go! When I was sixteen, I almost lost my horse there.

The horse I was riding was Cimarron, actually my sister’s horse. There was just a skim of water on the surface, just damp. We’ve been through a million puddles and wet spots, so I didn’t think anything of it.

I kicked him in there and he tried to go. Whomp! Down we went. His whole rear end sunk up to the middle. His body was out of sight. He surged through some of it, but it was too late. Really, just his front legs and head were out. I thought I was going to lose him. But he touched hard ground down there, or he was able to slide up on his belly. We kept struggling and struggling. Finally, he got his rear end out and his front legs to some harder ground. It scared the hell out of me, I’ll tell you.

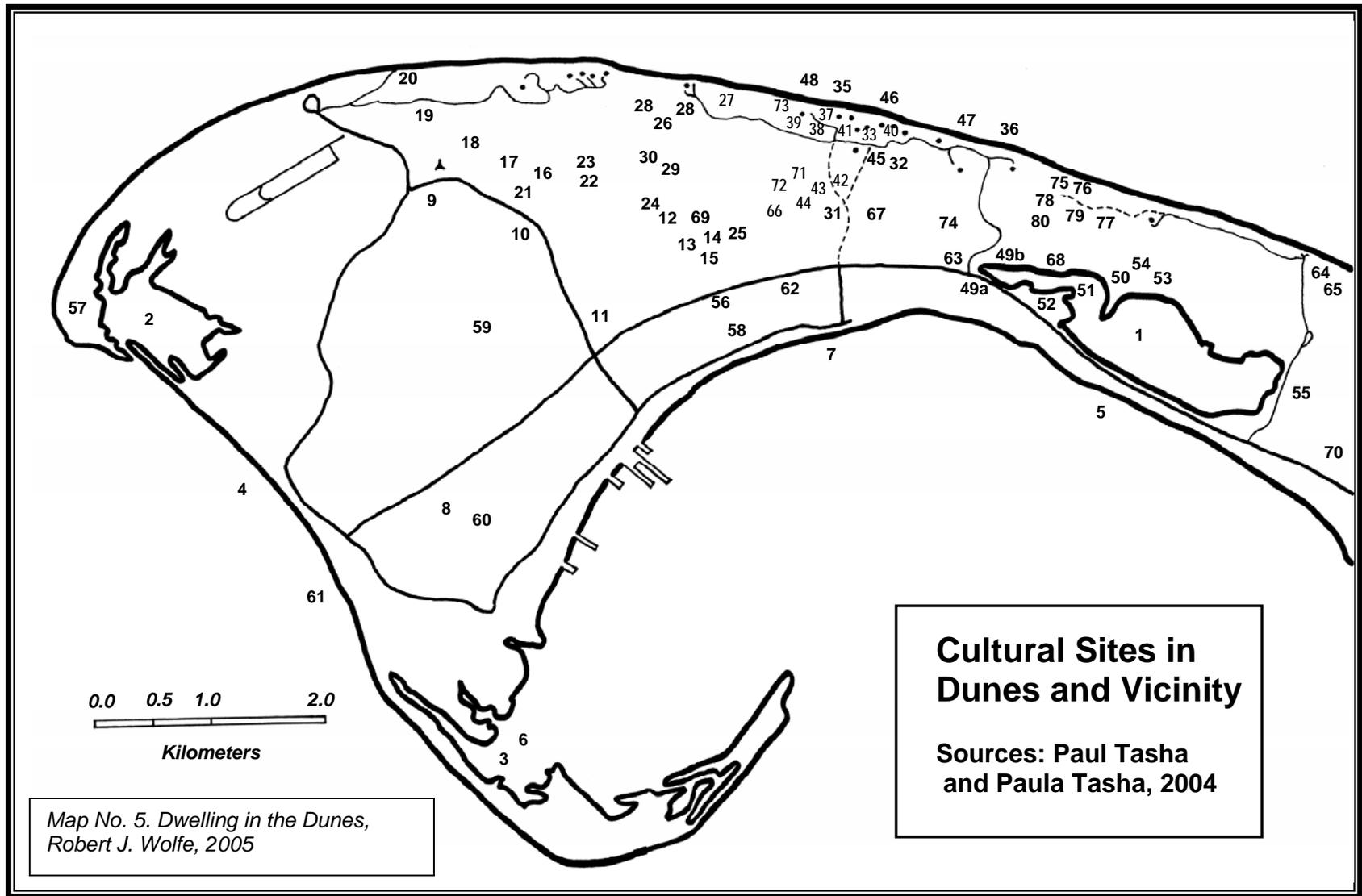
Debra went into nearly the same spot. It was a little ways off, in that same structure area of where that big dune drops down into that little valley. Debra ran her horse into there just two seconds after I told her, “Don’t go over there, that’s a quicksand spot.” She ran the horse right into it. It wasn’t as bad, but the horse went right down. Her legs disappeared, but her belly stopped her. Of course Debra flew right over the horse’s head.

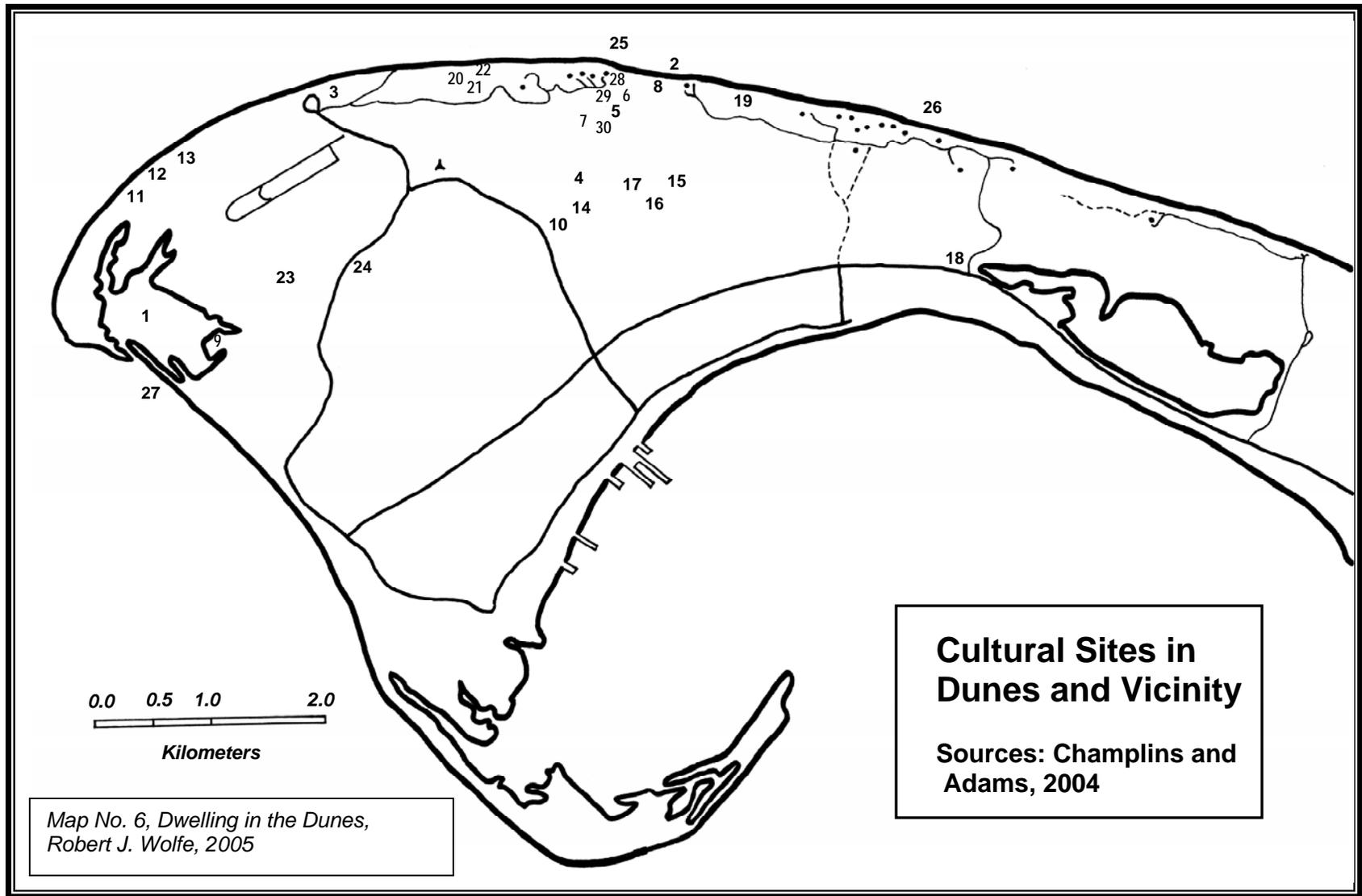
Debra was crying, “Oh, we’re going to lose her!” I told her, “We have to let the horse rest. I’ve been down this road before. Calm the horse down. Let her rest and she’ll be able to get herself out.” And we did get her out. It took ten minutes of grunting and groaning. You have to do it incrementally, a little at a time, let the horse rest, struggle forward a few feet, let her rest, talk to her.

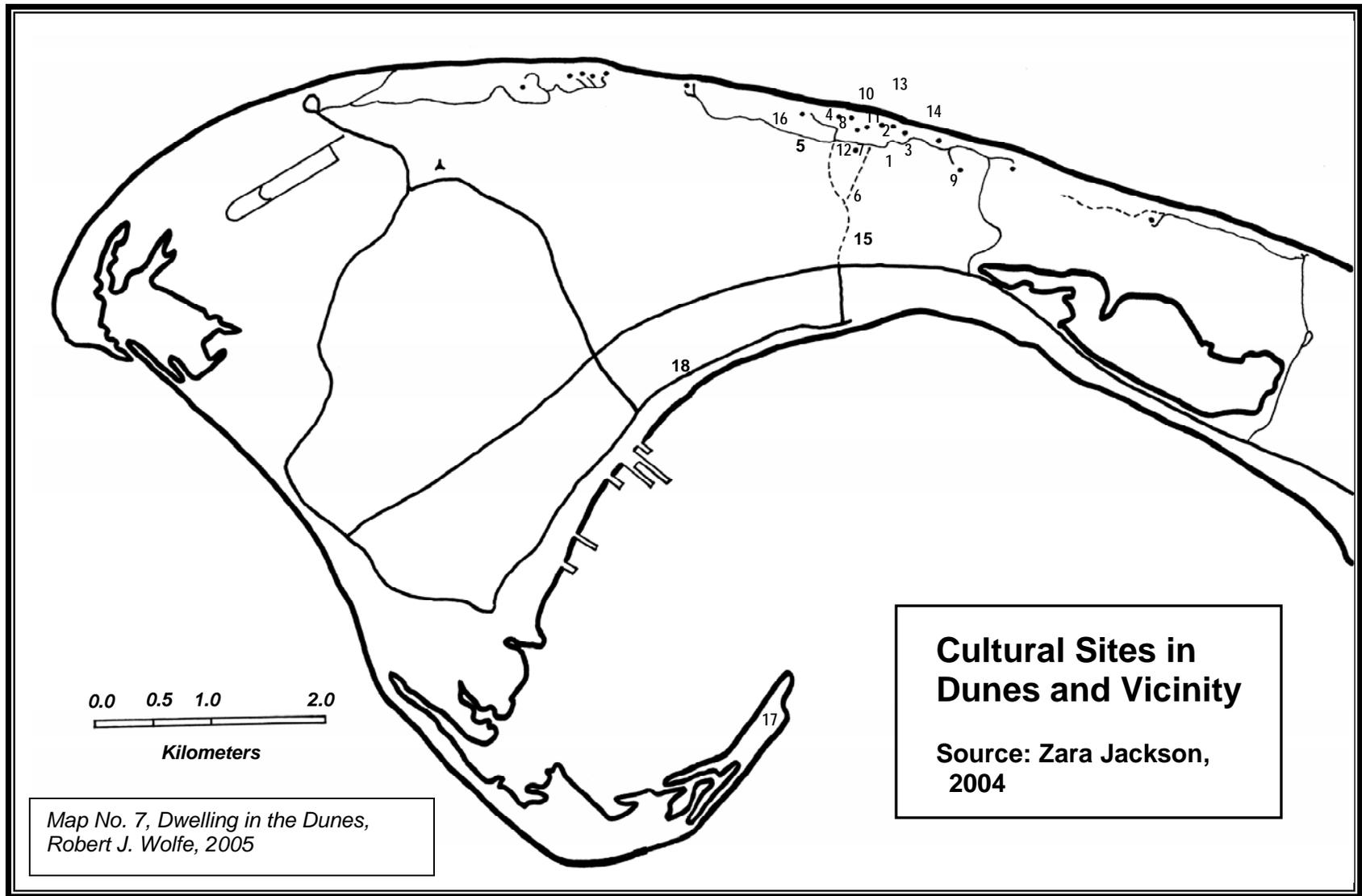
Right now you’d be fine. I’d guarantee it. No heavy rain recently. It’s definitely rain dependent. For a few days after a heavy rain, you’ll find that sand to be frighteningly alive. There aren’t ten people in town that know about it. I don’t think the Park is even aware of it.

There are many other examples that could be given. The ecological knowledge of dune dwellers contains observations over a span of years. They are historic records within an oral tradition. The information accords long-term residents with a type of expertise about local history related to the natural environment. In the memories of dune dwellers is information about

storms, beach erosion, dune shifts, plant succession, animal populations, water cycles, and a great number of other phenomena. Some of this information is of use in their adaptation of dune living to changing conditions. But much of the information is simply knowledge for knowledge sake, a form of “basic science” within folk culture, where humans secure places of intimacy within particular ecosystems and histories. It is knowledge acquired and passed on primarily because it’s good for thought, an enrichment of the lives of oneself and others.



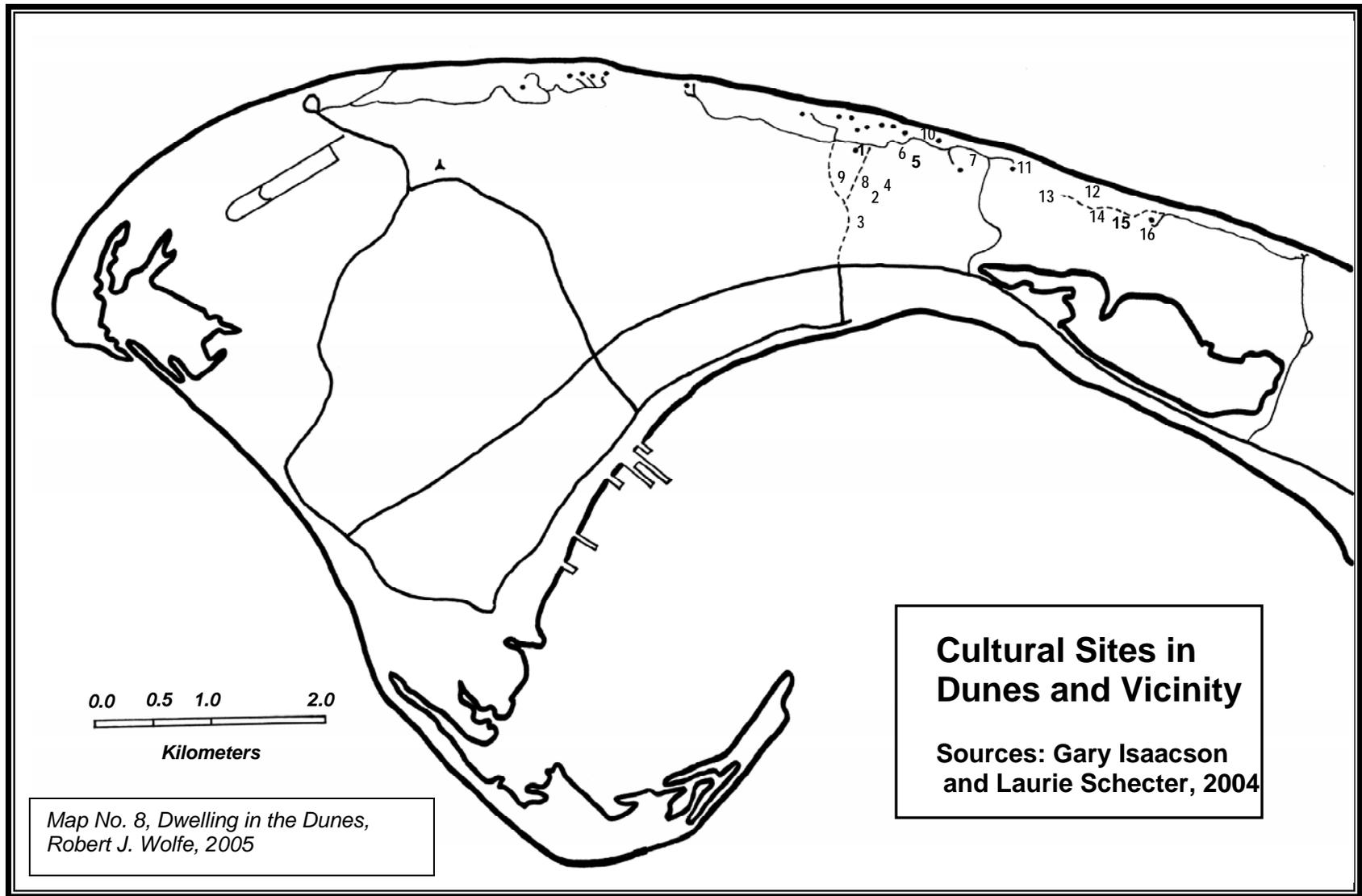


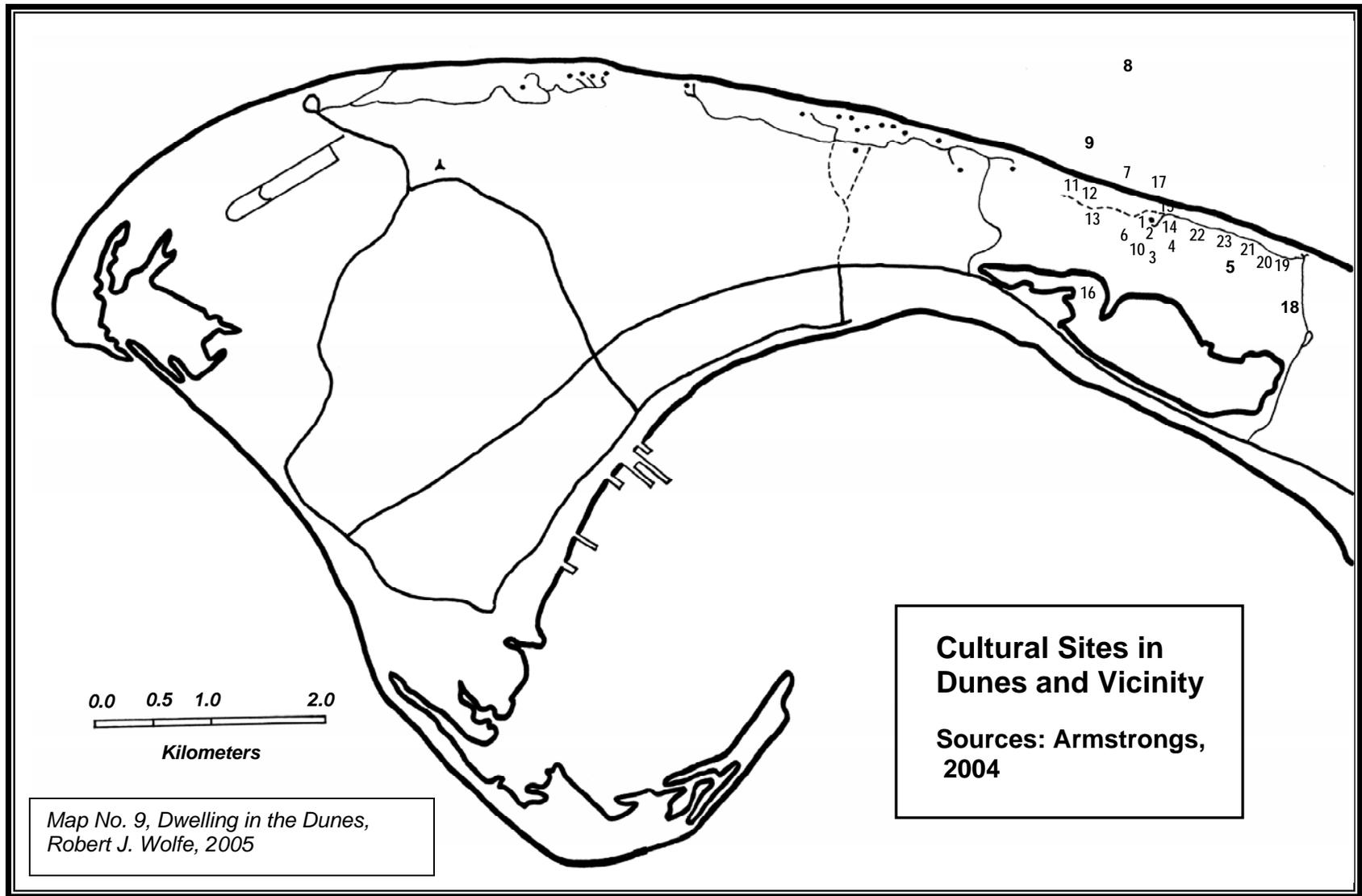


Map No. 7, Dwelling in the Dunes,  
Robert J. Wolfe, 2005

**Cultural Sites in  
Dunes and Vicinity**

Source: Zara Jackson,  
2004





## Cultural Sites, Map 5

Sources: Paul Tasha, and also Paula Tasha where indicated

1. East Harbor. Also called Pilgrim Lake. A water body once opened to the sea, formerly a harbor with wharfs, pilings, and settlements, now a lake. There was a bridge for a while. The dunes have migrated to cover a part of the lake. Paul Tasha: "East Harbor was the focal point of life in my family. My father [Herman Tasha] loved the pond, just loved it. Even as an old man he'd talk about what wonderful times he had in his life in that pond. And I did too. We duck hunted, deer hunted, hunted the edges. It was great berry picking all around the edges. Caught fish. Just everything. I ate meals from the pond and the Head of the Meadows, which is part of it, draining into the pond. The activities supplied a whole lot of meals for my family as a kid. We ate ducks and deer, rabbits, berries, or something from this pond a lot. It was a great food producer." When construction workers were mucking at the old entrance of East Harbor to put in fill for making Route 6, the clamshell scoop dredged up "big wads of eels." Herman Tasha, who saw this, was "jealous" because "he just loved to eat eels." According to Paula Tasha, during the 1950s-60s, the harbor was at times thick with ice during winter, allowing ice boat racing, bonfires on the edge, picnicking, driving on the lake with automobiles, and ice fishing. The ice rarely gets this thick anymore.
2. Race Run. Also called Hatches Harbor. A salt marsh. (See Site No. 18.)
3. The Creek. A tidally-influenced river used for fishing, clamming, and duck hunting. Pronounced "Crick." Paul Tasha: "If you say 'creek' nobody knows what you're talking about."
4. New Beach. Also called Herring Cove.
5. Beach Point. Also called Pilgrim Beach.
6. West End Breakwater. Also called The Dike. The west breakwater of Provincetown Harbor. Paul Tasha: "When you say 'The Breakwater,' you must specify west or east."
7. East End Breakwater. The east breakwater of Provincetown Harbor.
8. Crawley's Pond. Also called Shank Painter's Pond.
9. Nigger Hill. Also called Niggerhead Hill. A hill by the Province Lands Visitors Center. This old name is offensive and should not be used anymore, said Paul Tasha, who speculated the name had to do with the capstan on a boat called a "niggerhead." Deadman's Curve is nearby.
10. Hellmer's Pond (Hellmer's Parking Lot). Hellmer's Pond was "great duck hunting." Paul Tasha: "Hellmer was an old timer who lived there. The Park took away his land, left him his house, and built a parking lot in his front yard. It broke his heart and he died of grief."
11. Nelson's Chicken Farm and Riding Stable. Cliff Nelson ran a commercial chicken farm and commercial riding stables with trail rides. When Paul Tasha was a kid, they got manure and eggs from Nelson. Paul Tasha: "Cliff Nelson had a bad limp because when duck hunting as a youth, a friend swung on a duck, fired, and Cliff's head was in the way. He shot a little bit of Cliff's head off. He survived but pulled his leg for the rest of his life." Provincetown had electrical generators close by the chicken farm. Paul Tasha, as a child on a dark, cloudy night, would hear the generators going, reminding him of a Frankenstein movie, "get the creeps" and run for the house.
12. Big Grassy. A duck hunting area. Old timers know this name, as well as Small Grassy. There are other smaller ponds nearby for duck hunting that never were named.
13. Small Grassy. A duck hunting area.
14. Lawrence's Bog. Also called Chinaman's Lake. Lawrence Cayton had a commercial cranberry bog there which, when an old man, he gave to young Herman Tasha, although there was no deed. It had grown up with so much grass that it couldn't be used anymore.
15. Fish Pan Road. Some call it Tin Pan Alley but that is wrong, according to Paul Tasha. The road was lined on the sides with fish pans so the wagon wheels would not sink in, with the horses walking down the center. The old pans were leftovers from those used for drying cod.

There are remnants still that can be found along the way, particularly in winter when there is less foliage along the trail's edges. By lack of use, the road is now just down to a path lined by huckleberry, bull briar, red oak, and wild aster. There were other roads branching off from fish pan road leading to commercial cranberry bogs and other areas, now reduced to paths difficult to see from an overgrowth of bull briar and other plants.

16. First Oasis. A pretty area with a cranberry bog that floods in the spring and a pine patch with considerable growth. Deer cut through it traveling between the airport and the upland woods. The First Oasis provides good cover and is always laced with buck scrapes and rubs. The deer come out of the airport, a good feed area where deer sometimes bed during the day. But frequently deer work their way back east through the dunes and into the woods to bed. Hunters can catch them early in the morning as they do this.
17. Grassy Plateau. A high, pretty, dry plateau covered, not in dune grass, but the taller grass variety with feathery heads. Oscar Snow, among others, used to hunt up there for deer and rabbits. When they used to release pheasants here, the birds would wind up there.
18. Old Salt Marsh. According to old maps analyzed by George Bryant, a Provincetown historian, a salt marsh used to run all the way from Race Run to Truro, a consistent six-mile saltwater ecosystem running all through the back dunes to the Truro city line. It lay in the dune valley to the north of East Harbor and didn't connect to East Harbor, running behind it to the north. The salt marsh was changed by dikes at Race Run. The valley is now cranberry and pussy willow and freshwater swamp. There's an effort to partially reopen the lower end to salt water, opening the dikes and mucking it out. The salt marsh was almost lost to local memory, except for the old maps.
19. Inner Route. The dune road system currently used primarily by the dune tours, but also by residents to access dune shacks. In the recent past there was another, more inland route, that was closed by the Park.
20. Outer Route. The dune road system along the beach. Sections of the beach route are underwater at high tides, and sections are seasonally closed by the Park to protect terns and plovers.
21. Amphitheater. A "strange, magical little spot" comprising a natural circular bowl in the dunes lined with bonsai trees. The trees are descendents of non-indigenous species planted in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The original plantings grow in rows, but at the amphitheater they have seeded and grown, very bonsai, spread out close to the ground, because the environment doesn't suit the species of tree. There was one tree in the valley referred to as the Ponderosa Pine and another shaped like a lyre. There used to be a road allowing driving to the amphitheater.
22. Second Oasis. An area used for deer hunting and berry picking. A person could drive on the horse road from Nelson's, skirting the oasis and up onto the adjoining hillside to gather at a good beach plum patch. The plum gathering area was one of Sunny Tasha's "hot spots." It is still a good spot. Over time, the route became a horse trail. Now that the horses aren't using it, the trail has become primarily a deer run again, coming off a patch of oaks. There's a land bridge across a nearby cranberry bog, created by horses and deer traversing it.
23. Place of the Gut Pile Event. Story told by Paul Tasha (see Chapter 12).
24. Oak Hill Behind Grassies. A hill with oaks extending into the dunes next to an oasis. This is one of several places where deer, especially a smart buck, will try to stay in the cover as long as he can during the daylight hours, when hunters are out. In this spot, the deer feed in the oaks until sundown, and when it's dark enough, they step out into the open and make way to the nearby oasis where there is more food. Deer then move up on the grassy plateau, where one finds a lot of buck fights for dominance. Does feed there and breed.
25. Swirler's Patch. A wood named for a deer. The story is recounted in a Paul Tasha essay with the same name.

26. The Place of Herman Tasha's Last Deer. The place where Paul Tasha's father, 78 years old, killed his last two deer. Paul Tasha provided a story.
27. The Place of Bob Henrique's Deer. A place where Bob Henrique killed a deer, spotted it lying down, a 180 lb ten-pointer.
28. Malicoat's Patch. A patch of big oak woods on either side of Malicoat's cottage. Nearby is another unnamed patch with good acorn drops, a good deer hunting area, referred to as "that oaky patch behind Malicoat's patch."
29. Peepers Pond. A pond with tree frogs (*Hyla crucifer*, "for the little cross on its back"). The location always held enough water to keep peepers. One can always hear a chorus of peepers there from late March to late May.
30. Unnamed Pool with Peepers. A dune pool with peeper frogs that always flooded in spring. It's without a shred of vegetation. It's one of a number of places in the dunes with enough water to sustain the frog's reproductive cycle.
31. Fork of Old Snail Road. A fork in the remnants of what used to be Snail Road. From town, the right fork went straight to the coast guard station and up to the Tasha shack. The left route went straight to the beach. Snail Road was the route the Tashas took to drive to their shack for many years, until the route was closed to vehicles by the Park. Snail Road is now the main footpath from Provincetown into the dunes. Tasha: "As kids, we didn't have a set route over the dunes, because the dunes are open and you can just kind of meander."
32. The Obelisk. The remains of a wooden tower used by the coast guard. The perch resembled an Egyptian obelisk with a crow's nest and a needle at the top.
33. Lookout Tower. The remains of a metal lookout tower used by the coast guard to man a watch of the ocean for signs of distress, such as someone caught on the bars. Though rickety, it was still climbable when Paul Tasha was a youth.
34. Stark's Pit. Frank Stark's commercial sand pit. According to Paul Tasha, the area had several rolling dunes mined for sand, much of it sold to the Navy for sandblasting ships, a hard sand, eighty percent quartz, small garnet and feldspar. He mined out this pit and then relocated to another pit by East Harbor (Pilgrim Lake). Paul Tasha remembers special rail cars for the sand and big tractors to load them up. The road by Stark's Pit was the eastern route into the dunes, an alternate to the Snail Road route when there was a choice.
35. Wreck of the *HMS Somerset*. Possible site of the British man-o-war vessel grounded in 1778, a quarter mile west of the Tasha shack. Its bones still show at times after an easterly storm churns up the bottom. Paul Tasha has salvaged timbers for his house that may be from the *Somerset*.
36. Wreck of *Kate May*. A fishing vessel wrecked about 1960. When it was hung up on the bar, the surf smashed into it, knocking planks loose, carrying them to shore where they were sometimes salvaged. The Tasha family salvaged the fo'c's'le ladder, with brass placards on each step, for their barn, and a door for their chicken coop.
37. Peaked Hill. The former site of the landmark dune of the Peaked Hill District, the namesake of the Peaked Hill Bars and Peaked Hill Lifesaving Station. Once the area's tallest barrier dune, it disappeared during Paul Tasha's lifetime, eroded by wind, its sand blowing into an area to its lee side, covering up a substantial wetland (see No. 38). Paul Tasha provided its story (see Chapter 9).
38. Old Wetland, Water Spot. A place for getting water closest to the Tasha shack. It was the place most frequently used when the Tashas were at their shack until it was covered with sand with the disappearance of Peaked Hill. Also, it was "a fun spot to play." As the years went by and it began to fill, the Tashas had to range a bit more to get water.
39. Water Spot. A place where the Tashas get water. A cranberry bog and a wetland.
40. Water Spot. A good spot to dig for water. Good beach plums, good low-bush blueberries, a good bunny patch

- 41A, B, C. Blueberry Patches. Good patches of high-bush blueberries. 41A and C also had shadbush for picking. 41A and C were deep watering areas and had box turtles and quail. They were deep with taller trees and stayed cool, so the animals were kept out of the heat. 41B didn't have as much depth; it was sunnier. Paul Tasha: "You don't want to walk through 41C because it's a thick son-of-a-bitch. Even your rabbit dog will come out with his ears bleeding."
42. Water Spot. A place to get water when walking to the Tasha shack.
43. Water Spot. A place to get water when walking to the Tasha shack.
44. Water Spot. A good place to get water at the base of a dune when walking in.
45. Toad and Frog Place. A place next to the coast guard station foundations with peeper frogs and at least two other types of toads, protected by Paul Tasha from dune taxi traffic by placing concrete blocks at its center, forcing detours. (See story, this Chapter).
46. Bass Hole. A fishing hole well regarded by bass fishermen. Where ever there's a dent in the shoreline, the bass fishermen will call that "a hole," a "little scoop spot." The bass may hang in there. It's the "kind of place they like to lob a live eel in the dark." Paul Tasha: "You'll see fishermen most nights. Those guys are pretty fanatic, the hardcore fishermen."
47. Bass Hole. A bass fishing hole.
48. Bass Hole. A bass fishing hole.
- 49A, B. Old Pilings. This area has several sets of pilings from old piers, from the time there were wharfs deep enough for boats, and an entry to the sea allowing boats to come and go. Now most are buried by sand, though some can still be seen.
50. Madden's Patch. A patch of vegetation on a peninsula sticking out into East Harbor. Bill Madden had a duck blind there for years. It made great duck hunting and deer hunting. Because it was a peninsula, you could hunt either side of it, depending upon which direction the wind was blowing.
51. Herman Tasha's Blind. The duck blind of Herman Tasha when he was a boy, and later of both Herman and Paul Tasha. For people who know, the place is still called Herman Tasha's blind. Paul Tasha: "I have a memory from being a teenager, it was a September day, dry, bright, pleasant warm day, the old man and I went in the station wagon to East Harbor to build a duck blind in a little different place. We filled the boat with lumber. We started to row. Actually, I was rowing, I was old enough so he didn't have to row anymore. But it was a nice breeze. He was sitting on this big pile of lumber. So the old man took a big wide pine board, held it. It caught the wind and started to propel the boat nicely. So I put down the oars and I picked up one too and we held them up, the pine boards, and just by deflecting the wind a little bit we were able to steer the boat. I think he may have had an oar over the side at one point, and I was doing all the sail catching, and he kept the boat directed with an oar, tiller-like. But it's just a nice memory of a beautiful early fall day. We sailed down through here to the point, here, and built our duck blind. It's just a nice memory of a good time with the old man, this tranquil sail we took through here."
52. Site of a Mummified Snapping Turtle. When twelve years old, Paul Tasha found a mummified snapping turtle. The cove here is deeper than most. It was always a good spot for turtles and carp.
53. Pilot Whale Remains. A place behind the big dune with skeletal remains of black fish (pilot whales), where the oil was tried out beside the fishing settlement. After any good wind, one can find the skeletal remains.
54. Water Spot. A place to get water.
55. Berry site. A place for picking tree nuts (hazelnuts, butternuts) along with blueberries and decorative red berries. (From Paula Tasha)
56. Quaking bog. Part of Jimmy's Pond, destroyed by the construction of Howland Street. Paula Tasha and her friends used to play on the quaking bog, the size of a living room rug. Paula Tasha: "It had such a thick mat of growth on top of the water that seven or eight-year-olds,

- there were five of us, can sort of walk, or spread-eagle out on it, and it would undulate. We would just roar with laughter.” (From Paula Tasha)
57. Race Point Lighthouse. Paula and Don Tasha were lighthouse keepers on weekends for three summers, hosting tours. (From Paula Tasha)
  58. Kemp Cottage. The one-room studio cottage built by Sunny Tasha by hand on Howland Street for Harry Kemp as a winter residence. (From Paula Tasha)
  59. Nelson Riding Path. A loop for horseback riding, crossing the Race Point Road, paralleling the current bicycle path. “Now it’s all bicycles.” (From Paula Tasha)
  60. Boyzine’s Riding Stable. One of two riding stables in Provincetown during the 1960s. There was a horse show every July. (From Paula Tasha)
  61. Horse Swimming Beach. A beach where horseback riders swim their horses on rides from Provincetown. (From Paula Tasha)
  62. Railroad Bed. Previously operational, the tracks were peeled up in the 1960s. Ever since, it’s been a designated public walking path, with some horseback riding. The area is good habitat for box turtles. (From Paul and Paula Tasha)
  63. Eastgate Fireroad. An access point to the dune shacks for vehicles, beginning near an old commercial sandpit. Just within the gate was a prime snow sledding area for children during winter. (From Paula Tasha)
  64. Clay area. An area for gathering clay for crafts, decorations, and for children’s playing materials. (From Paula Tasha)
  65. House Under Highland Light. Paula Tasha spent the summer here with three horses, riding the backside moors. (From Paula Tasha)
  66. Quicksand Area. An area subject to quicksand conditions after heavy rain. Paul Tasha notes that this spot and the other (no. 67) fall along a line of dunes from east to west, so maybe others occur along that edge. Tasha provided the story.
  67. Quicksand Area. An area subject to quicksand conditions after heavy rain. Paul Tasha: “On the backside of the wetland, I started to climb the dune and I went right down. I started to call for my friend who was walking toward it too, to warn him to stay out. He came over to help extricate me. You know, you go in up to your waist and you say, ‘holy crap!’ It’s definitely rain dependent. For a few days after a heavy rain you’ll find that sand to be frighteningly alive. Without a good rain, no problem.”
  68. Dangerous Mud Area. An area of deep salt marsh mud on the backside of Pilgrim Lake before Madden’s patch, potentially dangerous to walkers. Paul Tasha: “Windblown sand over the mud makes it look like a solid little beach. You’d walk out on it over two inches of sand and break through and be in this horrible, viscous, nasty mud. Some of it may be 16 to 17 feet deep, according to Graham [Giese] and my old man, who tested it a few times. Because I spent so much time playing around there, my father was concerned, so he introduced it to me.”
  69. First Hunt - Paul and Father. The place of Paul Tasha’s first hunt with his father, Herman Tasha, when Paul was five years old. Paul Tasha provided a story.
  70. Last Hunt - Paul and Father. The place of Herman Tasha’s last deer hunt at the age of 89 years. Paul Tasha provided a story. The area is turning back to a saltwater environment now. Previously, it was drained with mosquito drainage ditches. It was an upland marsh where Sunny Tasha picked blueberries to make pies to sell to restaurants to bring in a little income. Paul Tasha: “He [Herman Tasha] always loved this whole marsh, and the Head of the Meadow you can’t see. He took a thousand meals out of there. I probably have stuff in my bones from the meals from there, still.”
  71. Cranberry Bog. A good cranberry bog. Paul Tasha: “There are so many good cranberry picking areas, they’re hard to label. There are good cranberry picking bogs everywhere, in almost any bog.”
  72. Cranberry Bog. A good cranberry bog.
  73. Cranberry Bog. A good cranberry bog.

74. Cranberry Bog. A good cranberry bog.
  75. Dune Charlies' Shack. The location of what was Charlie Schmid's shack.
  76. Charlies' Model A. A Model A Ford sticking out of a dune.
  77. Charles' Patch. A particularly large vegetated area in the dunes, quite a few acres. It has scrub oak, pitch pine, beach plum, lots of rosehips, three or four types of grasses, supporting a variety of animal life. There is quite a lot of oak in the draws, none more than twenty-five feet tall, most more like ten. Deer, turkeys, squirrels feed on the acorns. There is hog cranberry (bear berry), true cranberry, blueberry, shadbush, and huckleberry. Paul Tasha provided a deer story.
  78. Cranberry Bog. A good cranberry bog, with vegetation types from year-round water. It probably has a resident frog population. Paul Tasha provided a deer story.
  79. Cranberry Bog. A good cranberry bog.
  80. Cranberry Bog. A good cranberry bog.
- Unnumbered site. Coast Guard Boathouse. A few timbers are all that remain of the boathouse for the coast guard station. There was a barn with a team of horses to drag the boats to the water when they had to save people. The remnants were there up until about five years ago. There was a peaked roof and collapsed walls. It was fairly intact when Paul Tasha was a child. It went with the concrete building that housed the men.

#### Cultural Sites, Map 6

Sources: Nathaniel, Mildred, Andrea, and Paul Champlin; Maia Champlin Peck; and David, Marcia, and Sally Adams

1. The Flats. An intertidal area of sand, pools, and channels. It's a favorite place for children, with shells and crabs.
2. Wreck of the *HMS Somerset*. The site of a shipwreck, believed by the Adams and Champlins to be the British man-o-war vessel grounded in 1778, visible at times when the sand erodes out. Mildred Champlin described how they located the wreck. "I read about it in a 19<sup>th</sup> century book. It's exactly a mile. So we took the car and measured a mile from Peaked Hill to Dead Man's Hollow as they said in the 19<sup>th</sup> century book, and we figured, the *Somerset* is here, under this sand. About two years later, Dave comes up and said, 'Guess what's up – just exactly where you said it was?'"
3. Life Saving Station. An historic life saving station moved to the location of the old Wood End station.
4. Great Mountain. A high dune on the lower cape, offering great views, reached by several footpaths.
5. Pollywog Valley. A small valley among the dunes, used for ice skating in winter.
6. The Cranberry Bog. The cranberry bog closest to the Champlin's shack.
7. Orchid Area and Blueberry Patch. A place with blueberries and twenty-three varieties of orchids, some rare. The orchids were subjects painted by David Adams.
8. Squid Woman's. Site of a derelict cottage named for Squid Woman, now a scooped-out hollow. Mildred Champlin told the story: "Squid Woman's was a house. The Squid Woman came up when Nat [Champlin] was building one day, back in the early 1950s. Nat was doing some work here, and he noticed some movement. He saw this little old woman scuttling behind the car. She comes out and she says, 'I'm afraid of you!' And Nat, from his ladder, said, 'Well, I'm afraid of you!' She takes out this paper bag and says, 'I brought you some squid.'" So he said, "Well, I don't really need squid, but why don't you take it next door to the Adam's house?" Nat didn't cook and maybe Marcia [Adams] could use some squid, so he sent her over there. There was a derelict house where she lived. She was one of the Nelsons. I don't know for sure, but I think she was Clarence's sister. She was a little strange. And she

- had a different last name; she was married to somebody. There was a house there that, later on, was falling apart. It just fell apart. There was a blowout there for a long time, leaving a scooped-out place. And the last thing we saw was her well pipe. So now we'd say, 'How far down the beach did you go?' And you'd say, 'Just past the Squid Woman's.'"
9. Disappearing Forest. Site of an old forest inundated by salt water, with snags all together, a "neat place."
  10. Beech Forest. A well-known hardwood forest managed by the Park Service.
  11. The Bowls. Scooped-out valleys, big sand bowls, that were old habitation places of fishermen, whalers, and coast guards.
  12. Penny Bowl. A scooped-out valley where the Chaplins once found Indian head pennies.
  13. Second Rip. A good fishing location with a rip, commonly the site of a "colony of buggies."
  14. Witch's Mountain. A dark, spooky-looking dune, the second-highest hill in the area, with an "idyllic" pond of lily pads surrounded by forests. The Champlins refer to it as "the pond in Witch's Mountain."
  15. The Great Desert. A stretch of open sand named by Thoreau. Mildred Champlin: "That's what we call it too." It's now planted and stabilized with grass.
  16. Loaf of Bread. A "beautiful" dune formation near the middle of The Great Desert that used to resemble a "perfect loaf of bread, surrounded by nothing but sand."
  17. Cement House, or Concrete House. The site of a small, "cunningly-designed" house of wired cement in the middle of the dunes, featuring windows set with bottle bottoms. It was "gorgeous," "camouflaged because it melded in with the sand," "the boldest dwelling," "a little modern architecture." The Champlins have photographs of it.
  18. Sand Pit and Suicide Hill. The Sand Pit was the site of a commercial sand pit, a spot along the back route jeep road. Suicide Hill was a steep dune along the back route. Paul Champlin described a common use of the area: "We would go out and drive the back route. There used to be roads straight from the houses to town. You could drive up on the top of the dunes, the beach taxis too, everybody did. These were all bare dunes. The wind would just raise havoc with it. This was a big tourist thing. People would go on the dune tours just for this. You go along and suddenly there is Suicide Hill, a forty-foot drop, just straight down, like a roller coaster. Oh my gosh. So you'd go that way and drive around, catch a beautiful sunset at the Sand Pit, which is the entrance point for the other dune cottages. The kids would get out of the car and run down the Sand Pit and the adults would meet us at the bottom, and we'd go get ice cream in town. That was one of our traditions with the Adams, going on the sunset rides to the Sand Pit and ice cream."
  19. Bill's Camp. A site between Malicoat's cottage and Peaked Hill, where fishermen erected small temporary shelters and tents as bases for fishing.
  20. FORAC. Site of a naval radar station.
  21. No Hands Valley. The site of a murder in the 1970s. Mildred Champlin told the story (see Chapter 12).
  22. Jean's Hill and Jean's Blowout
  23. Blueberry Patch. Also called Blueberry Valley. A place for gathering blueberries.
  24. Blueberry Road. Also called Provinceland Road. A road providing access to a blueberry gathering area.
  25. The Pile. An underwater pile of ferromanganese, probably old ballast. It's "great habitat" for lobster and blackfish and a place for scuba diving and fishing.
  26. The Wreck. The site of an old, double-hulled wooden ship, with iron spikes. It's a place for scuba diving.
  27. The Torpedo. The site of an old navy torpedo, broken in the middle. It's a place for scuba diving.
  28. The Shed House. Originally the generator house for the Champlin cottage, turned into a two-seater outhouse with the "most beautiful view for an outhouse in the world." Paul Champlin

described a family tradition with the Shed House: “Once a year we would all march out to the Shed House and the kids would have pictures taken up on the roof. It was the cousins if they were here, the Adams, every year, a whole progression of kids and photos.”

29. The Valley. The first valley inland from the cottages, formerly a saltwater run. The Champlin’s water pump is located there.
30. Blueberry Bog. Also called The Second Valley. The second valley inland from the cottages. It’s a place for picking blueberries. A sundew grows there.

#### Cultural Sites, Map 7

Source: Zara Jackson

1. Coal Bins. The site of a small house for storing coal for the Peaked Hill coast guard station. Today the sand is black, mixed with coal. Nearby was a second small house, originally used for storage, where Frankie Henderson lived while serving as watchman for the decommissioned station. He did not live in the station itself.
2. Watchtower. The site of an old watchtower overlooking the beach, erected and used by the coastguards when the beach could no longer be adequately seen from the cupola of the station. Zara Jackson remembered that watchmen punched time clocks on shifts.
3. Braaten’s Shack. The home of Eunice and Theodore Braaten of Dedham, Massachusetts, and their two sons, Teddy and David Braaten, who were Zara Jackson’s playmates when she was a child.
4. Hollow. A hollow that once existed where Zara Jackson played house with playmates, Sally and Nancy, as a child. “All over the area we used to go and take sunbaths. You’d find a little hollow away from the beach or out of visibility and lie down and absorb the sun.”
5. Race Road. The old road linking the Peaked Hill coast guard station to the Race Point coast guard station, now a jeep trail. It used to have telephone poles and lines along it.
6. Snail Road. The old road linking the Peaked Hill coast guard station to Provincetown, going “straight from the station to the top of the big dune and on,” now a footpath. This is the main route used by Zara Jackson between her shack and town.
7. Boathouse. The site of a small house used for storing the extra surfboat of the Peaked Hill coast guard station. The primary boat used for drills was stored on the ground level of the station. The boathouse was bought at auction by Leo Gracie after the station closed. Alice Malkin, Zara Jackson’s mother, bought it from Leo Gracie. Zara slept in the boathouse with friends from time to time. As it deteriorated, it provided salvage materials for other dune shacks. It eventually was burned by the Park.
8. O’Neill Path. An old road to the original Peaked Hill coast guard station. When a new station was built, the old station was acquired by the playwright, Eugene O’Neill. The configuration of the dunes has changed considerably since that time. The road is now a footpath over the barrier dune to the beach.
9. Ray’s Shack. The dune shack of Ray Wells, the half-sister of Zara Jackson.
10. Swimming Area. The beach area used for swimming by Zara Jackson and other people living in shacks on The Hill, including Hazel Hawthorne Werner, her children (Nancy and Sally), and the Fearings.
11. The Hill. Zara Jackson’s name for Peaked Hill. The site of a tall dune near which several shacks were located, including Louis Spucky’s (acquired by Hazel Hawthorne Werner), Brownies’, Margo’s, and Fearing’s. The dune no longer exists.
12. The Pump. The pump supplying water for Zara Jackson’s shack.
13. Sandbars with Clams. The site of old sandbars, no longer there, used at low tide for digging large sea clams when Zara Jackson was a child: “There were lots of clams. You’d see a spurt

of water and a little hole coming up from the sandbar and you'd dig under that, large sea clams. My mother made clam fritters from them."

14. Surf Casting Beach. An area used by Zara Jackson's husband for catching flounders. "He was hoping for stripers, but never got them."
15. The Great Dune. The large dune over which Snail Road travels.
16. The Ant Hill. A hill providing a view over the valley where clients of Art's Dune Tours disembark to take pictures. "They look like ants up on that hill," remarked Zara Jackson.

#### Cultural Sites, Map 8

Source: Gary Isaacson and Laurie Schecter

1. Boat Station. Site of the old coastguard boathouse, formerly owned by Zara Jackson. Isaacson and Schecter salvaged wood from it for restoring their shack when they heard the Park planned to burn it as a demonstration with the fire department. The mahogany flooring of their outhouse is from the boathouse.
2. Walking Bushes. Clumps of bushes that seem to be moving up the dunes. They were visual referents, marking where Isaacson and Schecter made their turn for the path toward their shack, walking in from Snail Road. Looking from the shack and seeing people coming by the bushes, they knew that in fifteen or twenty minutes they would arrive at the shack.
3. Big Dune. The large dune near the start of Snail Road. Schecter: "Everybody calls it, 'Big Dune.'"
4. The Notch. A notch between forested dunes along the route taken by Isaacson and Schecter walking to their shack.
5. Carpet. A "beautiful carpet" of ground cover with berries along the route taken by Isaacson and Schecter walking to their shack. They purposely detoured around it to protect it.
6. The Blueberry Tree. An enormous highbush blueberry bush, "tree-size," thirty feet round and tall. Schecter: "You can't possibly reach the top of this tree, even with a six-foot ladder."
7. The Sand Road. Also called the Fire Road. The jeep trail providing access to the central group of dune shacks.
8. Cranberry bogs. Schecter: "There are lots of bogs where we do cranberry picking." They pick every year for sauce, or people do it for them if they are not here, during October-November. Near the cranberry bogs and forests they also pick lots of huge Belita mushrooms in September-October.
9. Blueberry areas. A wide area for gathering blueberries during July-August.
10. Beach plum areas. Favorite areas for gathering beach plums during end of August-September.
11. Jones. Also called Anabelle and the Jones shack. A shack, currently occupied by the Dunns.
12. Dune Charlie's. Site of Charlie Schmid's shack..
13. Valley of the Orchids. A valley with orchids and blueberries.
14. Vista Point. A viewpoint along the walking path over a beautiful valley, exposed and hot during summer.
15. The Forest. A forested area along the walking path, offering a cool, breezy place for a summer picnic beneath the pine trees, soft with pine needles. The path through the woods has a lot of poison ivy.
16. Armstrong's. The Armstrong's shack. Just before you reach the Armstrong's, there's a path around a knoll allowing access to the beach.

## Cultural Sites, Map 9

Sources: David, Connie, and Janet Armstrong

1. The House. The Armstrong shack in its current location.
2. Old Baldy. The hill on which the Armstrong shack currently sits. The hill used to be “absolutely bald,” with no grass or bushes.
3. Blueberry Patches. Three areas for gathering blueberries below Old Baldy.
4. Cranberry Patches. Several different patches for gathering cranberries. The Armstrongs avoid gathering at cranberry patches with poison ivy.
5. Mushroom Area. An area for gathering the giant Belita mushroom and star mushrooms.
6. Beach Plum Area. An area for gathering beach plums.
7. Striped Bass Area. An area for fishing for striped bass. Janet Armstrong: “There is really good fishing in hollows, whenever a hollow occurs. It used to be for many years when this road was here that there would be a whole RV campground, well, not really a campground, but they’d be all lined up here, dozens of them. The whole outer beach, really.”
8. Whale Area. An area for viewing whales in June and July, including Right, Humpback, and Finback whales, dolphins, seals, and nurse sharks. Janet Armstrong: “The seals have only been here since maybe the past eighteen years. Before that we never saw seals. Two or three times during the last month we have seen nurse sharks. Huge things. They are vegetarians with mouths like Volkswagens.”
9. Sea Clam Area. An area on the sandbars for gathering sea clams and other shellfish, including sea cucumbers. David Armstrong: “There are sandbars that occur at various distances offshore. And it used to be at the September low tides in particular that we could walk out to a sandbar, we’d be no more than up to our knees, where we could find sea clams that were so big one clam could make a clam chowder.” On phosphorescence: “There was one time when we walked down to the beach, and there on the beach was a log about this big in diameter. It was glowing like a light bulb. It had been there a long time on the surface. It was real fuzzy. These little glowing sea creatures were all through it. And when you touched it, you made a line with your finger that would come up into a real bright glow. You could write your name on this with your finger and see it in a glowing, golden fuzz.”
10. Teddy Bear Forest. Later on called the Enchanted Forest, when the Armstrong children “grew out of teddy bears.” A forested area used by the children for playing.
11. Charlie’s. Also called the Prudential Center of the Dunes. The site of Charlie Schmid’s shack. It was called the Prudential Center of the Dunes because it had grown up to such a height compared to the other shacks. David Armstrong: “The shack was threatened with being engulfed in sand. It was up over the windows practically. That was when he built another story above that. And in later years, he would come up another story. So it was a fantastic piece of architecture, not that any architect would ever design it. But Charlie designed it and built it and lived in it year round. It was a real marvel. It was really the destruction of that place that triggered the movement to get us protected by being registered as historic places.”
12. Ghost Ford. The site of a Model A, 1920 Ford. Buried for decades, it was exposed by wind in the mid-1980s.
13. Cranberry Bog. An area for gathering cranberries.
14. The Pump. The water pump for the Armstrong house.
15. Old Site. Also called The Old Place. The former site of the Armstrong house before the house was moved to its current location. The footings were still there. It was the location of a way station used by the coastguard, between the main stations.
16. Pilgrim Lake. Also called Lost Kite Lake. Used by the Armstrongs for hiking and bird watching. There was a pair of bald eagles there for a while. Once, a kite flown by family members fell into the lake after its exceptionally long string broke. The floating kite was retrieved, as well as the “mile-and-a-half of string.”

17. Uncle John's Final Resting Place. The area where the ashes of John Armstrong were scattered in 2004.
  18. The Road. The jeep road leading to the beach from the parking lot along High Head Road, providing access to the beach on the way to the Armstrong shack. Now closed to the public, previously it was used by fishermen and Art's Dune Tours. Connie Armstrong: "It was made by the Hannah sisters. Their names were Junia and Elizabeth Hannah. Edwin was their brother, but he was not all that interested in being out here. Their husbands had seats on the New York Stock Exchange. They had wonderful apartments in New York. But Elizabeth and Junia really didn't like spending winters there. So their husbands would come to their house in Sandwich for Thanksgiving and summer vacations. The Hannah sisters would go to New York for Christmas. After that they might go to Europe, Paris, or someplace for a little vacation with their husbands. But then they'd come right back to Sandwich. They had cottages in Sandwich that they rented. Their children were grown and they really wanted to stay on the cape. It was a perfectly fine arrangement... Ruth [Connie's daughter] was two years old when we were first talking with them. They just adored Ruth."
  19. Red Shack. Also called Grace's. The site of a shack used by Grace Bessay. It was coast guard originally.
  20. Coast Guard Barn. Also called the U.S.A. The site of a huge barn used for storing boats by the coast guard, still standing about 1948-50, but being derelict, it was dismantled by the coast guard and taken away.
  21. Stanard's. Also called the New York Shack or the New Yorker. The site of a shack used by the Stanards from New York.
  22. Joe Oliver's. Also called Patrick's. The site of a shack built by Pat Patrick and used by Joe Oliver. David Armstrong: "Somebody was breaking into our place at one time. We accosted them and they said that they thought this was the thing that Pat Patrick had built. His widow had told them that they could use his place, and if they had to break into it to use it, that was all right. They were supposed to have been one shack down breaking in. They were trying to break into our place, and we informed them that this was not the right place."
  23. Concrete Shack. Also called Fuller's or the Stone Shack. The site of a shack used by Andy Fuller, and later by Michael Sperber.
- Not numbered. Tony Veever's shack. This shack was located to the east of Grace Bessay's place. The aerial photograph did not go that far.

Cultural Sites of Paul Tasha and Paula Tasha (Map 5),  
Grouped by General Category and Features

<b>Cultural Sites by General Category</b>	<b>Additional Details about Cultural Site Category</b>
<b>Food Gathering Areas (25)</b> Bog (8) 14 71 72 73 74 78 79 80 Hole (3) 47 47 48 Marsh (2) 12 13 Oasis (2) 16 22 Peninsula (2) 50 51 Woods (2) 28 55 Hill (1) 24 Lake (1) 1 Patch (1) 41 Plateau (1) 17 Pond (1) 10 Salt Creek (1) 3	<b>Foods by Gathering Area (36)</b> Cranberries (8) 14 71 72 73 74 78 79 80 Ducks (7) 1 3 10 12 13 50 51 Deer (6) 1 16 17 22 24 28 Fish (5) 1 3 46 47 48 Other berries (4) 1 22 41 55 Rabbits (2) 1 17 Clams (1) 3 Eels (1) 1 Nuts (1) 55 Plums (1) 22
<b>Natural Features With No Use Mentioned (12)</b> Pond (4) 8 29 30 45 Beach (2) 4 5 Hill (2) 9 37 Salt Marsh (2) 2 18 Bog (1) 56 Wood (1) 77	
<b>Man-Made Features (17)</b> Road (5) 15 19 20 31 63 Breakwater (2) 6 7 Shack (2) 75 81 Shipwreck (2) 35 36 Tower (2) 32 33 Car (1) 76 Lighthouse (1) 57 Pier (1) 49 Railway (1) 62	
<b>Other Activity Area (8)</b> Horses (4) 11 59 60 61 Industry (3) 34 53 64 Aesthetics (1) 21	<b>Type of Industry (3)</b> Sand mining (1) 34 Whaling (1) 53 Clay digging (1) 64
<b>Story or Event (8)</b> Woods (4) 25 26 27 69 Marsh (1) 70 Moor (1) 65 Pond (1) 52 Ridge (1) 23	<b>Type of Story or Event (8)</b> Hunting (6) 23 25 26 27 69 70 Horses (1) 65 Turtle (1) 52
<b>Dangerous Area (3)</b> Quicksand (2) 66 67 Mud (1) 68	

Cultural Sites of the Champlin and Adams Families (Map 6),  
Grouped by General Category and Features

<b>Cultural Sites by General Category</b>	<b>Additional Details about Cultural Site Category</b>
<b>Food Gathering Areas (6)</b> Bog (2)           6 30 Patch (2)        7 23 Rip                13 Valley            29	<b>Foods by Gathering Area (4)</b> Blueberries (3) 7 23 30 Cranberries     6 Fish             13 Water            29
<b>Natural Features With No Use Mentioned (12)</b> Desert           15 Dune             16 Forest (2)       9 10 Hill, Blowout    22 Mountain       14	
<b>Man-Made Features (9)</b> Ballast Pile     25 Road             24 Shack (2)       8 17 Shed             28 Shipwreck (2)   2 26 Station          3 20 Torpedo         27	<b>Uses of Man-Made Features</b> Scuba Diving    25 26 27 Photography    28
<b>Camping Areas (2)</b> Bowls           11 Campsite        19	
<b>Story or Event (2)</b> Bowl            12 Valley           21	<b>Type of Story or Event</b> Finding a penny 12 Murder          21
<b>Recreation Area (4)</b> Intertidal flats 1 Mountain        4 Sand Pit         18 Valley           5	

Cultural Sites of the Jackson Family (Map 7),  
Grouped by General Category and Features

<i>Cultural Sites by General Category</i>	<i>Additional Details about Cultural Site Category</i>
<b>Food Gathering Areas (2)</b> Sandbar 13 Beach 14	<b>Foods by Gathering Area (2)</b> Shellfish 13 Fish 14
<b>Natural Features With a Use Mentioned (4)</b> Beach 10 Hill 11 16 Hollow 4	<b>Uses Mentioned (4)</b> Swimmng 10 Living area 11 Sunbathing 4 Tourism 16
<b>Natural Features With No Use Mentioned (1)</b> Dune 15	
<b>Man-Made Features (9)</b> Coal bin 1 Watchtower 2 Shack 3 9 Pump 12 Road-Path 5 6 8 Boathouse 7	

Cultural Sites of the Isaacson-Schecter Family (Map 8),  
Grouped by General Category and Features

<i>Cultural Sites by General Category</i>	<i>Additional Details about Cultural Site Category</i>
<b>Food Gathering Areas (3)</b> Bog 8 Area 9 10	<b>Foods by Gathering Area (4)</b> Cranberries 8 Beach plums 10 Blueberries 9 Mushrooms 8
<b>Natural Features With a Use Mentioned (2)</b> Bushes 2 Forest 15	<b>Uses Mentioned (2)</b> Trail marker 1 Picnics 15
<b>Natural Features With No Use Mentioned (6)</b> Dune 3 Notch 4 Vegetation 5 6 Valley 13 Vista 14	
<b>Man-Made Features (5)</b> Boathouse 1 Road 7 Shack 11 12 16	

Cultural Sites of the Armstrong Family (Map 9),  
Grouped by General Category and Features

<b>Cultural Sites by General Category</b>	<b>Additional Details about Cultural Site Category</b>
<b>Food Gathering Areas (7)</b> Area (2)            5   6 Patch (2)           3   4 Bog                    13 Hollow                7 Sandbar              9	<b>Foods by Gathering Area (7)</b> Cranberries (2)    4   13 Beach plums        6 Blueberries         3 Fish                    7 Mushrooms         5 Shellfish            9
<b>Natural Features With a Use Mentioned (1)</b> Hill                    2	<b>Uses Mentioned (1)</b> Habitation Site    2
<b>Man-Made Features (11)</b> Shack (7)            1   11   15   19   21   22   23 Automobile           12 Barn                    20 Pump                   14 Road                    18	
<b>Wildlife Viewing Areas (2)</b> Lake                    16 Ocean                   8	
<b>Story or Event (1)</b> Place                   17	<b>Type of Story or Event (1)</b> Scattering human remains
<b>Recreation Area (1)</b> Forest                 10	

## Chapter 7. Cultural Traditions I: The Edge of Provincetown

The dunes form a fringe to Provincetown, where town ends and country begins, a raw, partially-tamed expanse of patchy dune-ridged valleys ending at the Backshore. For over two centuries, the traditions of Provincetown have spilled into this place. Historically, this included forestry, livestock grazing, deer hunts, cranberry farms, lifesaving, and salvage, among other pursuits. Many Provincetown residents never went to the Backshore, just as many never sailed to offshore fishing banks. But segments of Provincetown have always used the dunes and Backshore, uses that continued throughout the last and into the present century. During the twentieth century, some from Provincetown came to experience the dunes and the Backshore as something additional, a special place, a formative place for growth and creativity, a place on the town's fringe for pilgrimage, grounding, and release, a place of freedom for gaining personal sanity from the pressures of a small town, and for training its children. Like the surrounding ocean with its fishing banks, the dunes and its Backshore became an important fringe of land that helped to hold the center of Provincetown together.

### “Old Provincetown”

The Provincetown town hall is an impressive building at the center of the community. It sits at the foot of the dune holding the Pilgrim Monument, the world's tallest granite tower, commemorating the first landing of the Pilgrims in the New World at this sandy spot. The entry into town hall presents dual wooden staircases that arc upward toward a grand hall where town meetings are convened, where the public governs itself. The stairways are framed by two large frescos by Ross Moffett (1888-1971). On the right, “Gathering Beach Plums,” three women are gathering fruits. They work on the dunes above town. On the left, “Spreading the Nets,” four men dry fishing nets beside the town with the blue harbor in the near distance. And finally, surrounding everything, wrapping around the walls of the room, are huge painted dunes. Like white arms they embrace the entry room, cradling the town and townspeople. This is “Old Provincetown,” as seen by Ross Moffett. The depiction of this traditional way of life is the town's foremost public image. Each person must move through it to get into the building. A person conducting town business must stroll through Old Provincetown.

Passing between the frescos, one enters a hall branching off into government offices noticed with plaques – Town Accountant, Town Clerk, Treasurer, Tax Collector, and Town Mayor. This high-ceiling hall is filled with huge oil paintings by prominent Provincetown artists. Art is also Provincetown. In this hall it surrounds you. The subjects are as noteworthy as the artists: Charles W. Hawthorne (1872-1930), “Fish Cleaners” and “Crew of the *Philomena Marta*”; William F. Hallsall (1841-1919), “The Peaked Hills of Cape Cod”; Henry Hensche (1901-1992), “His Breakfast” (a portrait); William L'Engle (1928), “Marya”; S. Edmund Oppenheim (1955), “Portrait of Harry Kemp”; and Salvatore Del Deo (1988), “Captain Francis ‘Flyer’ Santos”. Like the foyer's frescos, these prominently-displayed oils are windows to the town's past and current self-identity: Provincetown means Art.

The images establish and reinforce the town's civic identity. The art at town hall evokes central ideas: proud mariners, the Portuguese, old Yankees, the commercial cod fishermen, boat captains and crews, the salteries and fish cleaners; America's premier art colony with the schools of Hawthorne, Hensche, and their accomplished students; and local eccentrics like Harry Kemp, the “poet of the dunes.” The town's social mix is evident: Harry Kemp, a bohemian who lived in

a dune shack until winter drove him to a shelter in town, is honored alongside Captain Francis ‘Flyer’ Santos, a Portuguese boat captain.

Sand dunes and dune activities are prominent among the icons on display at town hall. They are central parts of the civic identity. Beach plums are gathered on their slopes. The “Peaked Hills” in Hallsall’s painting are shown from the sea as a mariner would see them, set high on the dune horizon, a signal for fishing boats and ships in commerce, a warning of the treacherous bars just offshore. Many dune shack residents are linked to the images displayed. Hazel Hawthorne Werner, the niece of Charles W. Hawthorne, owned two shacks. Josephine Del Deo, writer and shack activist, and her husband, artist and restaurateur Salvatore Del Deo, who counted Harry Kemp as his “spiritual godfather,” have used shacks for a half-century.

There’s little wonder then about civic outpourings of support for the dune shacks. The dunes and their traditional uses are part of the town’s civic image. During the late twentieth century, while segments of town pushed for real estate development, the town’s majority has consistently rallied to protect the dunes and the dune shacks. Like the Pilgrims commemorated by the granite tower, the dune shacks and their uses have become entrenched icons within the civic identity. Threats to the shacks represent threats to the town. They are perceived as threats to the core of the town, Old Provincetown with its cherished traditions.

When I refer to “Old Provincetown” in this chapter, I mean that iconic community featured in the frescos and oils at town hall. It’s a concept of a society of mariners, beach plum gatherers, and their families with Portuguese and Yankee roots, of prominent artists from America and Europe, and of maverick thinkers and writers. Old Provincetown is that iconic community embedded so deeply within the core civic identity. Today, socially, the concept of Old Provincetown is primarily held by the year-round residents of the lower cape who consider Provincetown their home and who have inherited or adopted as their own the community’s historic Yankee and Portuguese heritage. Many of them now live in neighboring towns like Truro and Orleans. The edges of Provincetown have become less distinct as family members have been pushed to neighboring towns by high rents and property taxes. But for many displaced kin, as for the year-round resident families, Provincetown has remained the cultural center, the true home. The importance of the dunes in maintaining the concept of Old Provincetown as part of the living traditions for its core of residents is the subject of this chapter.

The following materials show the deep connections of year-round residents in Provincetown to the Backshore, illustrated with a detailed case example from four women. The women are dune shack users who have never owned a shack, but have used them as friends of shack heads. While unique in the details of their lives and experiences, the women in the case represent a larger class of users from year-round resident families with long roots in Provincetown, families that identify with the heritage of Old Provincetown. Of the people I interviewed, this included the Malicoats, the Tashas, the Del Deos, and the Fitts-Walkers. Undoubtedly there are many more I did not interview. The stories the women tell wend among several themes, but their paths lead back to a central issue, the preservation of a way of life identified with Old Provincetown. The preservation issue is expressed in seemingly scattered particulars, like lighthouses, beach plums, banners of Portuguese fishing boats, heritage museums, reasonable rents, and of course, dune shacks. Yet the women conflate them, conceptually, into their core issue, their yearning hope of preserving a traditional way of life, a valued heritage in Provincetown. In their tales, I came to understand that the struggle to preserve the traditional uses of the dune shacks becomes emblematic of the struggle to save the whole and all its cherished parts. In this way, the dune shacks and their uses become powerful images of a larger struggle for the people of Provincetown, one of cultural survival as a distinctive community on the lower cape.

## Four Women from Provincetown

For four women, Provincetown has been a cultural center for more than a lifetime. I met them at Snail Road on a Sunday morning, where the main trail begins its climb into the dunes from the East End of Provincetown. Snail Road was once a road for wagons and motor vehicles over the dunes to the Peaked Hill Coast Guard Station. It's a footpath now. The trail cascades off a tall dune forming a sandy white causeway spilling steeply into a dark patch of wood, burying large oaks at its foot. The four women arranged to meet me here. They wanted to tell me about the importance of the dune shacks to the cultural traditions of their people. They wanted to tell me their stories while walking into the dunes, following trails they have used since young children, heading toward an important destination in their lives, the Tasha shack. This was the best way to tell their stories, they said.

Kathie Joseph Meads and Maureen Joseph Hurst are sisters. Susan Leonard is their close friend from childhood. These three descend from old Cape Cod families. Theo Cozzi Poulin, another friend from childhood, was born at Provincetown from an immigrant Italian family drawn by the art colony. For the four women, the traditions of Provincetown were personal, living traditions. They believed these traditions were under tremendous strain from outside forces. And they believed their traditions were bound to the dunes and the dune shacks. The telling of this story was begun by Kathie Joseph Meads, on our foray among the dunes:

Kathie: It really is such a strong feeling. I don't know if other people feel the way we feel about where they grew up. We were talking this morning about it – the uniqueness of growing up in Provincetown, and the importance of things like the dune shacks and walking across the breakwater and all these things that we did, going clamming, getting mussels, getting berries, all this stuff. We really didn't go out of town. It was like an island. Our parents didn't have cars and stuff. So this was our whole life, three-miles-long and two-miles-wide, this was our whole life. There were no vacations. People didn't take vacations. We lived off the land here, and the water. We ate fish five days a week

Susan: We ate a lot of fish. We ate a lot of fish. *[Laughter.]*

Maureen: Picked a lot of blueberries.

Kathie: Lobster again? *[Laughter.]* You're kidding me, we're having scallops again?

Susan: Can you imagine? Too much lobster? We ate like the Rockefellers. We absolutely ate like the Rockefellers. I don't know about your father, but Sunny Tasha, Herman Tasha, and my father all went hunting. So we were eating things like venison, quail and pheasant, fish, scallops and lobster, and thinking, 'Can't we just have macaroni and cheese?' No one starved, because even if the price of fish was through the floor, you could at least eat it. They might not be getting paid for it, but...

Kathie: Well, when we owned a fishing boat in one of the early years of my marriage, I can remember, I was taking a course at the Cape Cod community college. Unexpectedly, my instructor and a few friends showed up at my door. I didn't have any money. I didn't have anything in the house. All I had was lobster. *[Laughter.]* They came in the door and I said, "Well, why don't you stay for lunch, but umm...all I have to give you is lobster." They said, "Oh, all she's got is lobster!" And I said, "Really, all I have is lobster. I have no bread to put it on. I have no mayonnaise. But if you like lobster, we'll just make a big plate of lobster." They said, "We think we can handle it." It was literally all we had. I remember eating fish when we had the fishing boat. I said, as you just said, "Well, at least we have fish." And my husband Richard said, "Well, that's the most

expensive fish per pound you've ever eaten. It's costing us a huge mortgage." But that's what you've got. We never starved, that's for sure.

Susan: Well, you know, Provincetown was really pretty much a classless town. There were a very few families that had a few extra dollars, but the rest of us were all in the same boat.

Kathie: Yeah, you didn't sense that you didn't have money. You just didn't have money.

The four women grew up together in Provincetown, a home for them insulated geographically and culturally, a so-called "island" that young girls rarely left, three families and four girls. The four became linked with the children of Sunny and Herman Tasha. This connected them to Tasha Hill in Provincetown, where the Tashas lived, a wooded "dogpatch" of paths and small cottages built by Sunny Tasha "with her own two hands." It also connected them to Harry Kemp, the "Poet of the Dunes," spending his waning years on Tasha Hill. Likewise, they became connected to the Kemp shack, soon to be passed to the Tasha family at Harry Kemp's death. These family connections were traced out for me when we arrived at the Tasha shack, sitting on the sand to eat our sack lunches. For the four women, the connections reached both backward and forward through time, the newest generations intertwined by marriage, called an "eerie" full circle:

Kathie: I'll try to remember what I said on the hillside. It just sort of pours out. I'm Kathie Joseph Meads. My maiden name is Joseph and I've lived all my life in Provincetown. I was born here on Winslow Street in Provincetown in my grandmother's house. My parents are Anthony and Alice Joseph. My father was a Portuguese fisherman – is a Portuguese fisherman. He's still alive. My mother just passed away in May. She was from Boston, here as a young college graduate just before she was entering her masters program in Boston, at Boston College, and worked for the summer where she met my father right after WWII, and fell in love, here in Provincetown that summer. As my sister Maureen had said earlier, my dad proposed to her in a dory he stole off the beach, out in the middle of the harbor. She just never went back to Boston. So in many ways, what I think is unique about our situation, Maureen and I, is that we had a real marriage of cultures in our household. It wasn't always an easy relationship for them, but for the children growing up in that environment, we experienced Provincetown in all of its diversity, from a very early age. My mother sought out her intellectual, artistic friends, and my father's side of the family were very traditional Portuguese and were very much encouraging those values. So there was always a constant clash in that household of those values.

Through my mother's friends, we became very involved with the Cozzis, who are the parents of Theo. On the Portuguese side, we met Susan Leonard. Her dad was a fisherman. And Paula Tasha's family, who were again another mixture of cultures, the Tashas, with Herman's Portuguese background. So we had quite a unique experience as children growing up. The dunes for us became our playground, our place for adventure. Thanks to the Tasha family, we had free access to this dune shack at all times, and we made the most of it. So many of our life's experiences were blended into what we learned here in the dunes. And they go on. It continues on and teaches us today.

Theo: Well, my family came here to study with [the artist] Henry Hensche, along with Salvatore Del Deo. My father ended up opening a restaurant, *Ciro and Sal's*, with Sal Del Deo. So I grew up with my parents both in the art community and the restaurant community. Kathie, as she said, her mother and my mother became fast friends and did everything together because they had children all at the same age. Kathie and I are the same age, my sister Michael and Maureen are the same age, and Anthony and my brother

Peter were the same age. So they took us to Beach Forest hiking, and out to High Head picking blueberries, and out foraging for mushrooms. At some point, because my parents worked a lot at the restaurant, they hired Paula's oldest sister Carla Tasha to baby-sit for us. We were quite young at the time. She started bringing us to Tasha Hill [the Tasha residence in Provincetown], and that's how we met Paula and Paul and the whole rest of the family. I brought Kathie, Maureen, and Anthony into it. We all became fast friends, all of us, the whole group. My brother, Paul, and Anthony were all very good friends.

Sunny Tasha kind of took over as the matriarch. We were always free to go to her house at any time, and stay there for days if we wanted to, at Tasha Hill. She always had a big pot of beans on the stove and homemade loaves of bread in the oven, and you knew it was there for anyone who wanted it. There was always food on the stove. And she started taking us on these forays out to the dune shack. I remember sleeping outside and getting wet by the dew. We always had hot dogs and ketchup and she had her tea. Herman Tasha put a pump in for water. There was a natural spring in a hollow and we used to pump water. We had the dogs with us at all times, especially if we came out here on our own. It was a great experience. We spent a great deal of time out here, and together at the Tasha's [house]. It was kind of like a second home. I spent a whole summer living with the Tashas when my mother moved to Springfield. Kathie and I have been best friends since we were two years old, and Maureen and Michael, and Susan. There's a huge connection there.

Interestingly enough, it's evolved, because when I had my first child, Kathie and Maureen and I came out here with my infant son and stayed here for several days, out here in this very shack. And now he's engaged to be married to Ariel, Paula Tasha's niece, and they come out here and spend a lot of time at this shack. She called me one day this summer and said, "We're out here and we see the note that you and Maureen and Kathie and Susan wrote in the ledger, when you were out here for Maureen's birthday." And there it is. [She reads from the shack's logbook.] It says: "May 21<sup>st</sup> 2002. Back again, the old gang. How many years ago when we romped here as kids and ate Sunny's sweet dune pea soup. Maureen's birthday party, fifty-second. Thanks Paul, Paula, Carl, and Carla. We remember. Signed, Kathie, Susan, Theo, and Maureen." So, Ariel called me on her cell phone and said that she was reading that. And then she wrote: "May 15, 2004. In the midst of all the bullshit the best thing is to be able to get away and truly be free. What a wonderful day – high 60s and a brisk cooling wind. Draka (that's their dog), Drew (my son), Brian, and I are all out and about waiting until the tide is just right for the bite. Drew and I are spending the night, trying to escape the gradually filling P-town as summer nears. Signed, Ariel."

And then this is written six days later, the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, by the girlfriend of Brian who they had brought out with them. It says: "Came here with Ariel, Andrew, Brandon, and Brian." Brandon is my *other* son. "Went fishing until the sun set. Brian and I stayed. We had lobster claws and wine. What a beautiful night. I'm from New York and have spent summers camping here since I was born. Truro and Provincetown hold a special place in my heart and this night was a culmination of that feeling. It was hard for me to leave my family and friends for the summer, but being here has made me realize why I came back, and will until the day I die. The sky, the beach, the ocean are my church where I feel connected to all that is true in life. Thank you for the memorable first night for our summer together. Signed, Suzanne."

So, this is like another generation connection. And it's really eerie for me. Now, after all of these years of being connected by friendship, we're actually going to be connected by marriage. It's sort of come full circle.

Susan: I'm Susan Leonard. I grew up here and spent most of my life here. Even when I wasn't here, I was here. Even when I was in far away places, there was always a comfort in knowing and remembering Provincetown and the dunes. I lived for a time in Quito, Ecuador, at ten thousand feet. So I would never forget where I came from, in bed, trying to get to sleep, I would start in the East End of Provincetown and literally remember and go house to house to house, and street corner to street corner, and remember all the names of the streets, and all the people that I knew who lived in every house I could think of, from East End to West End. Interestingly enough, I ran into Mary P. Roderick walking into town the other day. Mary P. Roderick is 98 years old, and she can walk as fast as you and I. And I said something to her about remembering Provincetown. And she said, "Do you know Mary Viera and I used to sit in front of town hall, and Mary would say, 'OK, it's time to remember. Remember that house? Do you remember who lived on the corner?'" And I was like, 'Oh my god, I thought only I was the crazy one who would do that, to remember!' And here are two women in their nineties, who are like, "Don't you remember? Don't you remember?"

My father was born here in Provincetown in a house in the East End. His great grandfather came here from the Azores in about 1870. That's that side of the family. My mother's family has been living in Eastham [on Cape Cod] longer than Eastham has been a town. Talk about two cultures. It was almost as extreme as Maureen and Kathie's. You've got Yankee, seriously Yankee, Methodist, from Eastham. My poor mother moved to Provincetown. I'm sure she didn't even know what hit her.

I have to say, people ask me about my family, "What side do you relate to the most?" You know, those Yankees were really drab. *[Laughter]* I mean, my Portuguese heritage is probably what I recognize first and foremost. But we can't discount the other. One is really a little more prominent in my way of life.

I grew up here not knowing anyone but my cousins until I met Maureen and Kathie at the beach, fifty years ago, with my raccoon cap on and their mother shelling green beans from the garden. That's when we were about four years old. Kathie hadn't gone to first grade yet. That was my introduction to that family. And we've been together ever since. But I think it was late in life when I met Theo, I think I was eight or nine. Paula Tasha probably was about second grade. It seems to me that she was in my class.

We all spent so much time in each other's homes. As I was saying earlier, it was like, I put it in Latin terms, "co-madres," where women have the right to raise each other's children and explain life to them in the terms in which they see it. When I got to go to Sunny Tasha's house, that was like a theme park compared to my house. There was stuff you never saw before. There were things written on the blackboard every day. Remember the black board?

Kathie: She always wrote a saying, a quote from the bible across the blackboard, across the top.

Susan: Or Tennyson or someone.

Kathie: I always remember a bible quote. I know that she must have had the poets. When you sat down, the bulletin board was above the kitchen table, so when you sat to eat you were supposed to reflect on this quote.

Susan: But that house had things in it! I mean, did you see those things in your own house? *[Laughter]* She exposed us to things that we'd never ever seen. It was something that was so special and odd and peculiar. It was just one more thing in your life that would become part of you. Harry. Harry Kemp. You walk in and here's this guy wrapped up in this cloak. He sat in the big rocking chair, or in front of the fire of the pot-bellied stove. He didn't say a whole heck of a lot. But you knew it was a presence. This was a presence.

We see in these introductions several windows into the society of Provincetown as experienced by the four women. It's small-town and insular, so familiar to its long-term residents that, eyes closed, its streets and families can be visualized and named from one end to the other. It's culturally rich, containing influences from Old Yankees, Portuguese, and its seasonal art colony. It's economically poor, with family life connected to the not-so-abundant sea, the perpetually-impoorished arts, the summer-season restaurants, and the small, immediate countryside with its gleanings of berries, mushrooms, and shellfish. Overall, it's a society proud of its tolerance of cultural pluralism in neighbors, even while its families frequently roil internally with the blending and clashing of traditions. Extended kinship ties and long-term friendships provide the language of connectedness for Provincetown.

Susan called her mother and Sunny Tasha, "co-madres." Theo called Sunny Tasha a "matriarch." Each understood that Sunny Tasha was the female in charge on Tasha Hill. Sunny Tasha took them in, like she took in Harry Kemp. Fed them. Wrote inspirational quotes for them on the blackboard above the kitchen table. She exposed them to wonderful things. And she instructed them. But what they were taught were not old, normative traditions. As little girls, they were taught to question authority. They were given skills for breaking free of social restrictions, so that they might develop into strong, educated, and confident women. Sunny Tasha was Lithuanian, a Catholic-animist by way of the coal-mining towns of Pennsylvania, married into the Portuguese culture of Provincetown. Hers was a two-culture household, rich and at times, tempestuous. Kathie and Maureen came from a two-culture household, their Boston Irish mother swept away by a Portuguese fisherman in a stolen skiff. Susan Leonard came from a two-culture household, her mother an old Yankee Methodist from up cape in Eastham marrying into the Provincetown Portuguese – "she didn't even know what hit her." And Theo Cozzi's family added to the cultural mix, a family of artists with Italian roots drawn by the Provincetown art colony. At this time, Provincetown displayed several divisions, East End and West End, Yankee and Portuguese, the kids from a particular side expected to beat up the kids from another side. The artist's colony, primarily a summertime society, intertwined with this. Small-town Provincetown was not a unitary community. It was culturally layered and commonly contentious.

### Childhood Training

As described by the four women, Sunny Tasha's instructions were designed to help young girls see their way through the turmoil and restrictions inherent in the small town's social divisions and old traditions, not necessarily to reject them, but to question them, to successfully negotiate them as strong, independent women. The instruction was modeled after her own life experiences. Sunny Tasha regularly retreated to the dunes. The dunes, and the Kemp shack at the fringe of Provincetown, were her places of refuge. They also were her designated proving grounds for the next generation of children from Tasha Hill, especially the young girls.

At mid-century, gender roles for boys and girls in Provincetown were channeled by expectations of future occupations. The expectation still was that local boys would become fishermen. Girls would not. Men went to sea. Women stood on high points prayerfully watching the stormy horizons for returning fleets. Boys got little boats for play. Girls did not. These were mainstream expectations in Provincetown. But Sunny Tasha had additional things in mind for her charges. Like the bohemian artists and writers with whom she associated, Sunny Tasha pushed her children into the raw, unruly dunes, to impress upon them the joy of maverick self-confidence. The boys had the sea. The girls had the dunes. As co-madre and matriarch, her self-appointed task was training women by pushing them to the fringes of Provincetown. In hindsight, walking into the dunes, sitting at the Tasha shack, the women reflected on these childhood instructions:

Kathie: This is just a reflection back on childhood. Maybe everybody else will want to expound on it a little bit. There was enough tradition left [at that time]. We were pre-women's rights movement. But we had Sunny Tasha. And she was the premier women's rights.

Susan: Didn't she give us a glimpse into that world?

Kathie: She certainly did. I'm sure the Tashas told you how she built those cottages in her yard. I was always so impressed by the fact that she went searching out church windows. She would go everywhere when she heard that there was a church being demolished. She'd search out stained glass windows that she liked. Or she'd go to a demolition yard and she'd search out windows. She'd bring them back and position them on the lot in the best position for the light that she wanted, and then build the house around that. She did. It supplemented their income, their little rentals.

As for the boys and the sea – boys were allowed to get a little boat and get out on the water when girls weren't really encouraged to do that. So as our brothers were moving out, getting their little outboard motor, allowed to go diving for money at the end of the pier first, allowed to do these things, we gravitated toward the dunes. This was our adventure land out here. We could come out here. We could bring a dog with us. We could leave Tasha Hill, make our way through the woods, and head out to the dunes and be gone for the day. We could experience our own growth in an adventurous sort of way, out here on the dunes.

Maureen: You could go wherever you wanted to go.

Kathie: I remember we used to stop at this place we called the Moving Island, which was really Jimmy's Pond. We were light enough, young enough, so you could walk on the gunk on the top, kind of balance yourself.

Maureen: It was really a quaking bog, we found out years later.

Kathie: Then all of a sudden, you'd go down! We'd be full of mud. Anytime you slowed down, your leg would go down. So it would be a real challenge to see if you could get all the way across the moving island without your leg sinking in. And then we'd start screaming, "There are turtles under here!" Then the big thing was, we'd go across the dunes to go swimming, with the stinking mud drying on you, walking across, and then we'd get to the other side and jump in the water!

I remember Sunny used to say, "Don't forget to stop by and say 'hello' to Harry." Oh my god, ah jeeze, "OK, alright." So we'd stop. Once in a while he'd want to talk. Lots of times he wouldn't want to talk and he'd just go, "Yah, hi," and then we'd just like keep running down to the water. Well, maybe that was her way of checking on us and we

didn't even realize it. Maybe she'd say to Harry later, "Hey, did you see the kids?" Yeah, I never thought of that. Now as a parent, I guess I would do it that way.

I remember there would be people out here too. And we didn't know what they were doing out there. They were like, you know, nude sunbathers and all that stuff. I can remember we used to make a big circle around them and just walk real quiet if we saw a couple or something. But we didn't really talk about it. You know, it was just our playground. We just came out here for the day. It was a safe place.

Susan: Don't you think that the focus of the water for boys was really, at that point in history, our fathers or our grandfathers still expected that their sons would be the next generation of fishermen? I think they were pointed, they were encouraged, they were gaining skills they didn't even know they were gaining – being able to row a boat, being able to run outboard motors, to sink a boat and right it again and not drown.

Kathie: But Sunny, she had this wonderful way. I'm sure she had a level of control, now as a parent you can reflect back. I'm sure that she had a level of control. But we felt that we had complete freedom. It was just a wonderful feeling when she'd say, "Take a dog." We always took dogs with us. The girls would take dogs and we'd head out over the dunes. She would sort of give us just some basic ingredients, like a few little things to put together for a meal, and we'd be out here on our own. She worked at the Flagship, she was waiting on table, and she would come out afterwards and join us for the night, late at night, and we'd be out here for the evening. We'd go swimming or we'd be making our dinner, and we'd be camping out here for the night. When I look back on it, I'm sure that feeling at being home in nature, feeling that sense of being able to have an adventure of your own, she helped develop all those skills.

I'll never forget one weekend at her house. We were probably twelve years old. She said to us, "How many of you have ever seen the mountains?" As Maureen has said earlier, we didn't go anywhere. We'd never seen the mountains. So she walked back out of the other room and she put a roadmap on the table and we sat down, Paula, Michael, myself. And she laid this roadmap out and said, "Those are the White Mountains, this is Maine, this is New Hampshire, and this is Vermont. Next weekend we're going to the mountains. You decide where you want to go." And there we were at twelve years old with a pen, and we wrote up a map. She took the map and we went on the exact roads that we had mapped out. We traveled up the coast of Maine a little, went across, we saw the sun set on Mt. Washington. She didn't want us to deviate from that at all. She wanted to show us that we could write our own trip and go and have this exploration. That was the first time I'd ever seen the mountains. I still love the mountains. That's the kind of thing she did as a parent that I think just opened our eyes. And the dunes were the start of all of it.

Susan: She gave us a set of survival skills that we didn't even know that she was giving to us.

Theo: And a sense of independence.

Susan: She taught us to question authority. Really. Just because it was a law, written on a paper, it didn't necessarily mean it should be accepted as written.

Maureen: And this dune shack is a testament to that. This shack would be gone.

Kathie: It strikes me that someone as special as Sunny Tasha, her way of life and the contribution she made to our whole generation, the way we grew up, is every bit as

important as a lovely poem that was composed out here by Harry Kemp, or a painter's inspired painting. Because they may have inspired the people who were reading their poems, or they may have inspired the people who saw their paintings, but Sunny inspired a whole generation of children and friends. Her legacy is just as important to preserve as those written testaments of poets or the paintings. This shack is that legacy – the legacy of openness, and sharing, and the taste for adventure, and most important, the way she developed in us our ability to feel that we were up to the challenge of these adventures. That we could become self-reliant. That even though we were young girls and we weren't, as we spoke earlier, allowed yet out on the water in our little motorboats, we could come to the dunes. We could spend the night on the dunes. We would have the tools that were necessary later on.

Maybe we ought to spend a little time reflecting on how these experiences as children better prepared us, how we feel they prepared our own children to go out and meet the world. For Susan to find the courage to take off to go to Ecuador on her own and set up a life. All of us in our own way. Because we shared these common traditions as children. The skills we learned growing up in the dunes and having this freedom propelled us all off in many, many different directions. I think we recognize that and brought that into our parenting, and tried to bring that to our children. And our children recognize some of that value out here. But Sunny was the start of it all. This legacy that she's left with this dune shack is just going to continue on, from one generation to another, as much as Harry's poems are, or as much as those wonderful paintings are that were inspired out here in the dunes.

### Cultural Survival

For these four women, the childhood experiences in the dunes have become interwoven with the preservation of Portuguese and Yankee traditions of Provincetown. Over the last decade or so, the four women have worked hard to preserve the concept of Old Provincetown and its traditions. Non-conventionality was consistent with fighting for local traditions. Sunny Tasha inculcated traditions, scratching bible verses on the kitchen blackboard for children and reenacting the Pilgrims' first washday each year dressed in period costumes, reinforcing local heritages and time-tested knowledge. The four women perceived local traditions as being threatened by outside forces. They struggled alongside others in Provincetown to secure a future for their living heritage. The preservation of the dune shacks and their continued uses for year-round residents were parts of this struggle for Old Provincetown. The four women spoke about this effort, sitting in front of the Tasha shack:

Maureen: There are so few things I feel that are left that are visible for us to pass down to the generations. The fishing industry has really dwindled. It used to be that every single one of us had somebody in the family who got their living fishing, at least one person. Now really, we'd have to think for a minute to see if there are any of us left anymore. So here's the right of passage of the dunes, and trying to make our children understand what it was like, what that connection is like, and what their heritage is.

I recently got involved in the Provincetown Portuguese Festival. I'm on the committee for that. Theo's dad and Sal did a fundraiser for us at the Red Inn this year. It was Ciro and Sal together again, and they were so happy to do it. They said without the fishermen, the artists would not have survived in this town. It's that whole melting and that whole coming together, of all the different people.

We had a Portuguese artist, John Debrito from California, who's an immigrant Portuguese artist from the Azores. He came this year. He said, "What can you show me that would give me a feeling? I want to paint Provincetown for the festival." Well, I said, "I have to take you to the dunes." And I took him out. This was in April. [She searches and finds an entry in the Tasha shack logbook, and reads.] "Paul, First trip out to welcome spring. The above is a new friend and artist. Please come and meet him opening night of the Portuguese Festival. As always, I am so grateful the shack is still here. Many blessings to you and your family. Thank you, Maureen." Then John wrote something to him in Portuguese, which I don't know what it is. He did pictures, paintings of the dunes and the dune shacks. They were exhibited this year at the festival. It all ties in. It's all part of Provincetown. It's all part of our childhood. I really feel that we need to preserve the things that visually we can see, and our senses, everything, for our children. This is honestly one of the few things that are left for us to pass on.

Kathie: I remember not that many years ago, we were at a town meeting, debating a building that's now going to be the Provincetown Public Library. They're working on it in the center of town. But in the beginning it was a Methodist Church. Then it was the Walter P. Chrysler Art Museum. Then, after he picked up his collection and moved south, the building was abandoned. So we began the Heritage Museum. It was a noble effort. Josephine Del Deo was one of the trustees that started the Heritage Museum there. All of these collections were brought in. It was a beautiful little museum of our old culture. The *Rose Dortha* was built within it, this large indoor model ship. But then, a number of years ago, the Heritage Museum had kind of folded up a bit, and closed up, and they didn't know what to do with this big building. At one point there was an organization that wanted to buy it for a theatre. There was a whole move afoot to sell the building to this private company for a theatre.

I was at the town meeting, debating back and forth, what will happen to our culture and our heritage and all of our collection? They wanted to take the *Rose Dortha*, pick it up, move it to the end of the pier, and put it in a Plexiglas dome. Some of these were really ridiculous ideas. They said, "We can't afford to hold on to it any longer." And one person got up and said, "It needs to be said that Provincetown is known worldwide, has a worldwide reputation for its fine art. It's artists and writers who have been here, and some of these people are well received in Europe, and this and that, and Provincetown is a place of the arts, and that is what it has evolved to, and we should support the arts, and we should get this theatre and help to get it on its feet, and I say we should sell it to the theatre." The position that was being taken about Provincetown being the center of the arts really struck a [sour] chord in me, enraged me a bit. So I got up and said, "I would like to say to the previous speaker that it's true that Provincetown is now well known for its arts and isn't that a wonderful thing. But I'd also like to remind him that the very men that sailed on the *Rose Dortha*, and our fishing heritage, are the ones that fed those poor starving artists before they became rich and famous in Europe and elsewhere." So the building got to stay, after the discussion sort of went in that vein. And now it's going to be the library. I think it's a great use for the building.

The Heritage Collection is now being held in town buildings. It's being proposed that it go to the Pilgrim Monument Association. There's a little bit of debate about that. There's concern that they really need to remain the property of Provincetown. It's important that Provincetown holds on to these little bits. See, bit by bit, everything's going. And the more they don't know the past, the more they don't see the importance of

holding on, which is the problem with everything that's happening, including the dunes. Everything changes, and we realize that, everything changes and nothing stays the same, but it's such a beautiful wealth of history here.

Susan: And to that point, the Provincetown Portuguese Festival was revitalized about nine years ago by my cousins and several other people. Maureen has been doing things with it for a couple of years, and Maureen really knows how to get me going. So I had this vision of re-instituting the parading with the banners, the procession from church down to the pier, for the blessing of the fleet. There used to be a big procession of the banners. I'm a chiropractor and I have people who are my captive audience for about twenty minutes. There are enough people from Provincetown who see me that I began to say, "Do you have your grandfather's banner, the banner from your grandfather's boat?" And one woman goes, "Yeah, I know exactly where it is." [A photograph dated 1948 from a guidebook is shown to me.]

That's how it used to look. There were hundreds of fisherman who used to march. Hundreds of fisherman marched with their banners. Each boat had a banner. They would escort the bishop down to the pier after the Mass was served to bless the boats. I couldn't wait until I was old enough to march with my father. It was such a thrill.

And so, this year I called the captain of the boat that my father fished on for close to thirty years. I asked him if we could be in the procession with the banner this year. [Points to a recent picture.] This is me. And my brother. And one of the captain's nephews. You'll see some other people in there that you'll recognize. And there were only what, a half a dozen of us this year? But it made such a huge impression on the people who live here and remembered. It was just fabulous.

Kathie: [Pointing to a statue, carried in the procession.] And there's St. Peter.

Wolfe: Who holds St. Peter? The church?

Maureen: Yep.

Susan: They got a new lightweight version a few years ago.

Susan: And this gentleman, he's been coming every year since he was small.

Kathie: In memory of his dad.

Maureen: This is my mother's banner, from my mother's boat... my father's boat.

Susan: That's me and my brother and the captain's nephew.

Wolfe: So you revitalized this tradition just this year?

Susan: Yes. And there was a woman and her husband parked on the side of the road as we were coming through, going towards the pier. I think both of them were in high school with my dad. And she saw us coming but I don't think she realized, there was a band in front of us, and something else. She saw us coming. And did you hear her? She just went – gasp! She was speechless. Absolutely speechless. She was wiping her eyes. She was crying. I'm crying. I turn around and look at these two and they're crying. Everybody's crying.

Maureen: We were carrying my mother's banner right behind her. The woman had just been taking care of my mother in the manor. And my mother had just died. All of this was really nice.

Susan: And my brother – I called him. This is my half brother. My father remarried and so I'm twenty-three years older than he is and we haven't had that many things that we've done together as brother and sister. I called him and I told him this is what we're doing, and this is a really big honor that Joe's going to let us carry this, and we have to do this for Dad. [Susan starts crying.] And he did....

Kathie: He did. It was nice to see you guys do that. And this is my mother...  
Maureen: We're all going to start crying. [Maureen starts crying.]  
Susan: This is what it's all about.

The depth of feeling for family and local traditions is evident in this exchange. The symbols of family and tradition, such as the banners of family boats processing with the Bishop for the Provincetown Portuguese Festival, evoke an outpouring of memory and emotion. Like the banners, the dune shacks too have become symbolic of Old Provincetown. They evoke similar upwellings of emotion. They currently are symbols of a way of life for a small community perceived to be endangered. I asked how large the Portuguese community was in Provincetown and its environs:

Susan: It was very big. Now it's kind of dwindling.  
Maureen: I'd say it's twenty-five percent Portuguese now. A lot of people have moved to Truro, but Provincetown is still the center. Truro is like a suburb, sort of.  
Susan: There's only about 3,500 people who live here year-round anyway in Provincetown. I'd say two to three thousand Portuguese between here and Truro, don't you think?  
Kathie: Oh yeah, at least. The Provincetown heritage is still very strong here.  
Susan: It just kind of gets buried or overshadowed by the new money.  
Maureen: Yeah, we are trying to maintain our history. That's why we got involved in the festival. And Theo [who is not Portuguese] is involved. The whole project that we call the Provincetown Portuguese Festival isn't just a celebration of being Portuguese. You don't have to have been born here. It's for everybody. Ciro and Sal are helping. Everybody is helping. All you need is a passion for Provincetown. So many people have that. There are a lot of new people who have bought property in Provincetown who have that. They think they've died and gone to heaven when they landed here. Those are the kind of people that we just embrace. They want to hear it, they want to know, and they want to add to the community. So, it's not dead. It's not a dead thing. It's just that there are a lot of other people that have a lot more money, or who are just summer residents here to make a lot of money, and they don't want to know about the dune shacks, or the Portuguese, or the school, or what's happening. But that's not all there is. There's definitely a whole group that's passionate about Provincetown. And they all come and help with the festival. It's there for everybody.

One pressure on the full-time residents of Provincetown today is "new money," a term referring to the latest wave of moneyed in-migrants from off cape who are buying up property in Provincetown for seasonal homes. Rents and taxes have increased substantially, squeezing the older generations of year-round residents with more modest incomes. Maureen describes how she is one of the displaced, forced by economic pressure to move up cape:

Maureen: I'm an example of that. I live in Eastham now. When my house sold in Provincetown, I really couldn't find anything that I could buy within my means to stay in town. And I work in town. I've worked here at the Council on Aging for sixteen years. So I commute. Provincetown is home. Eastham – I love my little house and everything, but you know my life is really here. I'm grateful and lucky that we have my parents' house and some day that'll be an option to come back somehow. But my children, I don't know how they'll ever be able to come back. So these little trips [to the dunes] and these little things take on even more meaning. I don't know how our kids will ever be able to stay here. I know somehow they will find a way, but it's going to be very difficult.

Kathie: My son is fortunate enough that I had a piece of land behind my home that he could build on. When I asked him, was he was sure that he wanted to build his home in Provincetown? He just finished this year. He said, “Absolutely!” I was concerned about that, because I thought there aren’t as many younger families. The schools are experiencing a real decline in enrollment. They don’t know how long they’ll be able to hang on. Is this where he’d really want to settle? But he was adamant. And he’s a world traveler. He has been everywhere. He said, “No, I want to be in Provincetown. This is where I want to be.” And it’s largely because of the things that we’re talking about today – the culture that he had as a child, that I think, in the back of his mind, even though he has no children yet, he’s anticipating already that he’s going to be able to share with his children, and pass it on.

Susan: Don’t you feel like an endangered species? The people who are now buying property here, are living in it or not living in it. It’s an investment they hang onto it for a few years, and they sell it for a huge profit. Someone else comes along and does the same thing. You go through Provincetown in the winter and there are no lights on anywhere. They’re all second homes, third homes. Or they rent it out on a weekly basis. There’s no commitment, no commitment to the emotional piece of Provincetown that I feel. That’s how I see it.

And here’s my poor mother. They’re selling the property next to her. They’ve got a price tag on it for just under \$900,000 dollars. You know, it spans Pleasant Street to Montello Street. It’s a big lot, big for Provincetown, probably big enough to put another house on. What’s that going to do to the evaluation of her property? She’s just trying to live in her home. Meanwhile, her taxes are going to go up phenomenally. If that property gets sold for just under a million dollars, you know what it does to her property evaluation. It gets bumped up another notch. So she’s living in a home that’s probably going to be worth more than \$600,000, and the floors are sagging, the pipes freeze in the winter, and certainly there’s not enough money to brace the building and get the floors straight ever again in her lifetime. I just feel like there are so few of us left. Like Kathie said earlier, it seems like all the powers that be are trying to put us out of existence.

As portrayed by these statements, the economic squeeze threatens the traditional community and culture at Provincetown. As a Provincetown resident with long local roots, Susan says she feels like “an endangered species.” The driving force behind Kathie’s son’s determination to remain in Provincetown is this endangered heritage, “the culture he had as a child,” and his strong desire to “pass it on” to his own children some day.

A second pressure on the traditions were regulations, according to the four women. The women described their frustration over restrictions of their ways of living on the lower cape. Kathie provided details about Susan’s assertion that “it seems like all the powers that be are trying to put us out of existence.”

Kathie: That’s a good point to get back to. I think that the essence of the dunes experience is an experience of freedom. It’s experiencing your own personal form of freedom, whatever that is. I’m a little resentful that our dune experience is being herded... I think that’s the word I used...

Maureen: Boxed in.

Kathie: [Speaks like she’s reciting a set of rules.] ‘We will all experience the dunes in this same way.’ ‘We will all walk across the same path to the ocean.’ ‘We will not transgress.’ ‘We will not walk on this old path or walk on that old path.’ ‘We will refrain from harm to the environment in so far as we will not allow you to pick your

beach plums anymore.’ ‘Your experience will be the same as the person from Idaho or Iowa or whatever.’ And why is that? That is because we are a National Park that belongs to everybody and we are all supposed to treat everyone equally?

But I want to make the point that was not the understanding of the people of Provincetown. This was to be a National Seashore. The legislation for this was different. It was recognized that it wasn’t a wilderness area. There were cultural, deeply-embedded cultural traditions here that we were assured would continue. We welcomed the Seashore with open arms under those terms. But we have gradually felt the squeeze, that we have no right any different than anyone else. And that lies at the crux of the dune shack issue, to imagine that this shack is going to be taken away from the Tasha family, even with its wide open doors to anyone who wants to approach it, that it’s still going to be taken away and regulated to the point where we will not be able to stop by here and have our moments ever again. Or to the point that we’ll have to be relegated into the box of an artist. Or we’re relegated into having only a specific purpose and time that we can be here for, if we can get in here at all. That is such a sadness. It’s going to drive away further the people that are trying to stay, if they can no longer have it.

Maureen: Part of our inspiration is our acceptance of everybody and our trust for everybody. When we made this agreement [about the Seashore], I can remember my mother saying we’re one of the only towns on the Cape that didn’t ask for a beach for ourselves. This was because we believed what was said to us: “You will be able to continue.” Everybody said, “Ok, great, that’s great, that sounds great.” And we’ve done that over and over and over again. It seems that we’re losing more and more and more. So the very thing that makes Provincetown so special seems to be our destruction. It’s so frustrating. It’s like, “but you promised.” We feel like little kids, “but wait a minute, you promised.” Now we can’t do this. Now we can’t do that. All of these little things that are our identity, that inspire us to stay here.

I have a daughter who gave up a big corporate job in Boston to come home and write. She’s trying to make it running a little restaurant. I mean there’s just thousands and thousands of stories like that, that are getting to be maybe a hundred, two hundred. This [the dune shack] is one little piece of our history, one little tiny piece, that we want to preserve. And it just really seems almost like we are a tribe, like an Indian reservation, like, “Wait a minute, wait a minute, we’re here, we’re still here!”

Susan: How many people do you meet, who, when you tell them that you grew up here, they look at you, and they say, “I didn’t know that anyone lived here?” They literally say, “I didn’t think any one lives here.”

Theo: I work in inns now as an innkeeper. I’ve worked in five different ones. I get that response constantly. “You grew up here? There really are real natives that grew up here?” It seems the concept now is just the rich and famous and money. It’s just sort of like, “Little people, how do you manage?” Well, we work two and three jobs sometimes to make it to live here.

Maureen: And what makes that so important? It’s not Commercial Street. It’s the dunes. It’s the water. It’s Race Point. It’s Long Point. It’s staying overnight at the lighthouse. And that’s another whole story. Provincetown seems to be losing its little grasp on that.

Susan: We’re working hard at it, though.

Theo: Well, it’s come full circle. When my parents came here, came here not only to study with Henry Hensche, but they came here because this was the place that artists could

actually come and thrive on no money. They could do their art. They got mussels from the breakwater, free fish from the fisherman at the pier. They gave free fish to anyone who came to the end of the pier. They dug clams off the flat. They would never have made it in those early years without doing that. It was a place where you could come and survive. You can't do that anymore. You have to almost work around the clock in order to stay here. It is that we're a dying breed.

Kathie: It's these little bits of traditions that we hold on to that keep us here, and keep our families here, and keep us coming back. And there are so many people that do get it. You start to talk to them. They say, "You're so lucky." And we know how lucky we are. We know how lucky we are. But this dune shack brings all of that out in us, when we get out here, because we realize how threatened we are. When we hear that the very existence of this dune shack is threatened, it brings up all these emotions of what else is threatened in our lives. The whole threat – it just grows: the dune shack's going, our way of life's going, our existence in Provincetown is going.

As seen in these statements, the four women have worked to preserve living traditions, ways of living that are diminished and threatened but that still exist. Evidence of living traditions is seen in their children's decisions to live in Provincetown and the lower cape, despite the difficulties. The women reported that they fight to preserve the traditions not just for themselves, but for the next generation. And based on the notes in the dune shack logbooks, their young-adult children were acquiring some of their parents' uses of the dunes. The cultural patterns were appearing in the next generation:

Maureen: I think to all of us it represents privacy, it represents a camaraderie, it's where you go, it's a holy sacred place, the dunes for us, I think. And for my children, too. I have three daughters, and there are pictures in the photo album, the youngest one washing dishes at Sal Del Deo's shack, and Courtney and Gretchen coming out for my birthday party. I look forward to bringing my grandchildren Jack and Sailor out. It's part of what makes growing up here so special, all of these rights of passage.

Kathie: The real proof in that is that our children are coming out here and experiencing those same feelings of introspection and growth. They become important milestones for them, as well. These are not places that we bring our children and they say, "OK Mom, we're going to do the 'family thing' and make a visit there and we already did that." They gravitate back out here as well. So we know that the continuity, what the dunes had done for us, is being done again in this generation, as it was passed on to us by Sunny and the Tasha family.

Maureen: [Shows some family pictures in a photo album from her backpack, of scenes at the dune shacks.] This is my youngest daughter, when she came out to visit Kathie and her late husband Richard. She's washing dishes. This is the youngest one. Her name is Halcyone. And that's her there. And let's see...

Kathie: And that was not at this shack. That was at Josephine Del Deo's shack.

Maureen: [Pointing out more photographs.] This is my oldest daughter Gretchen. This is for my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. The kids came out one night too and slept overnight. This is my daughter Courtney, the middle one. She was out here. This is actually the happiest I've seen her – she was going through a divorce at the time. So it really is, I mean it's a place to gather and go through all the stuff. There's Kathie, my sister. That's me. This is the Tasha's [shack]. This was the big storm I arrived in. I was soaking wet. It was really blowing and really raining, but it was great.

I remember when Sunny [Tasha] was sick. Paul saw me on the street and he said that his mother was so happy, because he had brought the logbooks to her so she could read them. When they were full he'd bring them in for her to read. And she saw the entry from my daughter, Courtney, when she was in New Orleans and she came up. I came out a few days later and wrote her a little message that the Courtney who wrote was my daughter. Sunny was so pleased to see that. So it really is being passed on to the generations.

### Continuing Connections

The personal connections to the dunes extend across generations for these women, looking backward and forwards. They are still discovering linkages. Susan Leonard was “thrilled” to recently discover details of her family connections with the Peaked Hill Coast Guard Station. The Tasha shack, by oral tradition, was the hen house of the station:

Susan: I was thrilled to find out something recently. I never met my grandfather. He died when my father was a boy. I knew that he was in the coast guard, but no one ever elaborated on it. Just recently I found out that he was stationed out here at Peaked Hill. He's on the U.S. census for 1930, stationed at Peaked Hill Station. I nearly cried. I was like, oh my god! He walked on that same sand that I walked on.

The coast guard, the life saving station, and all of the men, I think all but one of the men, on this list from the 1930s census, is Portuguese. It just so happens all the crew are Portuguese, while the head chief, the chief officer of the Peaked Hill station, happens to have the last name of Mayo. Mayo is a really old Yankee name. So even then you've got this division of Yankee and Portuguese. There are some names here that were anglicized, you know, Portuguese names that were anglicized. [She reads from the census.]

This is Peaked Hill Bar Station, Second District, Provincetown, U.S. Census 1930. Frank L. Mayo is the head. There is Joseph A. Morris. Now there are lots of Portuguese families with the name Morris in Provincetown. Manuel F. Silva. John F. Cook... the Cooks were Cooks because, that wasn't their real name, they took that name because the man who came here happened to be a cook on board the boat. Frank L. Sousa. This one I think is Maderos, Joseph Maderos. Oh, here's another Yankee, George Payne. Manuel Santos. Anthony R. Leonard – that's my grandfather. My grandfather at the time was twenty-four. Maurice Worth... and the Worths are Portuguese. Louie H. Silva. I think this Louie Silva would be my great-grandmother's stepfather.

So there were Portuguese men who made their living out here. Their families did come here. Their wives walked back and forth. This census was actually toward the end of their time out there.

A poem written by Harry Kemp conferred a special relationship between Theo and the shack. Traditions about Harry Kemp connected with her family traditions. On our hike, she brought the poem in her backpack, carried in a simple glassed picture frame, so it might be read in front of Harry Kemp's old shack:

Theo: When I was about a year old, Harry Kemp saw me in either my mother's or father's arms. I had blond curly hair. He was inspired to write this poem. He delivered it to Sal

Del Deo, who was a fellow artist and best friend of father's, to give to my mother and father. He signed it with a seagull feather. I had no idea that I would ever be spending so much time in the shack that he lived in, and probably wrote it in.

'Rondel of a Child's Wonder.' June 1950.

The delight of a child in a flower  
Captured me in the street.  
My heart went out to its power  
To music soft and sweet.  
It stayed my willing feet  
As with a golden dower.  
The delight of a child in a flower  
Captured me in the street.  
But the clouds of the future lower.  
I saw the Paraclete of eternity take the hour  
Where earth and heaven meet.  
The delight of a child in a flower  
Captured me in the street.

Signed with a seagull's feather,  
Harry Kemp.

Wolfe: And this is the envelope it came in? It says,

"For Salvatore Del Deo, to be given to the young, holy family with the Provincetown Christ Child."

Wolfe: The "Christ Child" is you.

Susan: What a legacy!

Theo: [*Tears in her eyes*] I know. I've kept it all these years.

The traditions of the families of these four women are those of Old Provincetown. Because of their personal family histories, the traditions have come to be strongly linked to the dune shacks. Their visits to the shacks have become a continuation of those traditions. These final statements by the women, sitting in front of the Tasha shack, examined those connections:

Susan: Coming here is really our opportunity for renewal. I know Maureen mentioned, it's a very spiritual, religious experience, not in the classic, organized, religious sense. But it's a very spiritual, religious experience for us here. I can sit here and just totally stare into space and hours can go by and I have no ideas where I was. It is meditative in a very simple way. It's restorative.

Maureen: I remember once I came out one time with Debbie Shaw. We stayed a couple of nights here at the Tasha shack. We just took a little vow that we wouldn't speak for certain hours of the day. So we would leave a rock with a little message – 'I went for a walk,' 'I'll be back in an hour' – or whatever, but just no words, for a certain amount of the day. Who's to say what's artistic and what's a gift and what isn't? The photographs that we take here, the poems that we write here, that might not be our profession, but it's definitely creative to us. Not to judge what it holds for other people, but it's just as important to us. And it is our heritage, and it is our childhood, and it all wraps up. When

things are bothering you, you head to the dunes. When you celebrate, you head to the dunes. It's just a part of our lives. It's the backdrop. It's the most beautiful backdrop you could ever ask for. And it's ours.

Kathie: You'd be cutting off our creative arm to not allow us access to what we have come to rely on as our restorative, creative release and renewal place. It's just that important to us. We're that entrenched in this.

Theo: When you say celebrations, when my father hit his 70th birthday...

Susan: That was a great day.

Theo: My sisters and I were trying to think of what can we do that's really, really special.

My father and stepmother have spent a great deal of time at various dune shacks over the years throughout their marriage. So we got the idea that we would hire Art's Dune Tours to take all their friends and family out, with lobsters. We did a big clambake. We brought everything with us that we could possibly need for a big celebration. Art's Dune Tours took us all out in several buggies and we surprised them with this huge birthday party with lobsters and corn on the cob and everything. It was an amazing thing. We're all in this hollow around this dune shack. It was an incredible experience. I don't think we could have picked anything better to do for his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. They were so shocked. It was absolutely perfect.

Susan: God, there must have been thirty or forty people. It was the entire restaurant. We all worked for Theo's father at different points.

Maureen: And our children, too. It's just such a wonderful Provincetown connection. And what happens to all of those old artists, bohemian-type people, if we can't carry on this tradition? This is their tradition.

Susan: This gives people the opportunity to be different. It seems like there is such a push to conform at this point in history in this country. It seems like that's of utmost importance, to conform and accept everything as it's written or given to you through the media. This is one of those pieces that allows people to step back and say, "wait a minute, wait a minute."

Maureen: As the generations go on, we're so concerned with the children and grandchildren. You know, Jack and Sailor are Dad's great-grandchildren, Vavoo's great-great-grandchildren. My grandfather was a whaler off the Grand Banks and came to New Bedford through Ellis Island as a stowaway at eighteen. He couldn't speak the language, so they gave him the name of Joseph. So all of these things we want to preserve, that we talk about. Here's this very simplistic, easy way of saying it: "You know what kids? Come away from the computer for an afternoon and let Nana take you to a little enchanted place." That's what it's about. That's what it's all about. Naturally, hopefully, they'll grow up. They're already smarter than we are and everything else, but we have things that we can give too. And they're going to need that. More and more and more, we're going to need that.

Kathie: I wrote this little thing this week because I didn't have a picture that I could grab. My pictures were so messed up. It's a little poem about growing up here and being in the dunes. I call it "Dune Children."

'Dune Children'

It was our wilderness  
Remote and rising  
They lured us in  
Were we grown enough in mind and body

To master the climb?

Beyond the highest, mightiest,  
Wild adventures waited.  
Young and supple legs carried our curious imagining  
To places willed into creation

Each exploration new  
To the pirates... poets... princesses...  
Born on these days of youthful foraging  
Bared feet led the way  
Towards the richness of self-discovery”

Theo: See, you're an artist.

Maureen: You're a poet.

Kathie: No, I don't qualify.

Maureen: That was us. We used to be princesses out here.

Kathie: We were pirates, poets, princesses, born on these days of youthful foraging. We were whatever we wanted to be.

## Chapter 8. Cultural Traditions II: The Edge of America's Art Colony

Many practices within dune shack society today may be traced to the American art and literary traditions centered at Provincetown and Truro. Dune shack society formed at the edge of the fine arts colony of the lower cape, a fringe population pushing out into the backshore, drawing creative inspiration from its stark natural energies and its mixes of solitude and sociability. Fine arts have been the second great tradition giving purpose and identity to dune shack society. Many dune dwellers shared an expressive culture with century-old roots at Provincetown, highly valuing creative expression through art and literature.

The exceptional composition of the contemporary dune shack society struck me during interviews. It contained a high density of artists and writers. The fine arts held a commanding presence on the dunes. I encountered artists and writers most everywhere I looked, even within dune shack families who forcefully insisted that dune shacks should never be restricted solely to artists. Many dune dwellers worked at art and literature with passionate commitment. For some it was their life's profession, for others a cherished avocation. With unanimity, all pointed to the dunes and the dune shacks as integral to creative inspiration. Many viewed their work to be an extension of the storied traditions of art and literature centered at Provincetown and Truro. For them, this living tradition grounded their personal identities as artists and writers. This chapter traces the connectedness of the contemporary dune shack families to the art traditions at Provincetown. It describes the art colony at Provincetown today, contrasting it with the colony at mid-century. Then it describes connections of particular shack families to these art traditions, ending with a detailed case example of how artistic traditions have been passed down within particular family lines centered in dune shacks.

### Provincetown's Art Colony and Living Traditions

Provincetown artists I talked with commonly portrayed their town as the oldest fine arts colony in the United States. In previous chapters, Conrad Malicoat, Anne Lord, and Josephine Del Deo recounted its formation around several charismatic art teachers who drew students to summer art schools on the lower cape. Eugene O'Neill and other intellectuals congregated at Provincetown about the First World War, starting a tradition of writing. An efflorescence of art and literature bloomed, centered in Provincetown, but also in nearby Truro and Wellfleet. Murray Zimiles, a nephew of artists Boris Margo and Jan Gelb, bore witness to what may have been the height of the fine arts colony near mid-century. He grew up in Provincetown during summers, living at the Gelb-Margo shack and Margo's house in town, eventually becoming an established artist himself. In our interview, Zimiles described a vital art colony during the 1950s and 1960s, and contrasted those "old days" with the excessive commercialization that discouraged young artists today:

In the old days, Provincetown was ground zero for the major artists in America, period. The Hamptons didn't hold a candle to Provincetown in terms of the big shots. It's always been a summer colony. Many people came from elsewhere. They didn't live there. 'Elsewhere' was mainly New York and maybe Boston, but for the art community, primarily New York.

People used to joke in the old days that if they bombed Provincetown, Truro, and Wellfleet, you'd wipe out the entire cultural elite in America. There's some truth to that. Now you'd

have to add the Hamptons [on east Long Island, New York], and there's probably stuff in California. But especially in the 50s and 60s, Provincetown was the center of the universe.

There was a very famous school in Provincetown, the Hans Hofmann School. Actually there were a number of schools there, including Boris Margo's school, although it was not as well known as the Hans Hofmann School. Hans Hofmann [1880-1966] is considered one of the great art teachers in America. He was a German who came here. Many of his students became super-famous artists. Many of them studied in Provincetown under Hans Hofmann. Another school was the one run by Victor Candell [1903-1977] and Leo Manso [1914-1993], which became the Long Point Gallery. These schools taught a number of the artists. They became very influential as well. So through the schools and the community, the town's influence kept spreading. The tentacles go everywhere, right across America. There's no end to it. If somebody wanted to document this, it would be a real interesting study, how much of an influence that Provincetown was. And of course the dunes were a part of the town, being a major influence on the people who influenced other people. It would be enormous.

The Art Association was a common ground for a lot of people. We would all be in their exhibitions, which would be a big moment. Everybody would come in from the dunes. The whole town would show up, a big deal at the opening, hundreds of people, and parties. In the old days there was a symphony orchestra in Provincetown. A dance company in Provincetown. The Provincetown Playhouse. You could walk down the street and every other person was some famous something-or-the-other. Martha Graham [1894-1991]. Zoot Simms [1927-1985] and Larry Rivers [1923- ], the famous jazz musician and painter. The next street, all the players for the Boston Symphony or New York Philharmonic. The next, some wacko people dancing on the street with the Provincetown Dance Company. Walking by houses, there'd be chamber music coming out. It's a bit like the Clinton years – did it ever happen? It did happen. I was a witness to it. It was magic, like magic.

Boris Margo used to share a studio with Mark Rothko [1903-1970], who was probably one of the most famous abstract impressionists, one of the most famous American painters. They shared a studio in New York for fifteen years. Mark Rothko's house [in Provincetown] was just a couple of houses down from the entrance to Atkins Mayo Road where Boris's house in town is. Rothko would be a frequent visitor. So one of the most famous painters in America had a house in Provincetown. I could list all these different artists. Many of them would come out to the dunes because Boris was there, you know, because he was a "wild man" in many ways. Boris was the least materialistic person I've ever met. He'd give to everybody. "What's in your refrigerator?" they'd ask. "Here, it's all yours. Here, have a drink. Have this. Have that." So people had a good time.

There was a major, major influence on the New York art scene, especially through the schools and the interaction of painters. They'd show their works in the galleries, and the collectors would enter. Of course Provincetown was a major collector's community as well. In the old days, I remember I was a busboy, my first job in town, at Seascape House and Inn, a sophisticated place. You had to have references to go there. The Rolls Royces would be parked there, literally. The collectors would come out. They'd walk uptown. They'd probably drop maybe ten thousand dollars, which is the equivalent of a hundred thousand now. They'd spend a week there, sort of meet the artists, get in their Rolls and go back where they came from. That wasn't one or two collectors, that was many. A lot of artists almost made a living by selling their work during the summer. They were able to maintain themselves over the winter. It was a very different world in those days.

A lot of this has changed. The writer's colony at Wellfleet and Truro has even grown. It's still one of the most important writer's colonies in America. The art community has diminished. However, the Fine Arts Work Center for the young artist has become a major player nationally. They've produced a lot of famous artists. So that goes on. But the density that was there at one time is no longer there. The makeup of the town is very different. It's very commercial now. It's very gay. So that's discouraged some of the younger artists in some ways. It's not about prejudice. It's about balance, or something like that. Artists are sort of libertarians. They could care less: leave me alone I'll leave you alone. They would accept everything, in fact, encourage everything. That's the nature of being an artist: just "do your thing" so to speak. But it's become a very different kind of a town, the high real estate values and the fact that it's so commercial now. In the old days there were always trinket shops, but you had two of them. Now there are like two hundred of them. You know, it's a bore. There were always quite a few galleries. But this many today! I don't want to insult anyone, but what you're looking at there is about eighty percent of them are garbage and about twenty percent of them have art in them. Just because they sell pictures doesn't mean that they're art. There are still three or four good galleries in Provincetown now. There were many more really good galleries in the old days, though not a lot more.

In his recollections, Zimiles observed a vibrant summer colony at Provincetown during the 1950s and 1960s, attracting accomplished members of the fine arts, particularly the visual arts and writing, but also performing artists in music and theatre. Major elements of the colony included the artists, the art schools, the art association, the good galleries, and the serious art collectors. Members of the art colony commonly had homes in the urban centers of the northeast (such as New York and Boston) as well as Provincetown. There was an interaction between big city and town and dunes that stimulated creativity, with influences spreading out like "tentacles," "right across America." These traditions continued today, according to Zimiles, but at lower densities. He observed that the visual arts had diminished due to rampant commercialism and high real estate costs, while creative writing perhaps had grown in Provincetown and Truro.

The current public face of Provincetown's art colony may be represented by a recent edition of *Provincetown Arts* (2004/05), an art guide published annually by Provincetown Arts Press, a non-profit press for artists and poets. Like Zimiles, its introductory editorial heralded the town's standing as "the nation's oldest continuous art colony," but with an emphasis placed on "continuous," demonstrated by the creative new work featured in its magazine:

Published annually in mid-summer since 1985, *Provincetown Arts* focuses broadly on artists, performers, and writers who inhabit or visit the tip of Cape Cod, and seeks to stimulate creative activity and enhance public awareness of the cultural life of the nation's oldest continuous art colony. Drawing upon a century-long tradition rich in art, theater, and writing, *Provincetown Arts* publishes essays, fiction, interviews, journals, performance pieces, poetry, profiles, reporting, reviews, and visual features, with a view toward demonstrating that a community of artists, functioning outside the urban centers, is a utopian dream with an ongoing vitality. (*Provincetown Arts* 2004: 33)

In this portrayal, today's art colony is said to continue the town's "century-long tradition," including visual arts, literature, and theater, "a utopian dream with an ongoing vitality."

The titled sections of the art guide provide a feel for the shape of contemporary fine arts at Provincetown. The issue provides twenty-one profiles of *Provincetown Painters*, ten features on

*Authors*, four essays on *Theater*, two pieces of *Fiction*, and selections from ten poets under *Poetry*. So “Provincetown arts” encompassed primarily the visual arts and literature (including poetry), with some theater, but no music. The featured artist in the issue was Paul Resika, a contemporary local painter and former student of Hans Hofmann. Featured artists, performers, and writers in past editions have included Norman Mailer, Robert Motherwell, Annie Dillard, Joel Meyerowitz, Stanley Kunitz, Mark Doty, Mary Oliver, Karen Finley, John Waters, Eileen Myles, Sebastian Junger, and Hayden Herrera (2004/05:160). In the most recent issue, articles covered two historic figures, Eugene O’Neill and Henry Thoreau, writers associated with Provincetown’s past and the backshore dunes.

The art guide advertised programs of three major associations and schools in the Provincetown area: the Provincetown Art Association and Museum; the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown; and the Castle Hill Truro Center for the Arts. All three organizations operated from prominent buildings in Provincetown or Truro. Many dune shack residents have been active in these entities over the years, such as Philip Malicoat helping to start the Fine Arts Work Center, and Joyce Johnson founding the Castle Hill Truro Center for the Arts. In addition to the big three, four other art institutions also advertised programs in the art guide – the Cape Museum of Fine Arts in Dennis (a town further up the cape), the Massachusetts Cultural Council (a state entity), Campus Provincetown (a school offering classes through a consortium of local art groups and teachers), and Wilks University (a school in Pennsylvania offering creative writing classes two hours west of New York City). Two non-local societies advertised programs in 2004/05. The Eugene O’Neill Society announced its Sixth International Conference in Provincetown in June 2005, the town being the location of O’Neill’s early plays, many written on the dunes. Similarly, the Norman Mailer Society announced its Second Annual Conference at Provincetown in November 2004, the town being a home for Mailer. Like O’Neill, Mailer also has written from dune shacks. Two theaters advertised performances of plays and music during the 2004/05 season – the Provincetown Repertory Theatre in Provincetown and the Payomet Theatre in North Truro.

The art guide also presented a window to the commercial side of the Provincetown art colony. A substantial portion of the issue consisted of advertisements of art merchants. There were paid advertisements for thirty-three art galleries, of which twenty-two were located in Provincetown, five in Wellfleet, and one each in Barnstable, Boston, Brewster, Hyannis, New York, and Truro. The many gallery ads suggest that Provincetown currently functions as a market center for works of art during summer. With the gallery ads, there were paid advertisements for three individual artists, three architectural firms, and three design studios. In addition, the issue provided guides to substantial numbers of commercial establishments catering to summer visitors, including a *Dining Guide*, a *Lodging Guide*, and a *Wedding Guide* (in anticipation of legal gay weddings in Massachusetts that year). By these indicators, merchants used the reputation of the Provincetown art colony for marketing artwork and services to summer visitors.

This picture of the contemporary organization of the Provincetown art colony is consistent with that of Murray Zimiles. Visual artists and writers formed the core of today’s art colony, currently with three main associations and schools at Provincetown and Truro. A substantial number of galleries, generally operated by merchants, sold works of art, most of the galleries located along Commercial Street near the center of town. And a host of secondary commercial establishments like restaurants and lodges (as well as “trinket shops”) serviced the summer crowds of tourists drawn to Provincetown at the tip of Cape Cod.

## Fine Art Traditions in Contemporary Dune Shack Society

The dune shacks became an extension of the fine art colony onto the backshore through individual artists and families, rather than through the activities of organizations like art schools or art associations. None of the organized fine art institutions has ever owned or cared for a dune shack. Individual shack users commonly have been involved in these organizations, but organizational activities are only on occasion formally connected to the dunes (such as the Malicoats' annual hosting of fellows from the Fine Arts Work Center at their shack). As shown in previous chapters, dune shack society always has been structured first by kinship (extended families) and secondarily by friendship (networks of friends linked to extended families). These have been the traditional forms of social organization. The relatively recent involvement with dune shacks by two non-profit organizations (Peaked Hill Trust and Provincetown Community Compact) emerged in response to Seashore activities, initially in the struggle to prevent shack demolition during the 1980s, and later in bids to satisfy Seashore requests for artist-in-residence programs. So it has been through individuals, not organizations, that the Provincetown art colony has reached out onto the backshore.

Not every shack has been connected with the fine arts colony. This was illustrated by the list of some prominent non-artistic dune residents by Josephine and Salvatore Del Deo in Chapter 2. I observed no direct connection with the fine arts colony by current users of the Dunn shack. However, other than this one, I observed that all other shacks currently were homes to artists, writers, or performers of one sort or another.

I did not ask for comprehensive lists of artists, writers, or performers when I conducted interviews. Even so, fine arts entered the interviews, a pervasive aspect in the lives of many shack residents. A partial list illustrates this prevalent cultural theme. Peter Clemons (Clemons-Benson and Fowler shacks) ran an art gallery in Provincetown displaying his own dune paintings (gouache watercolors) and those of David Thompson, an associate. Both of them were using the Clemons-Benson shack to paint in 2004. Peter Clemons was a graphic artist by profession, and of his children, Thomas John was an artist and David Andrew was a novice screenwriter. Andrea Champlin (Champlin shack) and her husband were both professional painters who displayed their abstracts at their New York City gallery. She said she did not sell her impressionist pieces of the dunes; they were personal works displayed at the Champlin shack. Paul, her brother, painted birds, and Nathaniel, her father, taught photography and art at Cranbook Art Academy in Michigan. David Adams (Adams shack) painted watercolors, particularly wildflower subjects, currently selling as note cards (called "Nature Notes") at the Province Land Visitor Center.

Salvatore Del Deo (Schnell-Del Deo shack) worked as an established professional artist, with examples of his oils displayed at the Provincetown Town Hall. Josephine Del Deo was a writer, with many of her works (plays, a novel, several anthologies, poetry, small tracts and articles and a biography of Ross Moffett, the painter) written at the Schnell-Del Deo shack. Their son, Romolo, was a sculptor and their daughter, Giovanna, was a writer. Jay Critchley (C-Scape shack) was a conceptual artist, his works commonly expressing political commentary on environmental and social issues, as described in Chapter 9. Emily Beebe (Beebe-Simon shack) was writing a book called *Washed Ashore* about life on the lower cape. Joyce Johnson (various shacks and Peaked Hill Trust) was an artist, writer, and founder of the Castle Hill Truro Center for the Arts. Zara and Samuel Jackson painted on the dunes as avocations, taking art classes at Provincetown and Truro "when they could afford it," she said. Ray Wells (Wells shack) worked professionally in the film industry. Paul Tasha (Tasha shack) was a sculptor of small cast bronzes of naturalistic subjects, some combining human and animal forms. Lawrence Schuster (Schuster shack) performed as a classical pianist, playing his shack's newly-acquired digital piano powered from

solar panels. Janet Armstrong (Armstrong shack) crafted and sold jewelry as a living in the Boston area. Conrad Malicoat (Malicoat shack) operated a studio in Provincetown from which he sculpted, painted, and crafted elaborate fireplaces with brick. While not a complete list, these examples illustrate the prevalence of artistic activities among current dune shack residents. In addition, the shacks under the care of the two non-profits housed artist-in-residence programs and programmed residencies of people selected randomly. Many applicants have been artists or writers, as described in Chapter 10. A collection of writing and art from the dunes was compiled by Peaked Hill Trust as examples of the creative output of dune dwellers (*From the Peaked Hills: A Collection of Writing and Drawing*, Candice Reffe (ed), Shank Painter Printing Company, Provincetown, MA, published in association with the Peaked Hill Trust, 1988).

According to dune shack residents I asked, no single genre, technique, or literature is specifically identifiable with the dunes. Works are varied and progressive, evolving with American art and literature. But most residents credited living within the dune environment as an influence on their work. Immersion in the dunes, living close to nature in the shacks, in the bright light and fluid environment, brought inspiration. Conrad Malicoat and Anne Lord cautioned about “pigeonholing” the artistic and literary traditions that have found expression by dune dwellers, and described the dunes’ effects on people:

Malicoat: I would be somewhat careful about pigeonholing it too much. I think a lot of people are inspired by the landscape. Certainly my dad was. But some artists would take a lot of license in how they would interpret that. The landscape and the water and everything that’s going on out there is the inspiration. Now how that turns out through one’s mind, it can be interpreted in a lot of different ways.

Lord: Also in writing, not just in the visual arts. I would agree with Conrad, you can’t really say it’s a certain way. I would not pigeonhole it into any particular genre. Maybe at certain points of history there’s a certain kind of painting that shows up more, but I would be loath to try to categorize it like that. I think it affects many people in many different ways, some people more abstractly and some people literally. And the people who go spend time out there, whatever their walk of life is, not the arts necessarily, they gain a tremendous amount of the same thing. They should be honored as much as known artists or writers. Richard Busch composed this whole piece called “The Dunes of Music,” a composition specifically for the Art Association on their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The inspiration was the dunes.

Malicoat: I can tell you, frankly I’m not a poet. I don’t think of myself as a poet. But I’ve walked down that beach and all of a sudden all of these poetic words will come out:

Into a cave of a wave  
She went walking,  
She stood talking to herself  
Of the collapse of all roofs,  
The hooves in the L’ascaux crashing,  
Dissolving in sand.

It’s that sort of thing. I don’t know where it came from, but it just came out. When you walk down to that beach and you’re all by yourself, you don’t have to be by yourself, but especially if you’re all by yourself, there’s some powerful, powerful kind of stuff that gets churned up. But what is it, exactly? I mean, you can talk about the water churning into “a cave of a wave,” but what you’re talking about is change. Everything changes. Nothing stays the same. The liquid aspect of it all is very profound.

## Fine Art Traditions and Multigenerational Families

As shown above, the transmission of fine art traditions occurs within art colonies like Provincetown's, congregations of artists and writers coalescing around charismatic teachers, writers, schools, associations, and galleries. In Chapter 2, Conrad Malicoat characterized one archetypal path for burgeoning artists – the artist as family misfit. In this archetype, a troubled family member pursues art instead of more ordinary, practical careers. Family dissonance compels the troubled aspirant to leave (or be cast from) home. Such artists are described as responding to intensely personal drives to create and to express, impulses that push them to seek out likeminded associates at art colonies. Julian Esmeralda, the young, homosexual artist who is the lead character in R.D. Skillings' book, *How Many Die*, exemplifies this archetype, driven to Provincetown by internal demons where he's accepted in the gay community of the art colony, a local group that embraces, nurtures, and eventually buries him.

But Conrad Malicoat charted another archetypal path for artists, one that pertained to him personally – the artist as family tradition bearer. In this archetype, a child grows up in family of artists extending across several generations. The child is immersed in creative pursuits as if this were simply the normal course of affairs. The child learns and practices fine arts within a family, following an established family tradition. In such family lines, art is elevated to a highly valued pursuit, praised and encouraged. Children come to experience art through other family members at early ages and given formal education at art schools or through apprenticeships. Such children may strongly identify with their family's traditions, seeing their efforts as the newest generation to continue a way of life directed toward artistic expression.

The dune shacks have been strongly linked to this second type of tradition, art culture passed across generations within particular family lines. Several dune shacks have been, and continue to be, focal points for multigenerational families practicing creative arts as family traditions. Currently, shacks that have been centers for the cultural transmission of art along family lines include the Malicoat shack, Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack, the Champlin shack, the Malkin-Ofsevit-Jackson shack, the Schnell-Del Deo shack, and the Clemons-Benson shack.

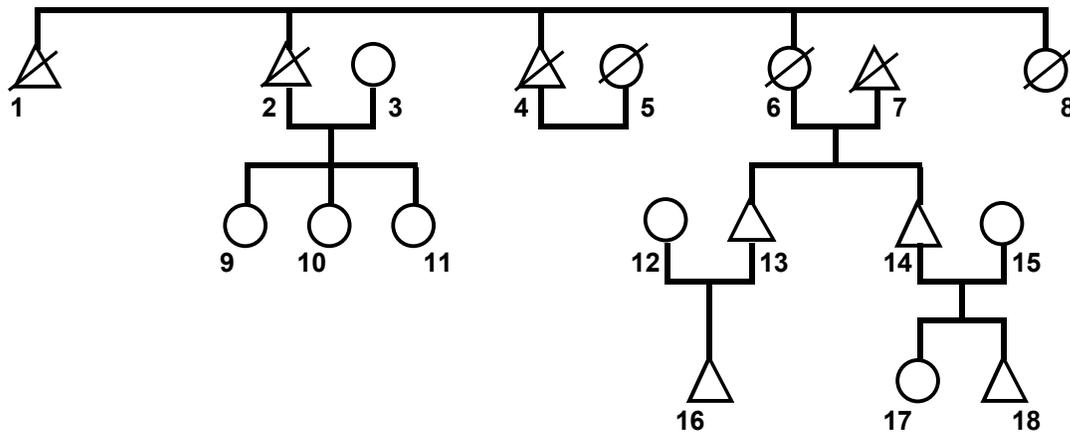
The Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack clearly illustrates a family line of tradition bearers centered at a dune shack. Murray Zimiles and Dawn Zimiles, interviewed in this study, were artists following in the footsteps of a storied line of artists. In this Jewish family, art has been a valued tradition traced back several generations to Europe, pushed over from Russia to America by the horrors of World War II, and flourishing in the New York-Provincetown area through the 20th century to the present. In this case, the family line found a center at the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack. The shack has been a creative center for three generations. According to Murray Zimiles, the dunes and the shack became the "sacred ground, the holy ground" for the family, a touchstone for creativity, a place for renewal and energy. The dunes and the shack served as a gathering point for family artists, and a final resting place for the ashes of family members. As described below, the traditional patterns of use continue in this vein today, although the future transmission of this cultural pattern was uncertain given the uncertain status of their family's dune shack. The story of this cultural tradition at the dune shack, transmitted within a family line, and the potential break in those traditions depending on the disposition of the family's shack, was recounted by the Zimiles in our interviews.

I interviewed Murray Zimiles and his wife, Martha Rogers Zimiles, at their rural home in upstate New York, a multistory, quasi-cubist structure designed and built by the Zimiles and filled with art, much of it created by family members. In addition to his work as a visual artist, Murray Zimiles held the Kempner Distinguished Professor of Art at the State University of New

York at Purchase. I interviewed Murray's niece, Dawn Zimiles, in Provincetown. There she lived and painted at the house of her great uncle, Boris Margo, now co-owned by members of the extended family. Each described their experiences growing up in a family of artists. Murray Zimiles is the nephew of Boris Margo and Jan Gelb, raised by them during summers at the dune shack outside Provincetown. Dawn Zimiles is the grand niece of Boris Margo and Jan Gelb. Murray and Dawn Zimiles graciously permitted the use of family photographs to illustrate the historic use of the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack.

The people in this story can be placed in the accompanying family tree depicting the last three generations of the Margolis-Zimiles line. In this family tree there are five siblings and three spouses in the top generation, five cousins with two spouses in the next generation, and three more family members in the third. All have used the dune shack, except Haika Margolis. Boris Margo and Jan Gelb, who painted from dune shacks for several decades, are numbered 4 and 5. Murray Zimiles, who helped build the current shack, and who has been a dune dweller since a child, is numbered 13. Dawn Zimiles, who used the shack growing up, is numbered 17. Other family members are similarly placed and numbered. The description of the family's artistic traditions and uses of the shack are recounted first by Murray Zimiles (the second generation), and then by Dawn Zimiles (the third generation), and again by Murray and Martha Zimiles. The story is recounted in their own words, illustrated with selected family photographs.

### People in the Margolis - Zimiles Family Line



- |                      |                           |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Dov Margolis      | 7. Joe Zimiles            | 13. Murray Zimiles  |
| 2. Dave Margolis     | 8. Haika Margolis         | 14. Stanley Zimiles |
| 3. Ruth Margolis     | 9. Yevgenia Margolis      | 15. Ruth Zimiles    |
| 4. Boris Margo       | 10. Adrien Margolis       | 16. Andre Zimiles   |
| 5. Jan Gelb          | 11. Helene Margolis       | 17. Dawn Zimiles    |
| 6. Yevgenia Margolis | 12. Martha Rogers Zimiles | 18. Seth Zimiles    |

## Murray Zimiles (Second Generation) and the Margolis-Zimiles Family

“Boris Margo is my uncle, my mother’s brother. Boris’s mother lived in Russia. They weren’t exactly peasants, because they were educated. But they lived in a mud house in the old country, that is, the floor was hard clay mud. Boris’ mother would decorate the floor. She’d paint designs on it. In the old country, decorative art was very important.

“Boris’s older brother, Dov, is an interesting story, quite fascinating. Dov was the first one to come, to leave Russia because he was the oldest. He went to Palestine to become a settler there, caught malaria and almost died. He could not earn a living, very sick, emaciated, and thought he couldn’t make it there. So he came to America. What he did for a living was decorate people’s apartments on Park Avenue with faux marble and faux wood. He made enough money to send it to the old country to start bringing out family members. But Boris did not get out that way. For Boris’ thesis at Leningrad Academy, one of the things they allowed you to do was to go abroad to copy a master work. So Boris persuaded them that he was going to the Louvre in Paris to copy a major painting for his thesis, and he never came back. He just left. He came to America via Cuba. He got out on his own. But David and my mother and Haika, another sister, these people got out because Dov was sending money.

“When Dov was in America, and Boris was in America, and the rest of the family finally came to America, Dov one day said, ‘Look, you’re all healthy. You’ve got jobs. You all can survive. I’m going back to Palestine.’ David at that time was working as a soda jerk in a candy store. Boris was teaching at the Roerich Museum, then a prominent and interesting place. Dov went back to Palestine and became a mounted policeman for the British and bought orange groves. Dov was artistic in this sense. In Palestine he became one of the best developers of housing in Israel because he had aesthetic taste. There was so little money then, they were basically building like the Soviets, concrete things that were falling apart before they were finished. But Dov built the first quality housing in the State of Israel. They were aesthetically attractive because of his aesthetic training.

“David became a major textile designer and a prominent sculptor and a muralist with Diego Rivera [1886-1957]. He was Louise Nevelson’s lover. Nevelson [1899-1988] was one of America’s most important female sculptors. She described him as ‘the gorgeous Russian.’ It’s a very colorful family. I could tell you many stories. David became very prominent working with Diego Rivera. Boris of course became a major artist in New York. He was eclipsed by some of his best friends and colleagues eventually in fame. But he had an exhibition with Peggy Guggenheim’s Art of This Century gallery, Jimmy Ernst’s gallery – at that time these were the major galleries in New York. He showed at the Betty Parsons Gallery for 28 years, one of the key galleries in New York City. He’s in most major collections. The Fogg just two weeks ago bought one of the pieces from Provincetown. The Whitney just got 85 of his pieces. This keeps going and going.

“When I was three years old my mother died of cancer. Rather than have us go to an orphanage, which was discussed, Boris decided to at least cover the period of summers for my brother and I. So 1944 was my first visit to the dunes of Provincetown. I was three years old. From that moment on, every single year, to this year, I’ve been going to Provincetown. We’ve seen many, many shacks. This is like, I think – I’ll have to figure this out – the third one that he built, but he also stayed in the old Coast Guard Station shacks, the station that was on the high ridge, not the one that’s in ruins now. The one that’s in ruins had a little boathouse. We stayed in the boathouse for a couple of years too. So it wasn’t always on that piece of property. But we finally got to that current piece of property. I think this present shack dates to 1973, if I remember

correctly. I was in my early thirties then, and I helped build that shack. I remember it vividly. In fact, my footprint is still on one of the boards in the roof. That is my connection: literally, every summer of my life, and just about every single summer since we've been married, and almost every summer of my son's life until recently when he's left the household to live in New York.

"Jan and Boris never had children. We were their kids, essentially, my brother and I. In many ways, the shack was more Jan's than Boris'. My connection is to both of them, of course. But Jan, even when Boris had his house in town, they would live apart. She would always live in the shack. She would come in with her white gloves and tell Boris how dirty his place was. *[Laughter.]* Then after she made sure he got the message, she'd go back out to the dunes to her pristine shack. Jan did artwork out there. Both of them did.

"Some people could argue that Boris' most significant work was done there. I showed you some of those monoprints. For example, one of them was just bought by the Fogg Museum in Harvard just last week, one done on the dunes. If you look at them pictorially, the influences of the driftwood are very apparent in those early works. He did this huge series in 1940. He painted there until he got his house in town. For 25 to 30 years he painted on the dunes. There are wonderful photographs of him, some by very famous photographers, of him on the dunes with his paintings. Some of them are very famous photographs, as a matter of fact. In his later paintings, it was this sort of streaking of the sky at sunset that created many of those images. So the dunes had an impact, even though not a literal depiction of the dunes in his paintings, but it was always a residual visual impact of the dunes on his work. Extremely important. In fact, he couldn't have made it without the dunes.

"The same was true with Jan Gelb [1906-1978]. Absolutely. She painted there until her dying day practically. Boris then created that monument for her in front of the Art Association with her poem, to this day one of the most powerful statements about the dunes ever written. For me, it's very emotional. I'll cry for you. Jan is interesting. She was one of the first female graduates of Yale art school. But she was always under the influence of Boris. Maybe that's not a nice thing to say. She admired him because Boris was a true artist. It's hard to explain what that means, because most artists today are part businessman. He was only an artist. That may have been his own undoing in terms of his fame quotient. He was a true artist.

"Boris was an immense influence on me. For instance, this house we are in now I literally built. That never could have happened without Boris. Boris gave me the courage to try anything. His house in Provincetown is a disaster in terms of construction. He had never built a house. But he'd walk down the block where there were houses going up and he'd say, 'Oh, that's how you do it.' And he'd start hammering away. But I wonder if his house is going to survive if there were a hurricane. He gave me the courage to build houses. He gave me courage. He gave me a certain kind of artistic education. Originally I was studying engineering. When I needed to gain proficiency, taking all these art courses, I didn't have money to spend much more time at the university, so I studied with him. It was a revelation. I love him so much on so many levels. So now I'm a distinguished professor at a university, about to become an extinguished professor.

"My son is also very artistic, except his bent is toward web design. He's a graphic designer rather than the so-called 'fine arts.' And my niece and nephew too. Dawn is a graphic designer, a Web designer as well. Her brother is a sculptor. Of David's children, Yevgenia was a dancer and Adrien was a painter, an artist. Helene is sort of the black sheep. She's become a major environmental figure in the State of California. As I say, it's a colorful family. And the tradition lives on. It's that connection. Boris was like the pivot of that whole world, and the shack and Provincetown itself was the center of the universe for us in terms of that. For me, I went there

every single year of my life. My brother and I would live with them. When we were living at the coast guard station there was a little annex to it, like a two-room shack. Then for years we lived in a one-room shack, all four of us. Eventually, Boris built a place in Provincetown, in the town itself, so I was staying mostly there, as well as commuting back and forth into the dunes with Jan. By that time I was working, to earn my keep in college. I put myself through college living with Boris in Provincetown, working as a waiter, houseboy, that kind of stuff.

“Other family members also would come every year. David would come, and his kids would come, although they didn’t live there, obviously. With four people it was hard enough. Imagine having eight people in that room. You’d have to sleep standing up. But it was a focal point. It was the place everyone talked about. They wouldn’t talk about his apartment in New York. No one would care. It didn’t matter where everyone else lived. The shack was where people really lived in terms of conversation, in terms of what happened, or where we were going. It was always, ‘When are we going to Provincetown? When are we going to get there?’ That kind of thing. It became a spiritual home. As I said, it’s sacred ground. You know, their ashes are out there. All their ashes are out there. Mine will be too, I guess.

“My art is imaginary landscapes. Paintings. Drawings. Prints. Many different art forms. Whenever I go out there, I watch. For some reason the sunsets are very important to me. I take notes all the time, you know, do little sketches. They’re not finished products, because I’m not interested in replicating. You know, there are a lot of dune painters. You go into Provincetown and every gallery has little pictures of the dunes. I’m not interested in that kind of art. My art, although it’s imagistic in the sense that it’s landscape bound, it’s much more imaginative. But for sure, the dune landscape has influenced me. It’s influenced me with color, it’s influenced me through light especially, through texture, through many, many interactions with that environment. And also it’s a place to think, and to read. It’s not only about making. It’s about preparing to make. There’s no more solemn, wonderful place than to sit on one of those dunes and think it out. You know, people want proof: ‘does he paint little dunes?’ The answer is, ‘No, he doesn’t paint little dunes, but he couldn’t paint anything he’s painting without the process that precedes painting.’ If there’s ever a place on earth where you can do that, it’s there.

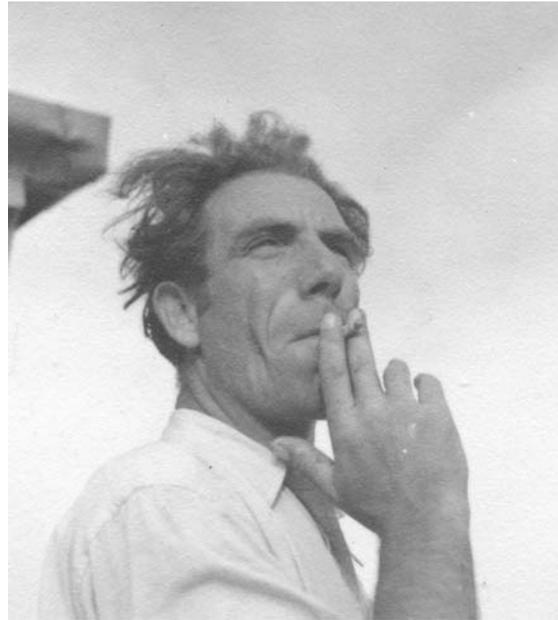
“Boris couldn’t have made what he did without being there. It would have been impossible. From those sort-of streaky light pictures to all those abstractions of all that found driftwood to just the structure of his pictures, what it is there. My nephew, Seth, took care of Boris during his last years in Provincetown. Even though Boris was a little ‘out-to-lunch’ then, because he’d sort of tune in and out of reality sometimes, he was still the greatest influence on my nephew’s life, as crazy as he was, as weird as he was. I think it’s kind of like a primal energy. It sounds like some hocus pocus, but it isn’t. He gave Seth a kind of artistic faith in a way, the meaning and importance of being an artist, what it means truly to be an artist, not one of these artists who’s a businessman, but an artist’s artist, where art takes over your life, becomes your life, and becomes profoundly meaningful as a way of life. That’s what he was able to do. And that’s what he did for me too. That’s an incredible gift.”

#### Dawn Zimiles (Third Generation) and the Margolis-Zimiles Family Line

“My entire family has been inspired [by the dunes] in their artwork. If I were to mention who in my family were artists, I’ve heard it goes back five generations to Russia where people were building wooden synagogues. You can ask my uncle Murray [Zimiles]. He knows everything about that.”

## Boris Margo

“My great uncle Boris was a wonderful artist. He was one of the original surrealists, and he evolved certain new techniques. He was definitely a major figure in art. Boris’s real name was Baruch Margolis. He came from Russia completely poverty stricken. He was in some sort of Jewish ghetto in Russia. He came out to New York, and his wife, Jan Gelb, brought him to Provincetown.



“My uncle Boris did a lot of work with sand, because he was on the dunes. He stretched canvas over wooden structures, furniture, stands, the table we just ate on. Then he put some kind of glue on it and sand on this. He also did a crazy kind of writing where he made a viscous liquid, wrote with it, and put sand on it. As you can see, there are all these sand creations everywhere [in the house]. This chair over here combines both the writing and sand. It’s really a beautiful chair.

You can see it says, ‘Peace.’ And hidden words. If you’re in the right state of mind you can actually read this. I remember one day I saw that it said, ‘Existence is beyond’ and started to read it. I thought I was insane. But other people have told me they can read it too at times. There’s so much of this stuff. My father has tons. And my uncle Murray’s house too.”



Top Right. Boris Margo at the dune shack, 1940s. Bottom Right. Boris Margo, “Matrix of an Unborn World,” 1939, oil on canvas, 30 x 36.

Dave Margolis

“My great uncle Dave just died very recently. He was a major figure as well. He was a muralist. He painted initially in the style of Diego Rivera, who he knew. My uncle Dave painted the murals at Bellvue Hospital. They were then painted over because there were black people and Native American people [in the murals]. They decided that it was communist. During the McCarthy years they completely covered them. He did a lot of metalwork, wonderful stuff. They’re enormous metal, aluminum sculptures, crafted in this beautiful way so the objects revolve. And there was a lot of calligraphy. And he did paintings. He died just recently, but he painted up to the end of his life. He also was lecturing at New York University at that time. He died at ninety-two, the same age as Boris.



“He was so encouraging to me when I was younger, when I was studying art. He lived at LaGuardia Place, in that area of the Village. He had me come over there and he’d give me little tips on how to draw bone, because I was doing life drawings, how to make them come through the skin. He’d give me things to trace. He once told me things like, ‘Make sure you have a library, make sure you have a visual library. You don’t need to have a million books on one artist, but make sure you have some reference.’ So to this day I always follow that [gesturing to a wall of books in her studio]. I’m always into my books. Dave Margolis, he’s really a great artist.”



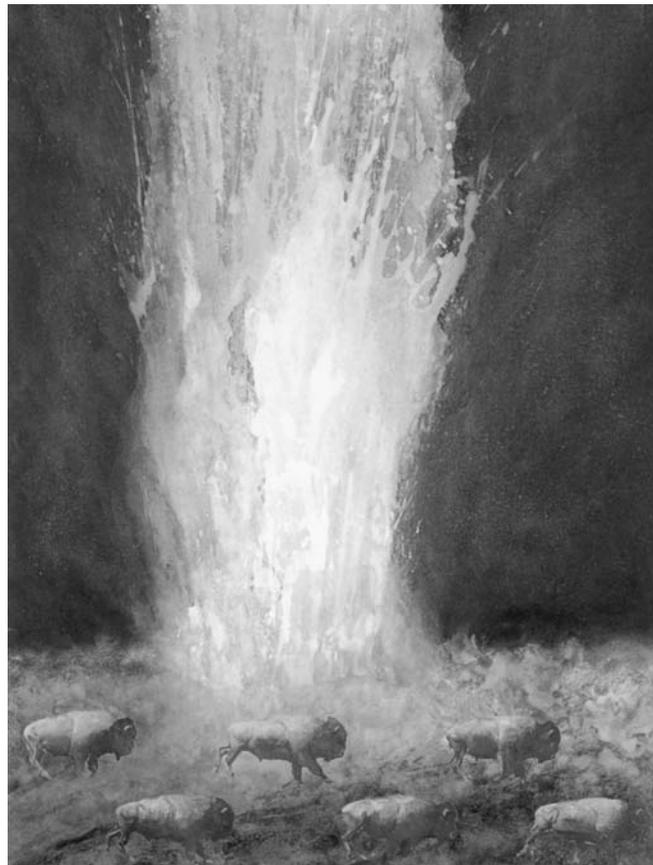
Top Right. David Margolis, 1940s. Bottom Right. David Margolis mural.

## Murray Zimiles

“My uncle, Murray Zimiles, is a wonderful artist too. He does painting and print, mostly printmaking, and sculpture. Most of my family dabbles. Almost everyone including myself experiments with many techniques. It’s pretty unusual in artists. In fact, my uncle Murray is even getting into doing a little digital stuff. He refers to himself as the ‘Old Man of the Dunes.’ I’m thinking, ‘Gosh, you’re pretty young for an old man.’ He’s sixty-one or two, the same generation as my father.



“My uncle Murray is a pretty amazing artist. He goes through a lot of different periods. He was painting the Holocaust for a long time. Images. He went all over Poland researching that. He had a show at the Cape Museum not long ago, just really unbelievably strong paintings because of subject matter, but also because how he paints is very beautiful. He then went into painting these fire paintings, synagogues that were burnt down. He’s done a lot with history. He was rendering figures when people were doing more modernistic stuff. He was doing his own trip, not going along with the culture at the time, what was popular art-wise. Now he does paintings that feature marching animals. Some of these paintings are really wild, animals marching in landscapes. You know, he built the shack. He’s very involved with that for I guess 60 years, many, many years. Still, every single summer, he comes out with his wife, and my cousin sometimes. He was just here in July. To him it’s like a pilgrimage. He absolutely has to come.”



Top Right. Boris Margo and Murray Zimiles, 1990s. Bottom Right. Murray Zimiles, “Yellowstone, Old Faithful, 2000,” mixed media on canvas, 50 x 38.

Jan Gelb

“My aunt, my great aunt Jan, was a wonderful artist. I have so many things I could show you. She was a wonderful painter and print maker. She wrote books and illustrated them too. She did one with fish that is just beautiful. My aunt Jan actually lived out there [at the dune shack]. She spent the whole summer, months on end painting out there. *[She shows examples of paintings.]* This is some of her work. These are hers too, up here, from the 30s or 40s. I mean, I have a lot of things, but these are actually of a dune scene that she painted. She would do little drawings of them. Here’s more of her work. Oh, she’s a wonderful, wonderful artist.

“I mean, I can’t tell you how I feel that with my family, the work that my family does, I feel that no matter what I’m doing, I’m always like, ‘Oh! I can never get to this point until maybe when I’m eighty years or something!’ They are so good.”

Top Right. Jan Gelb on the dunes, 1966.  
Bottom. Jan Gelb, oil, 1947.



Dawn Zimiles

“I’m not sure what I am doing exactly [in my current work], but I’m trying to get a feeling, one I can only describe as capturing the energy of a place in a way that I feel is very beautiful. It’s somehow where a painting and photography meets. Some people say, ‘Oh, is this really a photograph?’ It’s kind of right on the border. It’s some kind of middle ground. It’s very experimental. I print out many photos and soak them in different materials. I use vellum, try different types of pigments. The original photos look quite different before being soaked.



Then they are rephotographed and rescanned. I go through a long process until I get to what I call, ‘the look.’ I don’t know really how to describe it. I mount them some of the time on masonite with archival glue. Then I continue to paint on them. This is the dunes area. Actually, this is where Boris’ shack is, right up here. But I don’t paint it in, because I don’t feel like I want to yet, at this moment.”



Top Right. Dawn Zimiles, 2000

Bottom Right. Dawn Zimiles, “Untitled,” 2005

### Seth Zimiles

“My brother, he’s a sculptor. He’s a really wonderful sculptor. He does metalwork, and he just started working for a foundry. Before he was working at the Beacon Museum. He does great stuff. He has the same values like me, where he wants to devote his life to something that he feels, that the moment you are doing it, you get the reward. You’re not just doing it because you’re working to save money for some other time.”

### Adrien Margolis

“My cousin Dave’s three daughters are all very creative. Adrien is an artist, she studied art. She went to art school, Penn State I think. I haven’t been in touch with her for a number of years. Last I heard she’s still holding gallery exhibits at her apartment on Ninth Street that my family has had for many, many years. They’ve lived there since the 30s and 40s. They’ve made this little studio apartment. Of her art that I’ve seen, she went through a phase where she was painting bananas all the time, then dead mice. So she’s done some really unique things. She found these mice that had been trapped, bananas, and stuff like that. I feel I’m not giving her a good description because I haven’t seen her work in a while.”

### Yevgenia Margolis

“My cousin Genya, I have her books that she wrote, beautiful little children’s books, really beautiful. She was a ballerina in the New York Ballet. Later she moved to Venice for many years. Then she lived in Yugoslavia during the whole conflict there. She had some type of dance company when she lived there. She’s very interesting, my cousin Genie. She wrote these interesting books, like how color came into the world. And she illustrated them.”

### Helene Margolis

“Helene, she is not, you know, not really a visual artist. But she’s very involved in environmental issues. She’s a toxicologist in California.”

### Andre Zimiles

Andre does computer graphics. He builds websites, that kind of work. He went to Purchase, an art school. My uncle teaches there. But he’s more focused in the whole digital realm. What’s interesting is that my uncle Dave, Boris’s brother, at the end of his life was very involved with computers as well. And I am too.”

### Ruth Zimiles

“My mother and my father had their honeymoon here [at the shack] in 1961. And in the summer of 1968 she stayed in this house with Boris. My mother said there was the energy of the dunes and Provincetown. She was a teacher in Rockwood, but she quit that to study painting. And she loved music. So she became a piano teacher and a pianist. There is some kind of spirit here that makes people think of, you know, what is really beautiful in life, what really matters.”

### Stanley Zimiles

“My father’s not an artist, but he loves the environment – he was a science teacher, so there’s usually that kind of thing going on, that’s very important. But actually, there are paintings of his in the closet. He’s not an official artist. He did paint. He has painted. But the story was that my uncle Murray went to art school and my father stayed home and lived with his father and step mother and took care of them and went to Hunter College and was going to be an engineer. He was the more practical, stable one. Not that the rest of my family is unstable, but he really focuses more on the future, so his children can go to college. So he’s not officially an artist. But he takes photographs. He loves taking photographs.”

### Dawn Zimiles on the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles Dune Shack

“Everyone on this list [geneology chart above] has used the shack. Not Haika, probably. She died before I was born. You see, all these people have lived in Provincetown. Helene lived in Provincetown for many summers on the west end and went out there. Adrien has spent time out there. Dov went out there with me when I was a kid, but I don’t remember it that often, I was pretty young. Every summer we came to Provincetown. Not for the whole summer, but for a chunk of time. We came here to the house and then we went out to the shack. We walked out. Jan had a jeep and she would drive us out. But she died when I was eight. So later on it was with my uncle Boris and my uncle Murray. We’d always go out there. We’d bring food and we’d just go. It was so magical. Later I actually got to stay there on my own. I started staying on my own when I was like eighteen. And I brought my friends from college and went there. This was from art school, so we were into doing little arty things out there. I have not gone out there for months on end. I guess the reason was that the shack was taken over. And of course I didn’t live in Provincetown. Seth was out there many times. Both of us would pretty much walk out there ourselves, you know, just kind of sit on the porch, if the door was open, we’d get in there.

“I was trying to describe the feeling that was passed down through my family to my brother and I from my great aunt and uncle, the feeling of what it meant to be there [at the shack] and how it was inspirational for artists... The energy there really inspired, certainly, the earlier generations of my family. And they passed that on. If you talk to my brother, Seth, he’ll tell you that it was totally because of Boris and the shack and the dunes and that feeling there, that he wanted to become an artist. And my uncle Murray will say the same, definitely.

“There are varying degrees of success in my family. You see, I think that my family is not very practical. Me. My brother. Except my father. He’s a practical one. And Murray’s somewhere in the middle. Most of my family to a certain point doesn’t want to play by the rules or just do their art in such a way. They are not very practical in that way. But my family does feel very strongly about a life that revolves around creativity and inspiration and nature and that kind of world. There’s a reason we all want to have our ashes thrown on the dunes. There’s something about that place. It’s like, if we are going to return to the source, that’s where we really want to go. That’s the source. And I have no doubt that if it wasn’t for the culture that arose in that time, and my uncle was a major contributor to it along with other people, I don’t know if my uncle Murray would have been an artist. My uncle Murray coming here to Provincetown, and the experiences he had as a little boy really led him to do that. My father, even though he wasn’t an artist, he always respected and knew art was a valuable thing. Even though he was a high school teacher, he sent me to a really expensive art school. Even though he’s so practical, he knew art was a worthwhile pursuit. I think my brother and I always felt that.

“As I said, I used to keep pictures of the shack on my fireplace mantel in San Francisco. I just wanted to make it back here. I had pictures of drawings of the dune roses on the walls of the house. I knew I would come back here... So I think, to maintain that culture, I’d like when my brother’s little baby is born, I want to be able to say, ‘Look at what family you were born into. Look what we have to offer. Maybe you’ll learn to love art too, like we do. Maybe you’ll love these dunes too.’ You know, I’d like to be able to share that.”

## Murray and Martha Zimiles on the Uncertain Future

Murray Zimiles: “Prior to Boris’ death [in 1995], Boris bequeathed the shack to me. Even though by eminent domain the Seashore took it, I always thought that it would be in my family. When I got involved with the Peaked Hill Trust, I always said, when my family wasn’t using it, they could have it free of charge. During that time [Boris’ disability], we weren’t using it all the time. I have many obligations. But we used it as much as we could and we let some family members use it, and then there’d still be a fair amount of time when it was empty, so rather than waste it, since we knew how wonderful it was, we just gave it to Peaked Hill Trust [to use]. We’ve known those people for many, many years. We trust them. They’ve been good to the shacks. They’ve maintained them and kept them in good order, upgraded them when necessary, etcetera.

“Many of the [other] shacks were rented. But because it is sacred ground, holy ground, I never thought that would be a proper thing to do [with his family’s shack]. So literally, hundreds of people have experienced that shack when Boris was still alive. It could have been a profitable enterprise, but we never charged. In fact it cost us money because we had to clean up the mess, nail down the boards that were dislodged after everyone had left. The deal I made with the Peaked Hill Trust was, if they helped to maintain it, they could have other people stay in it. It worked out nicely. This was before Boris passed on. For eleven years, if I remember correctly, I let the Peaked Hill Trust use it.

“The shack’s history is a complicated story. For years Boris was persecuted by this man who claimed that he owned the land that the shack was on. He extorted money from the family. He threatened that if Boris didn’t pay the money he’d burn the shack down in the winter. So we paid some of the money. Then what happened was that people got together, including Boris and Jan, and tried desperately to gain ownership of these properties. Some people spent their life savings and ultimately lost. You know that story. That story is common knowledge. Boris was part of that group. Finally, the only deal they could make was life tenancy. So Boris and Jan in a sense were coerced to signing papers which meant that at least for their lives they wouldn’t be evicted. My brother, until a couple of years ago, has been paying taxes on the shack, even though the National Seashore took it over by eminent domain. I finally told him to stop, but we wanted to keep our claim. So we were paying taxes up until about three years ago, though it was idiotic. We were paying taxes to the town of Provincetown.

“Boris legally gave me the shack with the document that you’ve seen. It was sort of a leap of faith, him saying, ‘This is what I wanted to do. This is what you should have. So here’s the document.’ But obviously it hasn’t improved things. The Seashore hasn’t made any gestures. And when the Seashore did give leases out, they gave shacks to people who had nothing to do with them, which is astonishing to me, since I built it, and if anyone knew how to maintain it, if anyone had any right it [it would be that person]. Why would those people get leases and not someone like me, who literally built the place?

“I woke up one day and basically it was in the newspapers that the Seashore had taken over the shack. It was now theirs, or something like that. And they, I guess, turned it over to Peaked Hill Trust. That was always a bit unclear to me. It was never really explained. Peaked Hill Trust was kind enough to give me a couple weeks, I suppose because of my largesse of letting them have it for eleven years without ever charging a dime for anybody, for anything. This is now being reduced to one week. So it’s very tenuous. Of course, my son would love to go. My niece would love to go. My family would love to go, many people in my family. It was a family

shack. But now I'm the only one – one week. It's tragic. And as I said, there are people out there with twenty-year leases who before had nothing to do with the dunes.”

Martha Zimiles: What we've tried to do is, when we know we're going to be out there, we try to link up with his brother, Stan, and Ruth. And now that Dawn is living in Provincetown, we try to round up her and her brother, and we all go out there together. Schlep our picnics out on foot, stay until dark.

Murray: That kind of thing. But you know, there's not much else you can do with other people beyond that.

Martha: We make a conscious effort to gather there.

Wolfe: So the energy that you were talking about has not passed simply because Jan and Boris have passed? It's still there at the shack for the family?

Murray: Oh, I think so. Absolutely. But unfortunately, not very many people can get there anymore. Without that as the pivot it becomes almost like stories as opposed to realities.

Murray: If the shack's care came back to our family, we would discuss who would go when. It wouldn't be complicated. It's not hard to work out. When there's down time, which I suspect could happen now and then, then as I had done before, an organization like Peaked Hill Trust that respects the dunes and knows how to take care of it, would have other people use it. Now they are sharing it with the Fine Arts Work Center. The art connection obviously still exists. If they wanted to continue that when we're not using it, why not? I have no problem with that. There's nothing there to steal. It's just a shack. I could rebuild that shack, without exaggeration, in two days. Maybe the foundation would take a little longer, but the physical building would take a couple days. So we're not talking about a big deal.

Martha: I could see you and Dawn and Seth and Andre having a real bonding by being out there, having a time when you would go together to spruce it up, doing repairs, a great thing for the family.

Murray: We're a close family. There's no strife within the family, thank goodness.

Murray: But, you know, it's just weird the way it was handled. To this day, I just don't understand how the Seashore came to certain conclusions. I've written letters, met with the head of the National Seashore at Cape Cod. I didn't know what else to do. What else can you do? I mean, I don't have that much money to fight them. I don't see doing that. So what recourse does one have, other than to ask for fairness? If you're giving leases, then give it to people who have an actual connection. Don't give it to strangers. Do it openly, and do it fairly.

### Connections and Living Traditions

The example of the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack illustrates how dune dwelling families become connected with the Provincetown art colony and how these connections evolve over the stages in a family's developmental cycle. It also illustrates the potential changes in connections when a shack reservation comes to term and potential impacts on living traditions. In this case, the shacks used by the Margolis-Zimiles family, built on the eroding slopes of Peaked Hill, went through several incarnations, at least three according to Murray Zimiles. The family's shacks fell down and were reconstituted several times. Before the shacks, the Gelb-Margo family had lived on the dunes in an outbuilding of the coast guard station, and then its boathouse. Eventually, the family had a house in Provincetown as well as the shack on the dunes. The family also had residences, studios, and showing galleries in New York, where they were connected to the larger art community.

Like many other shacks, the core users of the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shacks comprised an extended family, in this case, a multigenerational line of visual artists, sculptors, graphic artists, writers, dancers, and musicians, many of them “artist’s artists,” committed more to creative expression as ways of life than as profitable professions. Like many other shacks, members of the Margolis-Zimiles family came and went seasonally from the Provincetown art colony and the family shack. Over time, the shack became a type of “sacred ground” for family members, a place of creative renewal, and eventually, a place of eternal rest. As children, Murray (in the second generation) and Dawn (in the third generation) came to the shack under the care of older family heads. As adults, Murray and Dawn chose to continue the family tradition of seasonal stays, almost like a “pilgrimage,” an essential element of the yearly cycle of creative work of many family members. The familial pattern extended three generations, with Dawn already anticipating a fourth.

Like many other shacks, the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack was used by substantial numbers of friends and associates of the family, principally but not exclusively drawn from the art colony at Provincetown. Generous and genial, Boris Margo, an art genius in his own right, attracted many notable artists out to the shack. Jan Gelb, who became the primary user of the shack at one point in time, also attracted many friends and associates. In this way, the shack became connected to the art colony in Provincetown, with creative artists and writers coming and going, experiencing the dunes and the shack through the family’s generosity. As described elsewhere, Connie Armstrong (Armstrong shack) remembered helping Gelb prepare for parties at the shack, working with Grace Bessay (Bessay shack) on their periodic visits from the southern neighborhood. Eventually, Margo and Gelb came to host huge August full moon gatherings by their shack, an event that for a while was the largest annual community celebration at Provincetown.

As with other shacks, the pattern of shack use evolved with the developmental cycle of the Margolis-Zimiles extended family. Jan Gelb died, the two live-in nephews (Murray and Stan) worked to establish careers off cape, and Boris’s health deteriorated, leaving longer periods of “dead time” at the shack. During this period of about eleven years, others were invited by the family to use the shack (“hundreds of people”, according to Murray). Among these was Irene Briga, who described in Chapter 4 how she became a dune dweller primarily through the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack. No shack user was ever formally charged for the use of the shack, as it didn’t seem “proper” to the family, except for the request to help care for the shack. During this family period, Boris and Murray invited the Peaked Hill Trust to use the shack in exchange for care. It was a local group personally known to them and trusted, caring for the two Werner shacks. So over time, the shack of the core extended family became connected with a much wider social and cultural sphere, including the Provincetown art colony (through friends and associates), the Provincetown community (through the howling moon celebrations), the nonprofit organizations (through friendly mutual arrangements), neighboring shack users (through visiting), and the wider American art community (primarily through the New York art schools, art networks, and galleries). While illustrating these many connections, the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack is not unique among the shacks. It provides a clear example of the more general cultural pattern of shack use over time by families, and their linkages with friendship networks and larger communities.

The most significant break in traditional use patterns for the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack occurred when the death of Boris Margo in 1995 brought to term the shack’s reservation of use with the Seashore. Customarily, care-taking responsibilities for shacks passed to designated heirs, commonly new heads in an extended family line, in this case, the nephew raised by Boris Margo and Jan Gelb who had helped build the current shack and continuously used it. With the

Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack, the significant change was that Peaked Hill Trust became the legal occupant, a selection by the Seashore. Decisions regarding shack use and upkeep previously directed by family shack heads (Jan, Boris, and Murray) have become responsibilities of a twelve-member board of the non-profit organization. In the past several years, the shack has housed an artist-in-residence program at the request of the Seashore, as well as weekly residencies of members of Peaked Hill Trust as either random awards or compensation for providing domestic services for other shack users. Under this new program, the customary uses of the Margolis-Zimiles family have become restricted to a single week (“because of my largesse,” Murray supposed). Otherwise, the family’s use of the shack was dependent upon individuals joining the non-profit organization and getting randomly selected for a week’s spot (a one-in-three chance, according to Julie Schecter) or getting a week in compensation for providing domestic services to other awarded shack users. Use also might be awarded through applications to the three-week artist-in-resident program.

As described by Murray Zimiles, the three-generation connections of the Margolis-Zimiles line to the dune shack, the “spiritual center” of the family, were “very tenuous.” The case of this shack also is not unique, as all family shacks have tenures set in reservations or leases. It illustrates the potential fragility of any traditional cultural pattern whose survival depends on being passed down from one generation to another. A cultural pattern may disappear within a single generation if the chain of transmission is broken. As stated by Murray Zimiles, the family tradition of art on the dunes “becomes almost like stories as opposed to realities.” The fragility of traditions was expressed by Dawn Zimiles on very personal terms, thinking about the next generation, the as-yet unborn children: “to maintain that culture, I’d like when my brother’s little baby is born, to want to be able to say, ‘Look what family you were born into. Look what we have to offer. Maybe you’ll learn to love art too, like we do. Maybe you’ll love these dunes too.’” Like the fragile shacks themselves, vulnerable to winter storms and fluid sands, the traditional culture of dune shack society also demonstrates a fragile quality, its survival depending upon the strength of connections of long-term resident families with the dunes and the shacks.

## Chapter 9. Cultural Traditions III: The Edge of Nature and Society

The two previous chapters have showed how certain cultural traditions of dune dwellers derive from “Old Provincetown” and the Provincetown art colony. This chapter identifies a third broad tradition finding expression on the dunes: environmentalism, living in Nature and learning from it. These themes are found in the writings of Henry Thoreau and Henry Beston, two historic figures connected to the dunes and precursors to the environmental movement of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. In their simple shacks, dune dwellers perceived themselves to be living close to Nature at the edge of human society. In interviews, no one said to me that they were intentionally following in the footsteps of Thoreau and Beston by living on the dunes, though many considered these authors kindred spirits. Some dune dwellers perceived their way of life to be an advance over the works of Thoreau and Beston. What these two historic figures briefly experienced and wrote about, the dune dwellers were accomplishing in fact over the long haul. Dune dwelling demonstrated how humans could live simply in Nature, benefiting from the experience while preserving its natural qualities

This chapter describes the expression of environmentalism in dune shack society. As shown below, some expressions were fairly direct, like the outrageous art projects of Jay Critchley, head of the C-Scape shack. But other expressions were subtle, ideas conveyed in the telling of dune stories constructed and colored so that they carried ecological messages. Collectively, this type of lore and art expresses themes about the environment and the place of people within it. They show that dune dwellers were purposively attempting to fit into unspoiled natural systems. Dune shack society was a small human community living within Nature, learning from Nature, and attempting to preserve Nature.

### Dune Stories About Nature

Much is conveyed in folklore. A well-told story entertains and enlightens simultaneously. During interviews, I never specifically asked for stories. Nevertheless, a number of dune dwellers told them. They wanted to, I could see, because they were fun to tell, while illustrating pertinent points. Many stories were personal. Others were historical, part of dune shack lore. And several stories were about the natural world. I could see they conveyed views of Nature and its relationships with dune dwellers. Thinking about these examples, I understood the local folklore expressed a kind of modern environmental activism with lessons for a wider audience.

The next four stories are examples. I have extracted them from interviews with particular dune shack residents. As I said, they were spontaneously told during an interview session. I believe the stories express ideas that are fairly widespread among dune dwellers. Ideas include a respect for Nature, a willingness to accommodate with Nature, and the necessity of taking moral lessons from Nature. As printed here, the stories closely track the original telling. However, the titles for the stories are mine. Following each story, I identify some of the environmental ideas implicit in the tale.

In the first story, Paul Tasha provides an interesting first-person account of Peaked Hill, the hill giving its name to many things on the backshore – the infamous Peaked Hill Bars, the historic Peaked Hill Coast Guard Station, and the current Peaked Hill Trust. His story purports to answer a very basic question, “Where is Peaked Hill?” As we learn from the story, it’s gone. The story explains where, how, and why.

The End of Peaked Hill. Told by Paul Tasha

It started out this way. There was a path to the left of the cottage.

That dune, if you can envision it now, it just towered up, way up above the cottage. It was the biggest dune out here. And it blew away.

It started out with a little path over the top. That path got wider and deeper, and wider and bigger, until finally Peaked Hill, instead of being this great big, broad-shouldered dune, turned into a split dune with a gouge in the middle. Then it all just blew into the wetland. Eventually, both sides blew in and there was nothing left.

The wetland now has fifteen to twenty feet of sand in it, with its own little dunes. But that wasn't like that when I was a kid, some forty-five years ago.

I remember it well. It was a big, towering dune with a little tiny path. And that path should never have been made. That path led to the destruction of what had been a landmark for generations.



Picture courtesy of the Zimiles family

Paul Tasha tells the quintessential dune shack story. It contains ideas and beliefs common within dune shack society. The first is that long-term dune dwellers are experts. They give witness to dune history. Watching the dunes for forty-five years, dune dwellers like Paul Tasha know things now hidden from view. The story packs considerable environmental information in a small space. According to Tasha, Peaked Hill was a large barrier dune near the water. The dune changed in size and shape over the years, from “towering” and “broad-shouldered,” to “split,” to “nothing.” Re-deposited sand from the dune completely covered a wetland to its lee, fifteen to twenty feet deep. Today, someone could not know by direct observation that there used to be a substantial wetland and tall dune in these places. The story also explains what caused the changes: wind blowing out a footpath to the dune’s top. Small acts by humans (a “little tiny path”) can lead to big effects in Nature. The story ends with a moral lesson: “that path should never have been made.” The misplaced path diminished natural systems (the dune and wetlands) and a local heritage (“a landmark for generations”). While this particular story may not be widely known in dune shack society, the moral lesson is. Many dune residents I interviewed explained their careful placement and use of footpaths around their shacks to avoid blowouts. Blowouts held the potential for reconfiguring the landscape, undermining shacks, and disrupting things of value. The customary rule was that humans should live lightly on the dunes making as few

directed changes to the landscape as possible. Accidents might still happen. But proper dune living should be done with foresight toward preserving Nature.

The second story is a funny, first-person account of drilling a water well in the sand at the Malicoat shack. Conrad Malicoat tells the story:

#### The Toad. Told by Conrad Malicoat

There was an incident that happened out here at the shack. We were digging this well. You dig a well with this auger that's like a bucket that's been split and had no bottom. It was a little deformed so that when you twisted it, it would bring sand into the center of it, and then you could lift it out, and drop off the sand so you could dig down 20, 30 feet, or whatever, before you hit water. Three of us, my dad, a friend of his, and myself were out there doing this. What you do is, you add extensions on, one after another, and you keep going deeper, deeper and deeper, and we got down to about 16 to 20 feet to where we hit water.

We were very content and now we were going to put the pipes down so we could get the pump going, and so forth. Just at that time, before we got the piping set, this frog jumped in, or toad. He jumped into the hole – all the way down.

So, we went back up to the house and got three bottles of beer. We all sat around wondering what are we going to do. We can't just start driving these pipes down on this poor toad. So we all had this parlay. And it was very funny. And all of a sudden this inspiration came – how to evacuate the toad.

It was this. The three of us were all around the hole like this, ushering in some sand, like this. And this went on very slowly, just filling it back in, very slowly. And this went on for 15, 20 minutes, half an hour, I don't know how long, very carefully so that you don't bury the poor thing. And pretty soon, all of a sudden, we fill the hole right up to the top. And this toad jumps right out.

We re-dug the hole someplace just off to the side. Where else would you do that except on the dunes?

Like the Peaked Hill story, Conrad Malicoat's story is another lesson about people and Nature. It's wonderfully told, with a great choice of language and a fine structure, filled with surprise, mounting tension, and satisfying resolution. It starts ostensibly as an account about the technical aspects of digging a well with an auger, a familiar task for most dune residents. But suddenly it turns into a story about a toad. Out of the blue, a toad jumps into the finished hole. This is the first lesson. Nature does unexpected things to dune dwellers: storm surges, blowouts, hurricane winds, even small toads. The immediate reaction to the crisis is emblematic of dune dwelling. Everyone gets a beer. Crisis is comedy, not tragedy. The story is wonderfully coy: it teases the reader to figure out the problem, which is, of course, whether to drink water from a well with a dead toad at the bottom. But the story never frames it this way. It's not a problem for people, but a problem for the "poor toad." The challenge is how to "evacuate" the "poor thing." The solution is elegantly simple: undo what was just done, slowly refilling the hole with small bits of sand to save the toad, and restart the well elsewhere. This solution expresses a core principle in dune shack society: human activity on the dunes should attempt to preserve Nature, even one

poor toad. Why? In this case, this approach mutually benefits people (clean well water) and Nature (live toads). The story's tag line shows a keen awareness that preserving Nature at the cost of human inconvenience is not usual within the mainstream: "where else would you do that except on the dunes?"

The third story is also a humorous, first-person account of people and animals on the dunes. It tells how a group of Provincetown children get exposed to the natural wonders of the dunes above East Harbor (Pilgrim Lake), right in their own backyard. Maureen Joseph Hurst tells the dune story, calling it a "Tasha story" because it begins and ends at the house of Herman and Sunny Tasha on Howland Street in Provincetown:

#### The Turtles. Told by Maureen Joseph Hurst

I'd love to tell you a Tasha story about East Harbor when we were young, really young. So many great things happened up at that house. One Friday night – Fridays were always good nights because it was the weekend and we were there after school – one Friday night Herman Tasha announced to us, "All right, tomorrow morning I'm going to wake you kids up really early. You gotta get out of bed. I have something I want show you." It was June and we were getting ready for school to let out. We were just waiting for school vacation.

He woke us up before dawn and piled us into one of those old little jeeps, those little army-issue jeeps that he had, with the tin seats in the back. And he drove us out over the dunes from High Head, along the back end of East Harbor. We still didn't know what we were doing. Then when we got there, he said, "Now, what you're going to do is get out of the jeep and be very quiet. I don't want you to talk. And you're going to crawl on your stomachs up over the crest of this dune and wait and watch because the huge snapping turtles..." and they were almost as wide as this table, "... are going to come out of East Harbor and they're going to lay their eggs." So we crawled up on our bellies, up to the crest of that dune, and we waited. And sure enough, out of East Harbor came these big lugging snapping turtles that were HUGE. We were little, like ten or eleven years old. I still remember to this day their back flippers digging the holes and the eggs pouring out. He didn't want us to disturb the turtles while they were laying their eggs, so he wasn't saying very much to us. But after the turtles turned around and were crawling back in, he went and grabbed two of these huge snapping turtles, picked them up, and threw them in the back of the jeep. And then Del got one of the sets of snapping turtle eggs. They had the consistency of ping-pong balls. He brought them back.

As we rode home, jumping up and down in the back seat of the jeep on those little tin seats, these turtles were crawling around the bottom. He said, "Keep your legs up! They'll snap your leg off!" Today, you'd probably get thrown in jail if you exposed to your child to a snapping turtle. But that was like, "See, see 'em? See how dangerous they are? Keep your legs up in the air!" And we were terrified, screaming, "Ahhh! Ahhh!" [*Laughter.*] He drove us home all the way to Howland Street, takes the turtles and throws them in this big bird cage he had in his yard. They were crawling all around in the cage. He showed us the consistency of the snapping turtle eggs. Then we buried them around the yard. Paula had said to us, "When he was little he had to go out and harvest some of these eggs, and his mother would cook them." I remember we named one of the turtles "June," because it was the month of June.

He let us observe these turtles for the next week. Then one day we got home right before school let out for the summer and the turtles were gone. He had picked them up and brought them back to East Harbor, put them back where they belonged. But we got to see what they were like in all of this. Then sometime around mid-to-late July, Howland Street, which was not more than a dirt road up in front of Tasha Hill at the time, was crawling with all these sea turtles. They were all heading down toward the bay. They were making their way down to water. Somehow they knew. So we had to gather up as many as we could so we could bring them back and stick them back in East Harbor. What a learning experience that was for us, first hand.

This wonderfully-told, high-energy story is about Provincetown children being specifically taught about Nature, about the dunes in their own backyard. This is not a story about “wilderness,” of untouched natural wonders seen by detached visitors. At Provincetown, people actively engage with Nature. They get their hands dirty. And snapping turtles are tough enough to take it (“See, see ‘em? See how dangerous they are? Keep your legs up in the air!”). Herman Tasha, the instructor, was a commercial fisherman and a natural scientist with Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute. He taught a hands-on lesson. The story’s told with a child’s wide-eyed delight. Nature is filled with wonders: giant turtles lugging up from the black sea, soft eggs buried in sand, baby turtles instinctively scrambling toward water. The story also tells of customs and responsibilities toward Nature, adapted to changing conditions. In his childhood, Herman Tasha gathered turtle eggs for food. By the late 1950s (the time of this story), Tasha had observed declining turtle populations, attributed to increased predation by foxes and raccoons related to increased human population on Cape Cod (more summer homes, more trash). To help preserve turtles, Tasha began relocating turtle egg caches around East Harbor to decrease predation (the reburied caches had fewer turtle signs to attract predators). The young girls were part of that type of expedition. Efforts continue today to restore East Harbor. It’s currently being returned to a more brackish, tidally-influenced system with new channel management, nearer to conditions before railroad construction cut it off from the bay in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The active, hands-on involvement with natural systems, and the perceived responsibilities to preserve natural systems, as expressed in this story, were widespread ideas in dune shack society. I heard examples of restoration efforts by dune shack residents involving turtles, toads, frogs, plovers, terns, and dune grass.

The fourth story is one of several hunting stories told to me by Paul Tasha while mapping named significant places. Most dune dwellers were not hunters, like Tasha. But I think the story expresses a theme common among dune dwellers, a lesson taught by a singular mysterious event one snowy afternoon:

#### Paying Respects. Told by Paul Tasha

For me, there are so many places on the dunes that have significance but don’t have a name. For example, on this vegetated ridge, when I was about seventeen or eighteen years old, Bruce Coria, a local boy of Portuguese descent a couple years older than me, shot a big eight-point buck with a palmate, flat, almost moosey-looking rack. Kind-of weird. He gutted the deer right here. He left the gut pile.

A few days later I was out hunting in a snowstorm, which is a good time to hunt deer because if you pick up a fresh track you’re right on it. And I did. I picked up a fresh track. The snow had just started to ease up, and the deer had come out. I had my gun and I was on

a horse. I remember I picked up a fresh track right along the edge of the dune, where the dunes meet the forest here, where there is the big oak forest above Grassy. I trail this deer, obviously a big buck, to here.

It was the weirdest thing. There was another big buck track coming from here, and three smaller deer coming from there. And they all did this circle around the gut pile. It was really weird. I mean, they knew this deer, obviously. The deer know each other. They're like the people of the dunes. They know each other. They fight with each other. They argue. They get along. Whatever goes on, you know. But it was just a really strange thing. They had the snow all trampled around. Three deer from here, one big buck, three smaller deer, another big buck. They all came and went to that deer's gut pile. And they circled round and round it. I don't know why to this day. And they had definitely come together to that gut pile of that animal that they knew, for whatever reason. They didn't walk on the gut. They just circled round and round it and then they all went off in different directions.

It had to be close to the same time because of the snow. The snowstorm was just ending and I had said, "Oh boy," grabbed my gun and horse and gone out. And it was still spitting a little bit. So it had to have just happened shortly before I got there. I think it was a total of about five to six deer. The two bigger animals and what looked like a group of three smaller animals like maybe a doe and two yearlings. It was interesting, you know. "Paying their respects?" It looked that way.

This story expresses the mysterious complexities of Nature, aspects of the natural realm that seem difficult to comprehend, at odds with common, rational explanations. In the details of the hunt, we see the keen observational skills of Paul Tasha regarding local landscape and weather. He knows deer well. Yet Nature springs a surprise, something "weird," hard to understand unless deer have some unacknowledged capabilities. In the original telling, Paul ended the story with the statement, "It was interesting, you know," leaving me to pull the threads together, to arrive at its implications. It was me who said, "Paying their respects?" I had guessed right. "It looked that way," affirmed Paul, and then he laughed. Elsewhere the story speaks of the complexities of deer society: "They're like the people of the dunes. They know each other. They fight with each other. They argue. They get along. Whatever goes on, you know." The story's central message is that there's more to deer and deer society than commonly supposed by people. Some of this belief may derive from his mother, Sunny Tasha, a Lithuanian by way of Pennsylvania with animistic ideas about Nature. Some of it may emerge from his personal hunting experiences, as Paul allowed that the more he got to know his prey, the harder it became for him to kill them. But this view of Nature was not just specific to Paul Tasha. I saw it among other dune dwellers, a respect toward animals because their lives and communities were believed to be rich and complex and worthy of discovery. Charlie Schmid made it his life goal to observe dune swallows. And four dune residents I interviewed had found employment with Whale Watch or other marine mammal research the year of the study (Lawrence Schuster, Irene Briga, David Andrew Clemons, and Marsha Dunn), occupations directed toward understanding the complexity of animal communities.

## Dune Art About Nature: The Work of Jay Critchley

Like stories, some of the artwork and literature of dune dwellers expressed ideas about people and Nature. A prime example of literature is the beautiful memoir by Cynthia Huntington, *The Salt House*, chronicling her insights about self and Nature living three years in a dune shack. A prime example in art was the work of Jay Critchley, head of the C-Scape shack. Critchley was both a conceptual artist and an environmental activist. His audacious artwork commonly expressed ideas about people and Nature with directives for action (“proposals” he called them). Much of his work derived from an interplay between dunes and town, as he explained:

My work is about the whole town and Nature, basically. How people, human beings, interact with Nature. That’s why I’m out there [on the dunes]. My real draw, living here, is out to the backshore, out into the National Park, probably more than downtown. I’m a social being too and I like the downtown. It’s nice to know it’s there and everything, but my focus is out into the National Park. So my opportunity to manage the C-Scape dune shack was like a blessing, because it gave me an outpost in the Park to continue my exploration of the natural environment and experience the natural environment in all four seasons and continue collecting, gathering ‘information objects’ from the beach, documenting changes going on out there. Well, the whole town is a laboratory in a sense. But I think the dune shack provides an outpost, an anchoring of relationship with the Park and the natural world around it, for me as an artist. I haven’t spent as much time out there as I’d like because we rent it most of the time. But in the winter, in the off-season, is more the time that I’ve been out there. Plus I’ve been out at the Jones shack a lot.

I visited Critchley at his Provincetown home to view examples of his work. Critchley presented them to me with short sketches that teased the imagination. Like the dune stories above, each piece conveyed messages. The cheeky art pieces were designed to shock sensibilities toward more expansive perspectives. A selection of Critchley’s pieces are presented below, with his thumbnail descriptions. They begin with his “weed garden,” a piece of conceptual art just outside his doorstep that we passed, entering his house:

### Weed Garden

This is my weed garden. These are all weeds that I’ve nurtured. I haven’t planted anything here. I also have my organic garden over there. But here I’ve just allowed and nurtured whatever grew, like these Jerusalem artichokes, with little tubulars that you can eat. In September they blossom with little yellow flowers, each stalk a dozen or so, like sunflowers. A polkweed that I’m bonsai-ing, cut in the shape of the area here. Queen Anne’s lace. Wild mint. A couple of other things.

### Lobster Claw Ceremonial Helmet

This is my ceremonial helmet with real lobster claws. I first used it in 1983. I got them at a yard sale in town. I figure it was about a thirty or thirty-five pound lobster.

### Black Fish Family Album

That's a picture of a black fish, a pilot whale. It's on a wheelbarrow, just the head of the fish. It's an old image, an historic photograph from the Pilgrim Monument. You can see it's a wooden wheelbarrow and you've got this perfectly cut-off head, a head of a fish on a wheelbarrow. It's like a portrait. So I put it on the cover of this elaborate ruffled wedding album. This is called the Black Fish Family Album. The question is, what is the family history of this fish that has been killed? Do we even care? Do we know? And do we care about it? I guess it's the question.



### Sand-Encrusted Objects

This is a sand-encrusted, entombed SUV. This was done way back. It's a mummified jeep. And this is a model of my sand car, which was in the parking lot [in Provincetown]. I did a series of cars in the parking lot encrusted with sand. Full-sized cars. This was 1981. The sand car series from 1981-84 was in the MacMillan Parking Lot each summer. The first was a 1968 Dodge Coronet 500 station wagon encrusted in sand. The next year I had the Sand Family inside. Ronnie and Nancy. Encrusted people. The third summer was a sand-filled car, a sedan. And then the fourth summer was a sandblasted car.

As far as encrusting things, well, I could say a lot of things about it. But I like to gather indigenous materials from the environment [like sand] and then use them in a way that juxtaposes them with common, everyday objects, the idea behind a lot of these pieces. It says something about utility as well as the incongruity of how separate we become from natural elements at the same time. There's a lot of things you could say about it. You could interpret it as Nature reclaiming human objects. With the fourth one, I took a sand blaster and stripped the paint and everything off the entire car and let it rust all summer long. So it was the destructive power of Nature as well.



The name of the series of car pieces was, "Just visiting for the weekend." The idea was that people used to come to Provincetown and immediately fall in love with it. They come for the weekend and then they'd stay, move here. Of course, that can only happen now to people with money. But there's something about the sand that gets in your brain. The whole town is a sand dune. Geologically, Provincetown is very different from the rest of the cape. It's created by the wind and waves. The glacier ended at High Head. It's a much newer

geological formation than the rest of the cape. I like this idea that the whole town is a sand dune. We're all on these little tiny grains of sand that have been moved here, one at a time.

This piece is a proposal for a Fisherman's Memorial. It's a sand-encrusted boat, made about fifteen years ago. It has a Christmas tree. A lot of the Portuguese boats put Christmas trees on top of the mast to ward off evil spirits, a good luck thing.

That's a found spray can, encrusted. I found it on the beach, probably at Race Point or the dune shacks. This was also found, a Styrofoam buoy. What happens is, when these Styrofoam pieces go underwater, the pressure is so great that it pushes the air out of them, so this creates this Madonna kind-of image. But my favorite piece is this Styrofoam cup which is shrunk down to about a third of its size, yet still in one piece, because it went into the deep, pressurized water.

### Fish Skinned Objects

I also use fish skins to make fish skin-covered, encrusted objects. Obviously you see a lot of religious icons everywhere. This is the Pieta in fish skins. That's the Sacred Heart of Jesus encrusted in fish skin. The top is with flounders. They dry on to the statue itself. They cling when you dip them in a Roplex type liquid glue, and then you put them on to the object. And these are fish skin encrusted high heels. This is flounder. I've used cod too. Whatever's available. This is a fish skin mask of my face. I did an original mask. Then I made a positive plaster from the original form. Then I used that to put fish skin on. It's in the center of a globe, a hand-painted Zodiac circle of wood that was from a floor-mounted globe. It lights up and blinks: the top half is a red and the bottom half yellow light.



My father was a fur trapper. For him, the muskrats were there to harvest, basically. In fact, when one of the environmental groups wanted to outlaw the leghold traps in Connecticut, my father went up to the state legislature. That was the only issue he got political about – trapping, and abortion. I think that his view of Nature was the basic, traditional Christian thing where it was meant for us to exploit, not just to use. It was unlimited. We weren't thinking about any damage we could do to it because it was considered to be there for us to exploit and use to our benefit. Today, I'm sure he would have a slightly different view of it. I'm sure he would have a broader sense of things. Even a lot of the hunting organizations and recreational vehicle groups have become environmental friendly in some ways. It's about protecting the land and ecosystems, so they can go out and continue to fish and hunt. It's a totally different political environment now.

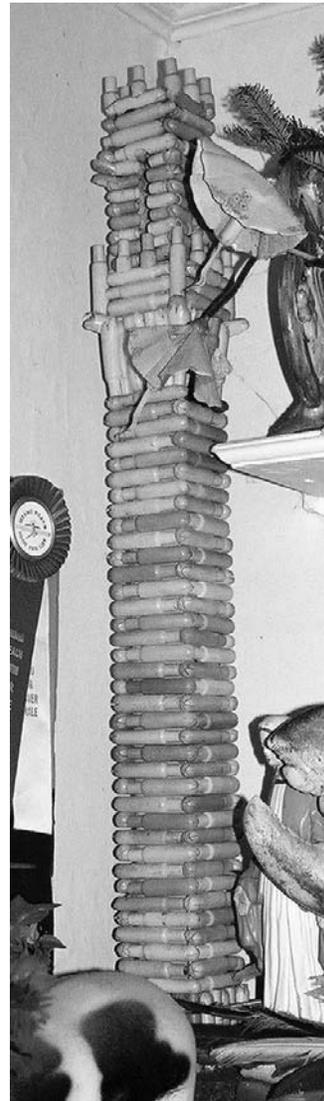
### Tampon Pilgrim Monument

I think I told you that I collect plastic tampon applicators? That's the Pilgrim Monument, made out of plastic tampon applicators. It lights up from inside. I'm well known in town for my plastic tampon applicators. I've been collecting off the beaches since 1978, mostly from the Boston sewage system. They used to dump them in the harbor. Then they'd float across. Boston Harbor was a disaster. That's one of the reasons George Bush Sr. won the Presidential election, because he came to Boston Harbor to show that Michael Dukakis had allowed the harbor to be polluted. So they created a 9.5 mile outfall pipe that goes in the middle of Cape Cod Bay. They've almost cleaned up Boston Harbor, but now they're shipping hundreds of millions of gallons of secondarily-treated water and sewage into Cape Cod Bay, 9.5 miles into the middle of the bay. They're monitoring it. It's a big concern of mine and a lot of people. I also have a Miss Tampon Liberty. And a gown with 3,000 applicators.

These two pieces are mason jar water samples from "before the outfall pipe" and "after the outfall pipe." Mason jars. I had a big ceremony out at Race Point the actual moment that the pipe's spigot was turned on in Boston. They had this big elaborate official ceremony there. So I had a ceremony at Race Point Beach sort of lamenting, and honoring, all the animals, the fish and organisms in the water, before they're blasted with all this water from the sewers of Boston. So one jar says, "Salt Water Specimen No.1 BP" (Before the Pipe), 9/06/00, and this one says "AP" (After the Pipe), 10/04/00. So that's that.

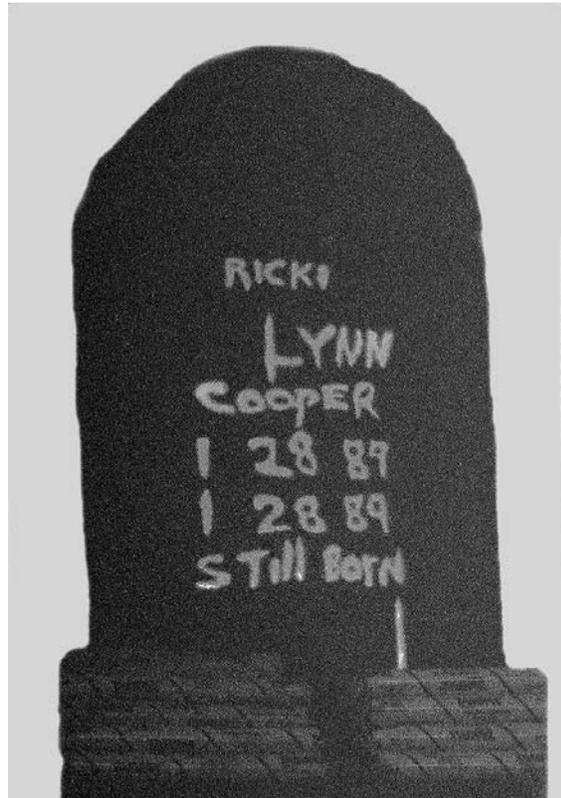
My audience is worldwide. I founded the Tampon Applicator Creative Club International, TACCI [pronounced "Tacky"]. And I sponsored legislation in Boston. In Massachusetts, citizens can directly sponsor legislation. So I sponsored legislation to ban the sale and manufacture of non-disposable feminine hygiene products, basically plastic tampon applicators. I've been up at the state legislature with my tampon gown a couple of times. The work has been disseminated on the wire services a lot. A lot of the projects have made it onto the AP and UPI wire services. I promote the projects, the ideas. But there have been a number of times that what I do has been censored by the editors. There was a big article that Associated Press was going to do on tampon applicators about fifteen years ago. I went up to Boston. They took pictures. They wrote the article. And then the editors decided it was too radical to put in the papers. Too gross. Too controversial.

That piece is a Plastic Tampon Applicator Ceremonial Necklace with red fishing bobs, baby seagull feathers. And there's my Tampon Pie, a piece of the tampon pie.



### Sand-Encrusted Memorial

This piece, “Ricki Lynn Cooper, 1/28/89 to 1/28/89, Still Born,” is a tombstone-shaped, sand-encrusted piece with red lettering coming through the sand. Those words were spray-painted on a wall at the beach. What happened to this couple was this. The woman had a stillborn baby. They were both drug addicts. She didn’t know she was pregnant. All of a sudden, this fetus appeared. So the man took the fetus down to the beach and buried it right next to the seawall. He spray-painted these words on to the seawall. It was 1989, right at the time a lot of people were dying of AIDS. Death was so much a part of the community. I just thought it was a very primitive, intuitive way of responding to death. Eventually the woman got charged with illegally disposing human waste. She was taken into court. But the judge threw it out. So I created this memorial to Ricki Lynn Cooper. That’s what that is.



### P-Town Incorporated

This piece is the logo for the theme park I created. It’s on a mouse pad. It has a happy whale, the Pilgrim monument in the form of a skull-and-crossbones, with the gay rainbow flag. P-Town Incorporated, Formerly Provincetown. The slogan is, “You’ll swear you were really there.” It’s all about the money. The town has become a town for the affluent. It’s based on Disney World.



Not too many artists in town do what I do. Conceptual art. Dealing with ideas with a lot of political and cultural content, with different mediums. Usually the ideas are concrete in terms of proposals I’m making, or the objects incorporating natural materials with found materials in ways that make some kind of statement about humans and Nature. My work is as much about the politics as it is about the aesthetics, about the materials. The challenge is to bring those together in a way that’s aesthetically pleasing, and integrated with some kind of challenge to the viewer or the public.

As shown above, Jay Critchley expresses a form of environmental activism in many of his conceptual art pieces. Others in dune shack society also were environmental activists. Paul Tasha was active in fisheries management, advocating sustainable, local fisheries with fishing technologies that did not damage the environment. He also worked to preserve wetland habitats of threatened turtles against development in Provincetown. Laurie Schecter was an environmental activist in Florida. And as discussed in previous chapters, Salvatore and Josephine Del Deo worked to preserve the Province Lands for development. They recently had a portion of the property surrounding their home in Provincetown designated an environmental preserve.

### Thoreau, Beston, and Dune Shack Traditions

It's not difficult to find the works of Henry Thoreau and Henry Beston for sale in the tourist shops of Cape Cod. Even without buying the books, tourists can read selections of their works in interpretive displays of the Cape Cod National Seashore. Both Massachusetts authors have been incorporated into the history and environmental traditions of Cape Cod.

Henry Thoreau was a Transcendentalist. Transcendentalism was a philosophic and literary movement of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, coming out of New England (Siepmann 1987:991). It was a reaction against extreme scientific rationalism, relying upon intuition in comprehending the natural world, where natural facts embodied spiritual truths. The movement disregarded external authority, trusting in direct experience. About a half-century later, Henry Beston lived and wrote for a year from a dune cottage on a sand spit at the fringes of Eastham. He lived further up the cape from the Provincetown dunes, but still on the great Outer Beach. In his enforced hermitage, he sought to exorcise his personal demons from the Great War through Nature, separated from the destructive madness of "modern civilization." He was a contemporary of the earliest dune shack people. His naturalistic observations published in the *The Outermost House* are considered classics in America's 20<sup>th</sup>-century environmental movement.

Both Thoreau and Beston were well-read in dune shack society. Many dune shack residents I interviewed said they knew them. High values in dune shack society today seemed not inconsistent with transcendentalism (unconventionality, intuition, freedom of individual expression, Nature embodying truths). Similarly, the methods of many current dune dwellers (living in solitude with Nature) paralleled those used by Beston.

During interviews, I directly asked three dune dwellers (Jay Critchley, Lawrence Schuster, and Peter Clemons) if they might be modern-day "transcendentalists." Jay Critchley and Peter Clemons laughed while considering the question. Clemons said a lot of "strange philosophies" had come out of Massachusetts. Critchley said he read Thoreau's journals while staying at one of the dune shacks, one previously occupied by Michael Sperber, a dune dweller who has published on Thoreau. Schuster said, "Of course I've read Thoreau." He pointed to his extensive library in his shack, the walls covered with books. He said he had one of the best natural resource reference libraries on the cape, not as good as Woods Hole, but people came to him for reference sources. He thought Thoreau had interesting observations. But as to whether he was a transcendentalist, Schuster said the question was "hoity toity." So each of these three dune dwellers denied they were transcendentalists. But they understood the question.

As for Henry Beston, Lawrence Schuster said he had purposely chosen not to read Beston's *The Outermost House*. "I want to do it on my own," he said, suggesting he did not want to be unduly influenced by Beston. Connie and David Armstrong talked about Beston in our interview:

Connie: Of course I read it really early. I found it in the bookstore down here the very first year we came, in 1948. So many times you think, ‘Oh, I wish I had written that.’ Or recently with a painting, ‘I wished I had done that particular one.’ Someone just had a brilliant composition, just a marvelous idea. I’m jealous. Every once in a while I think, ‘What would it be like to really be out here for the whole year?’ It just wasn’t that way.

David: We used to say, before the Outermost House got swept away, if you mean “outermost” in terms of who was the shortest distance from Spain, I think we’re the “outermost house,” not Beston.

Beston is treated as a compatriot in these statements, viewed as doing similar things as the dune dwellers. And there is a hint of competition. Schuster and David Armstrong see their own efforts as advancements over Beston’s. Peter Clemons showed me a photograph of Grace Bessay sitting in her shack, holding up for the camera Anne Waldren’s *Journey to the Outermost House*, which he characterized as a simpler version of Beston’s book. This was the text for Grace, according to Clemons, the affinity toward Nature, Man in it, her model. She believed that Beston’s book was instrumental in creating the National Seashore, and she considered it ironic that the Seashore would work to evict the dune dwellers who continued living in that tradition.

Neither Gary Isaacson nor Laurie Schecter were willing to put a name to their particular views of the relationship of people and Nature, nurtured by living in the dune district. Nor did they provide names of authors who might express compatible views. Thoreau’s name came up, and I asked, “Are your beliefs transcendentalism?” “No” was the response. My impression was that they considered their belief systems to be personally developed. They did not say that their current beliefs had emerged from another source, such as a particular social movement or a religion or a set of influential writers. Isaacson stated that it was good that others should come to the shack to experience for themselves this relationship with Nature, one that is simplified, direct, does not use up resources, uncrowded, creative, and so forth. He said that a bumper sticker summed up this view: “Live Simply, So Others May Simply Live.” Later, putting together lunch, Laurie Schecter remarked that she had been called a “tree hugger” and worse in her advocacy work of preserving undeveloped lands in Florida.

Emily Beebe named the environmental writer, John McPhee, as a like-minded compatriot in regards to her experience of the dunes, though she thought Beston’s writing fit as well:

Beebe: I think John McPhee would write about this place really, really well. I think he could really nail it down. He spent a lot of time, you know, walking in the footsteps of H. D. Thoreau, and all that. But he’s got a real practical sense of things too, like this is the order of things in the real world where, where the wind is blowing all the time, and this is what we’re doing in the other world and on the outside.

Wolfe: How about Beston?

Beebe: You know, a little bit, yeah, sure, definitely. I mean, he understood what it was. He understood what he was experiencing and how fortunate he was to be out there. And I think that that’s where the spiritual piece of it comes in, because you’re so blessed. You know you’re so blessed and you’re so grateful. And then you realize you’re out there, praying like, the whole time in gratitude. That’s a really neat way to spend your energy and your thoughts. I think we’re encouraged [in America] to be separate and control our environment. But that’s just not real. That’s not going to save us. That’s going to kill us. I think our ability to stay connected to [things like] what direction is the wind coming in, is about really surviving... I use so much water when I live in Wellfleet at my house. But when I’m out at the shack, I use maybe, maybe a gallon, a gallon-and-a-half of water

a day. I'm so aware of it. I'm in touch with every sound. I'm a lot more present in my thinking and more deliberate in my actions. And it's essential that I have that balance. Because otherwise you forget it and you're distant from yourself and you're distant from your neighbor.

Wolfe: Do you have a name for this philosophy?

Beebe: Oh God. No. I think this is real. It's just real.

Wolfe: Do you consider yourself a Greenie?

Beebe: No. Because I don't feel that I'm that rabid. I think I'm more practical than that. This is more – I think this is more on the spiritual and physical plane, where they connect, than in just the physical plane.

Connie Armstrong touched on her views of Nature in response to one of my questions. I had asked whether longer-term dune dwellers had ways of seeing the dunes that other people might not have. Armstrong thought so:

Oh, I know they do. I know they do. This isn't something you can absorb in a two-week holiday. It's something you don't get with a tour. I've had a tour with a ranger. I've taken many tours through National Parks, in many countries. That's a wonderful, exciting thing to do. But to be here for a while, a year or two or three, to look forward to the seasons changing here! In a similar way, Beston did it, but only for one year. But clearly in his writing, if he could have, he would have gone further to see. These were the changes during one year – what would it be if we were here five years? To see the changes. Remember how we took our walk last June? We saw acre after acre of that rare orchid. I've been out here for years and I might come across one of them and take a photograph of it. It was vast field of them. We just couldn't believe it.

It was just from the very first moment of seeing it, as I said, as a child who wanted to see dunes, who wanted to see something I had read about – here was the Atlantic on one side and Massachusetts Bay on the other, and this eternal struggle between the sands and the pine forests and people pushing sand back. And who's going to win? I still see it happening here, all these years later. Is the sand winning or the pine forest? It was the physical nature of the place. If you do imaging for a peaceful moment, or meditation, I choose this: I lie on the beach with my feet toward high tide, close my eyes, and listen to the tide come in. That's my focusing to get out of the chaotic day. It's always been since I've been here.

I have a philosophy about sand. If you make your home in the dunes, you have to make friends with the sand.

I think it's a sad thing when one generation of people can be so industrious and so capable, that they can ruin lots and lots of land that would otherwise be set aside and natural. Sometimes we think, 'if it's possible, then let's do it.' But I don't think enough human beings say, "well, just because it's possible, maybe we shouldn't do it." If you think of the term, "the true walk gently upon the earth," these people did, Charlie, Grace, Andy, David's brother. They said, "You want to leave behind your memories, not active footprints."

Connie Armstrong touched on sentiments I had heard expressed by other dune dwellers during interviews: the imperative for people to walk lightly in Nature. Living on the dunes for several decades, she placed her views among other historic dune figures she knew – Henry Beston, Charlie Schmid, Grace Bessay, Andrew Fuller, and John Armstrong. Though personally felt and tried, her sentiments were placed within longer traditions of living in Nature, currently expressed by many people who lived in dune shacks.

## Chapter 10. Programmed Residences

Among the types of shack uses were programmed residencies awarded by non-profit organizations through random-draw lotteries or juried selection processes. Some called these awards “shack time,” periods of time in shacks allotted to selected occupants. Programmed uses sometimes were characterized as “an experience” in a shack, one apportioned by artistic merit or lady luck, depending on the program. At present, short-term lottery winners or artists in residence were primary users of four shacks managed by non-profits, the C-Scape shack, the two Werner shacks (Thalassa and Euphoria), and the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack. Such occupants won one-week to three-week stays, as described in Chapter 3. As discussed previously, programmed uses were an innovative type of shack use, developed through the negotiation of management leases between non-profit organizations and the Seashore. By design, the selection systems for programmed uses were impersonal and impartial. The system of programmed stays differed from older traditions in dune shack society, where access to shacks came about through personal relationships based on family or friendships, with a more free-form flow of people coming and going, commonly resulting in long continuities between certain occupants with shacks. By design, programmed residencies tended to be relatively short. Different people cycled through shacks, each person staying for short periods of time.

Jay Critchley and Tom Boland, heads of the C-Scape shack, stated that the Seashore specifically asked for the artist-in-residence program at this shack. The Seashore was familiar with this type of program, they said. It was a national program in the Park’s institutional culture, although not traditional for dune shack society. According to Seashore staff, the program was established to tie into the eligibility criterion of the dune shack district for the National Register of Historic Places (the district’s association with the development of art and literature in America). In concept, the artist-in-residence programs made available certain public resources (the shack and the natural dune system) to selected artists for creative art or literature. In the case of the C-Scape shack, guided visitors from the Province Lands Visitor Center stopped at the shack to gain additional perspectives about the Seashore by meeting artists and hearing them talk about their activities. The values of the program might be demonstrated by the art and writing coming from the artists, and by the educational experiences of visitors.

As described in an earlier chapter, the C-Scape shack program also allotted one-week stays early and late in the season, open to anyone through a random draw. Critchley and Boland stated that the weekly slots gave common people a chance for a shack experience, not just artists with merit. It seemed to me that Critchley and Boland saw value in an egalitarian system that treated all comers as equivalent, alongside programs that awarded residencies based on artistic merit. The random draw was an equalizer. In practice, both “locals” and “non-locals” participated in the program, as shown by their user statistics.

It also seemed to me that Critchley and Boland believed that a residency at the C-Scape shack was an experience with potential benefits to anyone. Critchley called this a “core experience” offered by the C-Scape shack. The program was giving out something potentially good, a chance for an artist or non-artist to be momentarily separated from the normal course of life, living solitary under primitive conditions in the natural dune setting. In this regard, the shack was viewed as a type of “retreat” with restorative qualities for participants. The program’s title specifically refers to this benefit, calling it a “shack of healing.” Critchley discussed this generic core experience with the actual experiences of programmed users at the C-Scape shack:

Everyone has a different experience there, of course. Everyone has different reasons for being there. Some people just want to ‘veg out.’ You have to like the solitude, the isolation to be there, as well as the lack of hot water, things like that.

The experiences are different because everyone has different intentions on going out there. But the reason people go out there is because there’s this core experience, sort of a primitiveness, of isolation, a removal from the sounds, the blips and bleeps of television and other gadgets that we have around us. Listening to the natural sounds, smells, things like that. When the shacks were first built that’s all you could get at the time. I think now there is encroaching technology. If that were altered to have the conveniences of your average home then it would become like a beach house, beer in the refrigerator and TV and everything else. It would become something else. It would be just another beach-and-breakfast or something. Maybe that’s a question that needs addressing in your report, what the experience is and how much can it be altered to lose the essence of the experience.

So built into programmed uses of the C-Scape shack is a set of ideas about the value of experiencing “primitiveness” (“natural sounds, smells, things like that”) as a break from modern life (“blips and bleeps,” “gadgets,” and “beer in the refrigerator”). For Critchley, there is “an essence” to the experience at the C-Scape shack that he wants to cultivate by careful arrangement of conditions at the shack. In this sense, the programmed shack stay becomes almost like a packaged tour of the dunes offered by dune taxi business, with core elements designed to evoke a beneficial experience in participants. However, as participants are staying in a shack, the package is more like “summer camp” than a taxi ride, albeit a relatively unstructured, isolated summer camp. Afterwards, participants saying something like, “That was a good or beneficial experience for me,” becomes a measure of the value of the program.

### Experiences of Programmed Residents

I considered interviews with programmed residents to obtain information on this use pattern from its participants. However, I had no telephone lists for this set of users to schedule interviews. I also didn’t want to blindly knock on the doors of the shacks managed by non-profit organizations, as this violated shack etiquette. Partway into my research, I discovered a potential source of information – shack logbook entries. I learned that shacks managed by non-profits commonly provided logbooks for occupants to document their thoughts. Some family shacks also had logbooks, such as the Isaacson-Schechter shack and the Tasha shack. The records of programmed residents in logbooks provided short descriptions of their experiences at the shacks.

Jay Critchley lent me *C-Scape Logbook III* as an example of a shack logbook. *C-Scape Logbook III* is a small black book of bound, lined paper, its title embossed on the cover in sand and glue. It was filled with entries over the years by lottery winners and artists-in-residence. The logbook contains writings, artwork, and photographs from occupants of the C-Scape shack from November 1999 to July 2002, representing about 125 different people, my rough estimate based on counting entries with different writing styles. The actual number might be difficult to say precisely because I saw no obvious way to identify authors in the logbook. Some entries were dated and signed, but many others were not. Some entries were as short as a few sentences. Others covered several pages. Most were prose. There were some poems and hand drawings. Here and there, small paintings, photos, and cards were inserted or glued onto pages.

With the concurrence of Jay Critchley, I selected *C-Scape Logbook III* as a source of additional information on the experiences of people who used the C-Scape shack. The logbook provided information directly from the lottery winners and artists-in-residence. The entries were windows to this type of use. I selected five entries to illustrate the stays of short-term shack users, presenting information provided by the writers themselves. The selection below features the first and last entries in the book and three longer entries toward its middle. Of these five, three were in the artists-in-residence program, and two were not. I provide a short commentary following each of the entries, teasing out features of the writer's experience from their record in the logbook.

#### C-Scape Logbook Entry No. 1

The logbook begins with a poem dated November 3, 1999 by "Nola G."

storm, storm,  
go away  
come back  
Another day

The dunes, so pretty,  
So pretty  
The grass, the grass  
So beautiful

The date of this short poem (November) indicates that Nola G. used the shack in the late fall, either through the residents program or as a drop-in visitor. Most dune shacks have closed up before November because of deteriorating weather, but C-Scape remained open year-round in 1999. The poem begins by wishing a storm to go away, suggesting that Nola is not happy with the weather. Perhaps she feels confined to the shack by the storm. The childhood chant is not original, but it's likely heart-felt. The second half of the poem praises beauty she sees in the dunes and dune grass. This is all we learn of Nola G.'s stay at the shack.

#### C-Scape Logbook Entry No. 125

The entry by Deborah Ross dated June 22 to July 13 [2002] is the last chronological entry in the logbook. The dates of her stay indicate that she was an artist-in-residence. Her entry is primarily prose, but also includes a poem and four small watercolors entitled, "all sands lead to the sea," "almost dark painting," "sand fly?," and "wasp in the grass." She offers a birthday poem:

##### Birthday Poem

the sky is blue  
I am silent  
surrounded by sand.  
On my back  
opening  
I spread my arms

upward  
the sky is blue  
I am falling forward  
I'm fifty-two

I worked mainly in hand-bound watercolor journals. I find the physical reality of a book keeps my focus on process rather than on product or "art." I work solely from life and consider my note taking as a field scientist considers his subject. Small notation or marks build up in layers over months revealing direction and pattern.

July 10, 2002. Today is my birthday. Last night it rained and stormed so today was clear and beautiful. I walked for miles, stopping to paint at different spots. I wanted to stay quiet and use this day to reflect on my time here. I have accomplished some landscapes which interest me. My goal of large-scale watercolors was not met. The wind was one obstacle. The complexity of a dune landscape was another. To paint a dune often felt like falling backward off a cliff grabbing for any support at hand, some branches holding, others slipping out roots and all. Until I can solve general dune aspects on a small scale I have no FAITH in any grand scale victories. Now in the last couple of days I can say I am getting there. I have loved the solitude. I am so glad I have decided not to have any visitors while at the shack. Several friends wanted to come but this was best alone. I need to breathe and stretch out. Have some time to finish a thought and not speak. I did have a cell phone up till today when it broke. The connections were never that good but the phone enabled me to keep in touch with my husband who's NOT a solitary type. This is the new moon. It's very dark, with many stars.

[Watercolor Picture] 'wasp in the grass.' What this bug means is what is dreamt may happen tomorrow. A few weeks ago when I first came here I found a dead June bug. It was a lovely color so I kept it to paint. A few nights later I had a dream of a hundred golden beetles falling from my painting bag. Then just two days ago I found dozens of gold June bugs eating the centers of the salt spray roses.

I have been very happy here. I met a mouse on the first day. I painted, he bowed and I never saw him again though others would thunder through the insulation board rushing here and there. No mice were interested in my food. I think because it is summer and there is much more mouse appealing bounty outdoors they went there. I never felt really lonely. If I wanted contact I went up to the Visitor Center which is a gold mine for information about the area. The Rangers are very nice. So are the people in the bookstore. Rebecca gave me a wonderful "tidal flats" field trip. And Mimi was fun with the groups. I now know snakes climb trees and that spring tide is not a seasonal term but has to do with the moon. Thank you Compact for this lovely gift of time and marvelous feast for my curiosities.

Deborah Ross, a New York artist, was awarded a three-week stay in the artists-in-residence program. She observed her fifty-second birthday in solitude at the shack. She chose not to have visitors during her stay – she needed "to breathe and stretch out," perhaps expressing her feelings about New York City congestion. She kept in touch with her husband and friends by cell phone. She walked to the visitor center at times, talking with its staff and taking guided walks. She talked to "groups" brought to the C-Scape shack by Mimi, a Seashore guide. She used the visitor center as a source of information. She walked on the dunes. She painted. She spent time on the beach. She said she "accomplished some landscapes which interest me," but her goal of "large-

scale watercolors” was not met because of technical difficulties with wind and landscape complexity. However, she believed she was “getting there” by the end of her stay. She was grateful for the “lovely gift of time and marvelous feast for my curiosities.”

### C-Scape Logbook Entry No. 87

Toward the middle of the logbook is an entry by Ted Weesner, dated 5/5/01 to 5/12/01.

The morning of departure. I promised myself the first day that I would make a series of entries here. The dunes, the Dune life, overtook me. I have found myself utterly engaged by this place. The place has colored and flavored every hour. I’ve woken each morning at 5:30, something I never do in the city, unless it’s insomnia that’s kept me up until then. I brought a fishing rod and each morning I was out of my bed, casting the waters, catching the blur of the sky and strange light I usually miss. Two mornings ago I caught a big striper, a keeper, and my adrenalin was streaming. I gutted the big fish on the deck, cut fillets, then carved out the remaining strips for a breakfast of striper sashimi with a sprinkle of soy! This is not an everyday city experience for me. Usually, it’s toast and coffee.

One morning I came out and a coyote was drinking at the well. He jogged crookedly up the nearest dune. I tried to stay still. Twice he peeked over the edge of the dune, the two of us curious. I took naps at unusual times. I went to bed early. The light and my animal moods were respected. I took long walks. One that I’d recommend is down to Harry Kemp’s little dune shack (it’s half bed, half books in the interior), following the tracings of the hills, then returning on the beach. It took me two hours. When I got back to our spot on the beach, I ripped off my clothes and dove in the May water. Yikes! A pick-up was coming down the beach. I ran like a scared sandpiper up the trail, shot up the incline, still the guy caught a glimpse.

My meals here were also very much Dune Influenced. I love to cook; I usually make a few separate dishes. Here, I pushed the cast iron pan to its limits, finding unorthodox, occasionally disastrous, ways to combine starch, protein, and vegetables. I ate enough garlic to stave off any lurking packs of coyotes.

I had one very bad experience. It was cold at the beginning of the week and I got to making evening fires. Because of the smoke overflow in keeping the stove burning, I debattered the smoke alarm. One night I left the stove door open ajar perhaps a half inch. I woke in the middle of the night coughing, the house filled with smoke. Alone here, I felt the brief flash of near death. What if I hadn’t coughed awake? I aired out the house. I made profuse thanks to whatever larger power it is that gave me more time. I’ve been in car accidents and this was more terrifying. The next morning, though feeling hung over, I did my 5 am rush to the beach. I was determined to fight off the smoke bogeys. The ocean air and that light – so much light to watch here – set me right.

I do feel like I have a little dune in me now. It will be peculiar to walk again on hard surfaces. It we’ll be unsettling to wake to car alarms and roaring trucks and not the glancing winds and bird chatter. I came across a Mary Oliver stanza that at first might have struck me as unreal: “On the last night I pack up / For the walk back to town. / Over the dunes, / Through valleys green with scrub-oak, / The edges of my body / Are as bright as the moon.” That’s it. She’s right on. You regain your edges and they glow. I

leave here a different man. I want to spend part of each of my days on Dune Time. Thank you to Tom and the Provincetown Community Compact. I'm going for my last run and swim.

Ted Weesner, a journalist and writer in Boston, was awarded a one-week stay at C-Scape. In his entry he says, "the place has colored and flavored every hour." He contrasts "dune life" with the "hard surfaces" and "car alarms and roaring trucks" of Boston. He woke early, fished, cooked in an unorthodox fashion, breakfasted on striped bass instead of toast and coffee, swam naked, ran naked from a pickup on the beach, napped, took hikes, retired early for bed, and respected his "animal moods." Except for an encounter with a coyote and the truck, he mentions no other visitors. He recommends to logbook readers a two-hour walk to "Harry Kemp's little dune shack" (the Tasha shack). He describes filling his shack with smoke one night, a "brief flash of near death," "terrifying," a "very bad experience." He asserts the one-week stay was life-changing and beneficial: "I leave here a different man," "I do feel like I have a little dune in me now," and "I want to spend part of each of my days on Dune Time."

#### C-Scape Logbook Entry No. 97

Toward the middle of the logbook is an entry by Jen Roberts, dated 6/23/01 to 7/14/01.

6/27 Bed by 11 pm up at 7:30 am. Difficult to paint outside. Satisfied at first. Crushed by the end. View: woman caught in gust, legs of easel begin to collapse, wet canvas nearing doom, umbrella borrowed with hitches and warnings simultaneously somersaults wildly across the dunes. Okay. Two easel legs steady; push the third deeply into the sand at a rakish angle. Woman's hat is thrown behind her jerking and about strangles her as sunglasses jettison when she dashes and claws the sand for the umbrella. Dragging both back to the shack under a merciless sun, the sea grass manages to take most of the paint from a day's work with it. She reaches the deck with a sigh and pauses just long enough for four sparrows to begin their air attack. 'Go away!' She reaches safety inside the screen door and manages to face the mirror. Beet red, dripping sweat, hair sticking and streaking face, she drops everything and runs out the door ducking. She screams her way to the ocean as the chattering of beaks urges her along.

6/28 Painted indoors, looking out deck windows. Hot out. Asleep by 11 up at 7. Coffee, water, wine, dinner and walks on beach seem to be all I do. And it probably would be if it weren't for my 'production' expectations. Will let go. Dread trip into town for provisions. Don't have appropriate footwear. Look forward to talking to humans tomorrow night. Local friends are having a fire on Race Point. Even if I wanted to leave these dunes it doesn't look like I'll get much of a chance. Unable to reach anyone at home. Feeling lonely. Need to daydream more. Feel like I'm busying myself with rituals: albeit enjoyable. Painting went better today. It's a double-sided blade: need expectations to be productive, the very same expectations that lessen the enjoyment of the process. Let go of the over-achievement crap. There are so many things that I want to record here. Things I don't want to forget. I feel like I'm the only one entering negative thoughts into this journal and wonder if I should just keep them to myself. It is a beautiful place, one I could never leave, but it isn't just the place but those who inhabit it. And this cohabitor... I'm going to sign off for a few days and enter a summation.

7/14 Waiting on the beach till pick-up. Respectable amount of work started/finished but less than my goal. Took fewer chances than had hoped, but started a large series of

mixed media drawings that are a hybrid of two aspects of my work which didn't connect previously. Anxious to digest the personal and visual experiences back in the Boston Studio. Taken a lot of personal inventory and must obtain inner and outer quiet for a more contemplative life. Truly feel another week would bring greater resolve to being here. Had few houseguests, but would consider fewer or none if I were to do this over. A bicycle would have made trips for provisions less intrusive. Would try to get up at sunrise and not stay up as late to make more use of daylight. Wish pets were allowed. Missed my dog horribly and she would have helped with household pests, the bouts of loneliness, and the need for human guests. The weather was perfect, a little of everything and not too much of one thing. Allergies made life difficult. Don't know what they're from and haven't experienced that before. Now that the trucks can come this far up the beach, there's tons of trash and speeding. Maybe cans should be provided and it taken up with the 'national seashore.' They want to tear down shacks, but they allow this vehicular destruction. People can walk. The dune tour trucks are constant. I will miss the dewy waves of silver grass and watching it grow; listening to the paint chip; the long shadows of the sea spray rose bushes in early evening; the changing skies; the lighthouse beams; stars and breaking waves. I don't want to leave, but I am fed. Thank you. Thank you.

Jen Roberts, a Boston artist, was awarded a three-week stay in the artists-in-residency program. She worked on a series of mixed media drawings and had a few visitors during the stay. She describes early problems trying to paint outside on the dunes (disruptive wind, collapsing easels, and attacking birds), leaving her "crushed by the end." The next day she painted indoors, "feeling lonely," "busying myself with rituals," and remonstrating herself for her negative feelings: "I feel like I'm the only one entering negative thoughts into this journal and wonder if I should just keep them to myself." Summing up her stay, she states she struggled with "bouts of loneliness," "allergies," and litterbug trucks, and was "anxious to digest the personal and visual experiences back in the Boston Studio." She states that being at the shack for another week "would bring greater resolve to being here." She ends saying she was grateful for the experience: "I am fed."

#### C-Scape Logbook Entry No. 98

Toward the middle of the logbook is an entry by Allan Baillie, dated 7/14/01 – 8/04/01.

7/17 Tuesday. Been here three days now, and this is the first chance I've had to write anything in this journal. It is raining today. Cool. Grey. Overcast with 25-35 mph winds. I photographed the rain drips on the windows, as well as the broken window over the sink. The first day here I looked out from the porch and found a rainbow arcing up clearly to form a quarter circle on the horizon. How lucky! To start my stay here with a rainbow. Years ago I came to the dunes, but I could not remember exactly what they looked like. I thought I would find something like what I saw in California last summer. Undulating parabolic wind swept vistas without any vegetation to be seen. But I should know that nothing is the way I expect it to be. I will search for whatever is here in the province lands that is interesting, and I am sure there will be subjects to make photographs of. There is a long tradition of creating out here in the dunes. I just hope I can continue the art with something worthwhile.

Yesterday while waiting at the airport I looked up and saw walking slowly toward me – Norman Mailer. He looked old but with the same macho chiseled face. He walked with

a cane and disappeared into the airport. A few minutes later he came out with his wife Nora. I said hello as he came by. Seeing Mailer reminded me of how this special place has attracted artists and writers for such a long time. I feel fortunate to be here. I have several ideas for projects here.

Idea I: Photograph the landscape here in black and white using a mirror to reflect other aspects of the space, a visual dimension that reflects other views.

Idea II. Show in color all the small details that make up C-Scape. The pump. The grass. Wood. Sand. Light. Sky. Water. Lamplight. Old art work left in the shack. These images will be put together in a large collage to form an impression of the environment here.

Idea III. Look for patterns. In the sand. In the sea, and the grass. Clouds, etc. Done in black and white.

Last night I set up my 4x5 camera on a tripod and aimed up at the heavens. It was a clear night and the stars sparkled. The night before I saw the moon in a crescent shape coming moving across the window. To photograph the stars I knew the moon would have to be out of the picture, or the light would be too strong to see the stars clearly. I set up around 10 pm without the moon in sight. I wanted to show the pattern of stars make when they traverse the night sky. I opened the lens to it's widest opening and left it open for the stars to move across the sky to form streaks on the film. I checked the night sky about every half hour to see if the bright moon had risen on the horizon anywhere. It didn't come up until around three am and I closed up the camera and went to sleep. This Starscape was the longest exposure I ever did. Six hours! I saw a meteor dart. Will it be on the film?

7/21/01 Today is my birthday. Six decades from my beginning. Mortality crosses my mind. How much time will I have? I want to make use of my time here at C-Scape. Today it is hot, overcast and quite breezy. The wind makes it hard to photograph. When the large camera is used I usually use long exposures that show motion when something in the picture moves. I tried to put a birds nest on the porch to photograph, but was afraid it would blow away. The cloth I use blows so hard I can't hold on to it.

7/24/01 Plan to hike to the airport, rent a car, and drive to the Audubon Society walk down in Wellfleet. There will be more things to photograph there, I hope.

Two mockingbirds came and went all day in and out of a bush by the porch. Inside the bush I found two small baby mockingbirds with fuzzy heads. I few days later the nest was empty. No more activity. About ten yards away a small bird could be seen hopping in the grass, but not yet able to fly. The nest was empty! [The entry ends here for this writer.]

Allan Baillie, a New York artist, was awarded a three-week stay in the artists-in-residence program. He celebrated his sixtieth birthday at the shack. In his entry, he mentions the long artistic tradition at Provincetown, and states, "I just hope I can continue the art with something worthwhile" and "I want to make use of my time here at C-Scape." On his second day he saw Norman Mailer at the airport. It's not said why Baillie was there and not at the dune shack. He is unfamiliar with the dunes. He expected something more like California, saying, "I will search for whatever is here in the province lands that is interesting." He lists several ideas for projects. One

night he photographs star paths. He has trouble with wind: his subjects move or blow away, “the cloth I use blows so hard I can’t hold onto it.” By the tenth day, he resolves to rent a car to look for things to photograph elsewhere. After a short entry about mockingbirds, we are told nothing more about his shack stay.

### Comparisons

Taken together, this set of five entries reveal substantial differences among the experiences of short-term shack users. Two (Ted Weesner and Deborah Ross) had mostly good things to say about their stay in the shack. Two others (Jen Roberts and Allan Baillie) described substantial difficulties that they encountered adjusting to the setting, along with some positive experiences. One (Nola G.) simply wished the rain would end. Supporting Critchley’s statement above, the experiences from a short-term stay varied considerably among this set of occupants, apparently linked to factors such as weather, expectations, aspirations, skills, and temperament.

The entries reveal practical challenges presented by the dunes to visual artists. Rain was disruptive, of course, but also wind, unstable sand, heat, and even attacking birds. No entry asserted that this was an ideal place for their art, not even an exceptionally fine place. Instead, entries described difficulties to overcome. This may reflect in part the invited artists’ lack of experience with the dune environment. Jen Roberts and Deborah Ross appeared to have found solutions to challenges by the end of their stays. The occupants were forced to deal with difficulties alone, with no suggestions or assistance from a larger community.

An issue for some residents was the solitude of staying at a shack by oneself for periods of one to three weeks. Whereas Deborah Ross and Ted Weesner liked it, Jen Roberts didn’t, at least initially. Ross enforced solitude on her stay like a discipline, keeping friends away while occasionally using the visitor center and her cell phone for company. Roberts was very lonely at times, had some visitors (then regretted doing it), and missed her dog “horribly.” Ted Weesner thoroughly enjoyed a week of being alone, except for almost killing himself (he believed) with the stove. We don’t know how solitude affected Allan Baillie and Nola G.

The stay appeared to provide both inspiration and impediments to creativity for this set of shack users. Deborah Ross found subjects for watercolors in the dunes and local bugs. Jen Roberts was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with her productivity, attributing problems primarily to inner rather than external factors. Allan Baillie was inspired by stars one moonless night, but apparently abandoned the dunes in search of other subjects. Ted Weesner, the writer, believed the rustic setting brought him in touch with a more elemental, animal aspect of his nature, something he viewed as positive.

There are hints about perceptions, what each thought he or she was doing, residing alone at a dune shack. Three (Deborah Ross, Jen Roberts, and Allan Baillie) portrayed their stays in terms of fine art, an expressive culture. They were at the shack to engage in artistic pursuits. This is not surprising, as each was invited as artists in residence. Two of these (Baillie and Roberts) came with high expectations. Baillie judged his stay against Provincetown’s notable history of creative luminaries: “There is a long tradition of creating out here in the dunes,” and “I just hope I can continue the art with something worthwhile.” Roberts’ high expectations at times worked against her: “It’s a double-sided blade: need expectations to be productive, the very same expectations that lessen the enjoyment of the process,” and “let go of the over-achievement crap.” Ross was more sanguine. She stated that she was focused “on process rather than on product or ‘art,’” and seemed content with the stay: “I have been very happy here.”

Weesner was not an artist in residence. He simply had a week at the shack. His entry is silent about art and writing and professional development. His entries read like Tom Sawyer during summer, finally free of town and school: “this is not an everyday city experience for me,” he wrote. His week sounds like a giddy summer vacation, or an easy, satisfying personal therapy. There is not enough in Nola G.’s entry to reveal her own understanding of what she was doing in a dune shack during stormy November. She just wanted the rains to stop.

As a group, the entries by programmed users reveal no long-term connectedness with the dune shack or to the dune district. Everything was new to them. This is to be expected in a program structured in this manner. The participants were unfamiliar with the shack, the landscape, the trails, and other physical aspects of the setting. The novelty is probably seen as a stimulating aspect of the experience, benefiting the creative process. In one instance, however, the lack of familiarity with a wood stove presented Ted Weesner with what he called a “near-death” experience. The participants also appeared unfamiliar with the history of the shacks and dune district, its particular people, its lore, its cultural sites, its specific traditions, and its connections with the social groups that have used them for generations. Again, this is to be expected in a program selecting people from the city and placing them in a shack alone. One participant (Deborah Ross) sought out information about her surroundings from the Province Lands Visitors Center. The program was not structured for a flow of information from long-term dune shack residents to the programmed residents. They were not linked to the social network of shack families and friends. Again, this is to be expected for a program designed with “isolation” being a core value. Given their separateness, the programmed users brought their individual ideas, meanings, and expectations to the shacks, uninformed by local traditions except in a general sense, such as Alan Baillie’s awareness of Provincetown’s storied art traditions and his desire to become a part of it. Overall, the programmed residencies are designed to evoke experiences at the shack that are novel, singularly isolated, and intensely personal, and for newcomers from the city, experiences separated from local peoples, cultures, and traditions.

## Chapter 11. Shack Maintenance and Protection

For dune shack residents, a significant part of dune living consisted of working on the shacks themselves, through maintenance, repairs, and upgrades, managing sand and plants around the shack, and periodic shack relocations. Such work was said to be unending. And it was primarily a “labor of love” by family and friends, typically done without monetary rewards. The severe conditions of the Backshore would destroy shacks except for the vigilant care of residents. Strong winds, blowing water, and shifting sands quickly overwhelm the vulnerable shacks without intervention. Four shacks left fallow rapidly deteriorated after the deaths of their owners – the Gail Cohen shack (C-Scape), the Leo Fleurant shack (Beebe-Simon shack), the Jones shack (Dunn shack), and the Peg Watson shack (Isaacson-Schechter shack). The shacks were undermined or buried by shifting landscapes, and succumbed to damage from lost shingles, wood rot, shattered windows, twisted supports, and other problems. Substantial effort by new occupants was required to restore the shacks to habitable conditions.

Dune shacks were simple exposed structures built and managed to accommodate the inherent fluidity of the barrier dunes, rather than to modify it. This exposed, simplistic accommodation (a so-called “fragile house type” in the state’s historic finding) is probably the central defining characteristic of the dune shacks of the Backshore, the feature that makes them “shacks” rather than standard “houses.”

This chapter describes the kinds of shack maintenance and environmental stewardship applied by dune dwellers to sustain the fragile balance with the dunes desired within dune shack society. In doing this, the chapter identifies some common shack features, such as personalized shack designs, the mix of old and new materials and technologies, and fences and plants for managing sand. The chapter ends with a case example of shack maintenance: the resurrection of the Isaacson-Schechter shack from a sandy grave in 2004. The case illustrates customary ways of lifting a shack with workers activated through principles of kinship, friendship, and barter in the local informal economy.

### Unending Work

Work on shacks is unending, according to dune shack residents, with things needing done every year if shacks are to be kept habitable. Mostly it is basic maintenance and repairs. But occasionally shacks are revamped with upgraded features, like better roofs, windows, decks, and utility systems. And every couple of decades or so, shacks may be repositioned to adjust to new contours of the barrier dunes. During our interview, members of the Champlin family (Nat, Mildred, Maia, Andrea, and Paul) and the Adams family (David and Sally) discussed repairs and upgrades on the Champlin shack accomplished just during the last two years.

Paul: Every year it’s replace this, replace that. Jack this up, shore that up. Sometimes it’s done with scraps of previous projects, which are scraps of previous projects. If you don’t have the right fitting for something you just can’t run out to Wal-Mart, you have to go all the way into town and it’ll be another day before you get anything done. So you just make do.

Andrea: Paul put a new water tank on the roof this trip.

Mildred: Andrea put a sink in the kitchen. And Paul and Tracy put all the wood on for a 30-foot roof.

Maia: Last year and the year before it was the water system.  
 Sally: You have all these wonderful plans for projects and something [unexpected] presents itself.  
 Mildred: The last storm blew the roofing off the dormer. It rained in the house for three weeks. I'm mopping up the water and cleaning up the black mold.  
 Andrea: Cleaning all the linens.  
 Nat: You can't replace the roof until it dries.  
 Mildred: We had to chop the old dresser apart. It was so swollen it wouldn't open.  
 Andrea: Two years ago I drove a new well in the valley because the old one was getting buried. Tom [Adams] showed me how to do it with a fence post driver. You take the well point and drive it down with this heavy, cement fence post driver. Dad was down with the wrenches turning while I pounded and pounded.  
 David: Look at those shoulders and biceps!  
 Andrea: All of my New York friends, they're so shocked when they hear what I do. I don't even tell them the stories anymore. "You went up to the cape to do roofing?" they ask.  
 Paul: Yeah. That's what I did last summer I came up. I came in, put on the new roof, and then left.  
 Maia: We replace posts as we can. Paul and John and Adam – we had a bunch of people putting in the sills. We do what we can on our limited schedule.  
 Paul: We say to guests, "Welcome to the family. Come on, let's put a sill in." [Laughter.]  
 Mildred: There was this woman that said, "I bet all you do all day long is lie on the beach and read." [Laughter.]  
 Andrea: That was in the editorial in the paper. They think what we do is watch the sun arc through the sky and have all-night wine parties.  
 Maia: I'm waiting for that.

The repairs listed by the Champlins on their shack from the last two years are impressive, including a new roof, new water tank, new kitchen sink, new water well, and new windowsills. They also repaired water damage and mold from a storm blowing off a dormer roof while the shack was unoccupied. Members of this relatively large extended family accomplished it all, with some help from guests to the shacks. The attitude toward this is not one of resigned drudgery. It's humor. Repairing and upgrading the family shack is a labor of love. In this discussion, the family members laughed that they had so little time to sit on the beach reading under the arcing sun. Living on the dunes was not a relaxing vacation where other people served you by maintaining facilities, as in the summer rental cottage industry. Dune dwelling was self-reliant, improvised living, where a person could not "run out to Wal-Mart." The hard-working component to dune life was difficult to explain to "shocked" city dwellers, it was such a life apart. As Andrea explained, "I don't even tell them the stories anymore." The work on the Champlin shack described above seemed typical of the types of work on other shacks I observed.

### Careful Designs, but Growing Like Topsy

Most dune shacks have passed through several incarnations during their lifetimes. Some shacks began as improvisations, small structures thrown up with whatever material was at hand. This was the case with Frenchie's shack, the precursor of the current Schnell-Del Deo shack, according to Conrad Malicoat, who mused about whether "shack" or "cottage" might be a preferable designation for the dune dwellings on the backshore:

The words are not, in my estimation, a description of the buildings so much. I think that the original origin of that description of calling the buildings out there "shacks" was the fact that

the people who went out there used a lot of the wood that was attainable on the beach. What they came up with was unique.

I remember one particular woman, who you probably heard of – Frenchie. I remember her way of building was absolutely amazing. I mean, she was an artist at building her structure, the way some of the modern art is today. She would do it by erecting, putting pieces up, and then if it began to move around or be dislodged in some kind of way, she would buffer it up with some kind of support, so all of a sudden you had this building she could live in. And if it blew down during the wintertime, that was all right. Well, that was the beginning. Now something like that would be like a shed or something, a makeshift, so for the time that you're going to be there, you could use it, you could stay out of the rain. But a lot of the places have matured to something else, like our place. We have a fireplace, just because, I guess, I can build them. *[Laughter.]* Otherwise there probably wouldn't be one. There are a lot of respectable buildings out there.

So, just to answer your question about what you're going to call them. I don't care if you call them a "shack." What it does is send a very direct vibration back to the original origin of those places out there, because they all were shacks at one time. They all were.

Malicoat doesn't mind the term "shack" because it harkens back to the humble roots of all the dune dwellings (which Malicoat considers noble), even though many of them had evolved today into "respectable buildings" with special features, such as the fireplace in his own shack ("just because, I guess, I can build them"). Malicoat's overarching assessment of improvised shacks like Frenchie's is one of awe ("her way of building was absolutely amazing"), comparing it with creativity in modern art. This touches on an important feature of the shacks – the expressiveness of dune shacks. Makers consider them personal expressions of bold concepts and demonstrations of fine craft. As a group, the shacks are not mass-produced tract homes. There's nothing much standard about them. Each carries a distinctiveness that reflects the personal visions and skills of its many makers. Long-term dune dwellers express considerable pride regarding their shacks. They love their own shacks. Many I spoke to complimented other people's shacks, and then explained what features made their own shack the best of the bunch.

The themes about individual expression, creativity, and craftsman's pride in shack design are found in the Armstrongs' discussion of the incarnations of their own shack. The Armstrongs acquired the shack in the late 1940s, after they discovered it buried under sand at the shoreline. They rehabilitated it with new and old material, as they described below. As the shore bluff eroded, they moved the shack to Old Baldy, the next inland dune ridge. These changes over time, and the architectural merits of the shack, were discussed during the Armstrong interview, with comments from Connie, Janet, and David Armstrong, and Richard Arenstrup. David, who was a professional engineer, began the discussion, responding to my question about technological guidelines in shack construction:

Wolfe: Speaking about technology, have there been any guidelines that you have followed in making choices about appropriate technology, or inappropriate technology, for your shack?

David: Well, in that connection, someone once said, "None of these shacks has any architectural merit. They're all sort of just thrown together." But this one [the Armstrong shack] has a structure for the rear deck that I don't think you could find anywhere. It has beams cantilevered, and planks with further cantilevering. It was entirely unsupported on the far edge, originally. We did put in some posts strictly to be

able to hold the railings that we decided to put round the deck. Have a look at it afterward and see if it doesn't look just a bit unique as far as structural features go.

Connie: The first house really grew like Topsy. If something was needed we would sort of know what kind of lumber was needed and we would hope, after a long walk, we would find such a thing on the beach. A lot of repairs and things have happened. Decks indeed were made of driftwood. The pilings under the house had to be replaced. None of them were treated. Actually, I don't think they are now.

David: Yes, the main posts are.

Wolfe: The house is a mixture of new and old?

Connie: It has had to be.

Arenstrup: It is constantly being replaced, as you can imagine. If you're picking up things on the beach, it comes with bugs already built in. Rotten. And so it's constantly having to be kept in repair and pieces replaced.

David: When we were poor students, anything that we needed to be replaced we'd go up and down the beach until we found something that had washed up on the beach that seemed to be suitable to use for that purpose. Now we buy lumber.

Connie: I can remember straightening nails with a hammer on a rock and rubbing them with ivory soap.

David: For lighting we use candles mostly, and this angle lamp. It's an unusual kind of lamp. Most lamps that hang from anything have the base underneath the chimney that goes straight up from the base. So the base casts a shadow right in the middle of the space that's it's supposed to be lighting up. These have the flame coming out into that transparent bowl that sheds light straight down.

Connie: Believe it or now, those things actually hung in parlor cars in early trains that went west. And you'll see in taverns out west in the 1800s, they'll have these. It's a double angle lamp. It burns lamp oil.

Janet: We don't use kerosene.

David: Kerosene makes so much smell and smoke.

Janet: Liquid paraffin is the fuel of choice.

David: I do have one solar cell that we got chiefly because, when we got into our seventies, our children said they were a little uneasy about our being out here without any communication. They insisted we get a cell phone. In those days the cell phones ate up current much more than they do now. So we got the little solar panel, enough to keep that battery charged up.

Connie: But we've always had solar heated water, as soon as we had the well dug in that lovely hollow in the sand. We'd put out twelve gallons or so of water in the morning when we pumped water. We'd just leave them there. By noontime, by two thirty, that was hot. We had an old-fashioned bathtub down there. By turns we'd go down and have a bath. The rule was to use Ivory soap, not a bunch of cosmetic things, and that bathtub had to be fifty feet away from the well. If you were shampooing your hair, you couldn't rinse it back down into the sand.

The Armstrong shack illustrates an evolution in shack design and materials. In Connie's account, their shack in its early years under their care "grew like Topsy," getting altered bit by bit, much like Frenchie's method of building as described by Malicoat. But as the shack and its family matured, it took on more considered features, becoming a "respectable building." With pride, David pointed out the current shack's innovative cantilevered deck that he designed, urging me to "have a look at it afterward and see if it doesn't look just a bit unique as far as structural features go." In these later stages, it was not true that the shack was simply "thrown together." It had carefully-designed features.

Bill Fitts, a long-time shack user, talked about shack design. His insights elaborated on these points. Fitts was a professional builder in Provincetown who designed and supervised the reconstruction of the Jackson shack after it had burned. He had carefully examined the structural features and workmanship of many of the dune shacks. He observed that many of the original shacks were erected by skilled builders in Provincetown, one in particular being Jimmy Thomas:

Mentioning Jimmy Thomas, he's of the generation of our parents [that is, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century]. His wife was an artist. Jimmy was one of the crackerjack carpenters in town, one of the two best I could think of. He was personally affiliated with the dunes, going out there with his family. He did a lot of the building and the repairs, moving shacks from one place to another, getting inundated [with sand] or scoured out from under. He was doing an awful lot of that out there on various shacks for people. It was a little bit on hire, a little bit on friendship.

Many of the early shacks were not “thrown together” at all. They were carefully designed and built by local craftsmen like Jimmy Thomas. In Fitts' opinion, some of the thrown-together work seen on shacks came about later, additions by novice builders staying at the shacks, substandard to the original work.

Lawrence Schuster echoed this sentiment, talking about his shack. Schuster walked me around his shack, pointing out features. The tour was filled with particular pride about improvements and innovations, such as a widened bed, fiberglass insulation in the small kitchen, upgraded electricity, and new ceiling hooks for hanging cookware. Many of the upgrades were required to undo the inferior work of the Navy when they altered the shack during World War II. The Navy added the small kitchen room with inadequate insulation. The Navy installed ceiling panels of poor quality materials that Schuster ripped out. Like other shack tours I was given, Schuster was able to point to particular wood or fixtures and tell me the story of where they came from or how they were found or donated. The physical items in the house contained and brought to mind very personal and satisfying stories for Schuster. For instance, he related that he got the elaborate hinges on the outhouse by removing them from a boat that soon afterwards sunk in a blow (maybe because he removed them, he laughed). His shack had a swallow's house on a post, and a chair on the roof to get a view of the ocean. The house was substantially buried by sand, like the Isaacson-Schecter shack described below. Schuster said he will have to lift it eventually, but he joked that he was letting his potential workers get practice with some of the other shacks first. He had salvaged a long, barnacle-encrusted beam from the beach, cut into four pieces, to use for supports when he lifted the house. It lay on the ground beside the shack. In barrels at the front the shack, he grew parsley, tomatoes, and kale. In his kitchen he canned jellies and jams from wild berries. But he didn't fish from the shack, he said, a “busman's holiday” for someone like him who worked on the ocean most days.

### Old and New

The Armstrong shack discussion above identified a feature common to most shacks: the mix of old and new materials, and of old and new technologies. The mix of old and new reflects pragmatism and efficiencies. As related by the Armstrongs, when the family was young, salvage often sufficed, although it came waterlogged and bug infested. “Now we buy lumber,” said David, as they are able to do so. Shack technology also combined new and old, evolving with the needs of the family. Liquid paraffin was still the preferred choice for lights. A double angle lamp from a 19<sup>th</sup> century design worked best to light the shack. The family saw the utility of a small solar cell to power a shack telephone, so the children could communicate with their aging

parents at the shack. Bath water continued to be solar heated, but without the intermediary solar cells.

Shack residents commonly incorporated salvaged materials into shacks. Shack residents looked for ways to build cheaply and efficiently. Old materials found in town and on the beach at times were used to upgrade shacks at much lower costs than new materials. Plus, they often looked better than new materials. Residents frequently knew the source and dates of materials in the shacks. The Champlin family (Mildred, Maia, and Paul) and Adams family (Marcia and Sally) talked about salvage in the construction of their shacks:

Marcia: Ours had salvaged materials.

Mildred: That was part of it, making the houses out of salvaged stuff. That's certainly what happened in the 50s – recycling, early recycling. The windows came from [condemned buildings in] Brooklyn. They were putting in an expressway in Brooklyn.

Maia: The front porch is made up from wood that washed up on the shore.

Paul: Monkeywood.

Sally: Our house had the old windows from the post office in town. They were taking those out.

Marcia: The shutters were made from a dance hall floor, we understand.

Paul: Isn't this an old barn? [Pointing to the ceiling.]

Mildred: Yes, the roof boards. There's a board up there that's 22 inches wide that came from that barn, a hundred years old when Don took it down.

Paul: See, that's the thing about these places. The bell posts were probably 30-40 years old when they were taken from the dunes and planted here.

The posts for the Champlin's mission bell originally were electrical poles left on the dunes when the Peaked Hill station was decommissioned. Nat Champlin dragged these to his shack with his car. Other materials were identified through word of mouth, among friends in town or on the dunes. For example, to help repair the mission bell, their neighbors, Evelyn Simon and Emily Beebe, offered posts that they had found up the Cape in Dennis. Paul Champlin, who called his neighbors "the new generation" because they had replaced Leo Fleurant at the neighboring shack, described how Simon and Beebe had acquired their posts:

Down at Evelyn and Emily's, the new generation, they stumbled across a whole load of telephone poles when they were putting in their house. They were pilings they were sawing up and using as posts. They got them from the town of Dennis. There was this set of pilings that needed to be taken out. A guy they happened to know said, "Take as many as you want as I have to remove them anyway." So they got hauled all the way out here and they're sitting there buried now, except for the ones that are holding up the house. I wandered over there yesterday after being told by Sally that I should see about these posts. Sure enough, they're these 30-foot pilings that are just waiting to be hauled over here and put in. Evelyn said, "If you can figure out how to get them over there, just do it, they're all yours." They're worth \$1,500 just to buy them, and then you gotta get them out here, if you can find them. That's a perfect example of making do with what you can get. And if we didn't use those, down on the beach there's a 56-foot log, if we could figure out how to get that one up here. We'd go to the beach, waiting for the beach to open, we'd tow it in front of the house, then figure out how to get it up there.

This illustrates the informal economy of the lower Cape, where personal friendships frequently provided material and labor at cheaper costs than the formal markets. According to Paul, if the posts from the neighboring shack didn't work out, then a beach log might be used.

In renovating shacks leased from the Seashore, new dune dwellers (Beebe-Simons, Isaacson-Schecter, and the Dunns) also incorporated found materials in the shacks. Gary Isaacson and Laurie Schecter used wood from an old house in North Carolina, as well as timber from the old boathouse of the Peaked Hill station that belonged to Zara Jackson. Emily Beebe described how she and Evelyn did it:

Traveling on the fire road you pass the C-Scape, the next place you see is ours, Leo's Place... He had a chimney that we rebuilt. It kind of exceeds the quaint rustic rough definition physically, though most of the materials it was made from came from old houses in town. We visited lots of old building projects through the years that we rebuilt this place. And we found materials on the beach. And we found materials in the dump. First of all, we didn't have any money. The only thing we had to buy new we bought new, like asphalt shingles for the roof, cedar shingles for the walls, tar paper for underneath, and nails. Everything else we reused. A lot of fun. A lot of challenge.

The choice of found materials was in part family economics – it was simply cheaper to use materials from old buildings, the dump, and the beach when a family had limited funds for shack construction. But as implied in Beebe's statement, the use of old materials is consistent with a view that the shacks are “quaint,” “rustic,” and “rough.” Because of exposure, new items like shingles quickly acquire a weather-beaten look, bleached and battered by blowing sand.

Innovative technologies for solving routine tasks get invented by shack dwellers. This was illustrated by Lawrence Schuster's approach to getting propane bottles up to his shack. For the first fourteen of his twenty-two years in the shack, Schuster walked out to his shack. He said he'd carry a little something each trip. For big loads like bird seed he made arrangements for them to be delivered, bartering something for the delivery, like his homemade wine. Now he owned a four-wheel drive jeep and used it to haul materials. He showed me how he used the jeep to drag heavy propane bottles up the steep dune to his shack. He rigged a large pulley system to posts sunk at the top of the dune and at the bottom, near the jeep trail. Running a long rope through the blocks, he hooked the line to the propane bottles and the front bumper of the car. By backing up the jeep on the trail, the jeep pulled the rope through the pulley system, dragging the heavy bottle up the steep dune. In demonstrating this technique, he stationed me at the top to yell when the bottles arrived. I watched him haul up two bottles this way.

### Managing Sand

One common aspect of the dune shack maintenance was the management of sand in the immediate vicinity of a shack. Resident families took considerable effort to sustain a delicate balance between the shack and the inherently fluid natural landscape. Wind and water moved sand. Beaches grew and contracted. Hills rose and fell. Dune ridges displayed a tendency to march inland from the beach over a course of years. Changes commonly were incremental, as sand was lifted, carried, and dropped to another spot, grain by grain, depending upon physical obstructions like plants, or the placement of footpaths and sand fences. But sometimes things changed rapidly with storms.

Dune dwellers managed sand primarily with fences and plants, and secondarily with shovels and backhoes. The Armstrongs walked me around their shack, showing how they attempted to manage sand, “grain by grain.” Connie Armstrong said she tried to imagine how an individual grain would likely be transported by the wind blowing in certain directions. She erected sand

fences and planted dune grass and rose bushes accordingly around her shack, with the goals of stabilizing or moving particular dunes over the course of several years. If done properly, the wind did most of the work of moving sand to the proper places, working in combination with the fences and plants. The bottom portion of the Armstrong shack, raised above the ground, was enclosed with a solid wall in part to tame the winds beneath the structure. A large patch of rose bushes was what stabilized the dune to the southwest of the shack, she said. The roses began to desiccate and die because of moth infestation a few years back. So the family began pruning them in the fall to eliminate the ends with moth tents before the hatch. This hard, scratchy task helped considerably. The rose patch was healthy again, she said. She planned to do it again soon. The northeast dune in front of their shack was exposed to blasts of wind during winter. They have an ongoing project of planting grass and moving fences to protect that slope. To the northwest of the house they have used an S-shaped configuration of fences to break the wind and to build a sand barrier over to the front of the house.

The management of sand and plants was discussed by the Champlins, who lived in the western neighborhood a considerable distance from the Armstrongs. They used similar techniques:

Maia: The people who live here become stewards of the land. That's something that you don't get in a week-long stay with wine parties. It's an understanding of the fragility and how to protect it.

Paul: It's looking out at the yard here and seeing all that grass and knowing when there's too much grass, that this place is going to get buried in a year or two. And then having the gumption to go out and start managing it.

Nat: Too much grass collects sand and builds dunes.

Paul: Yeah, the tap root goes way down. There's a bit of management that has to be done then.

Maia: That's counter to the intuition of the soil conservation service. They like to build stuff up. But sometimes you can get too much and it builds against a building, a structure, and either buries it or rots it out. Charlie Schmid's house, his lower story or stories, were buried.

Andrea: It's sort of like wind through buildings in a city. If there are sand dunes, the wind goes between the dunes and creates blowouts. It just creates a lot of havoc.

Paul: You don't want too much blowout. You don't want too much build up. So we've learned through snow fencing and grass. We've planted grass, and taken grass, and moved grass. It's this whole balance you try your best to maintain.

Andrea: We've carried dozens of wheelbarrows full of sand.

Mildred: You have to manage it.

Paul: When we do have to build it up, we know when and how. We've even just in the last few years discovered that the snow fences that stand up this tall [he indicates with his hand], they're just a little too big. So we chop them in half the long way and you have these half fences that you can stretch out from here to those poles. This year they'll build up a little bit. Once you're satisfied with that, you pull them up, and you move them. And you move them, and you move them, and you move them. And then by the time that cycle is done, maybe we'll have to start again, maybe we'll have to pull some grass.

Dune dwellers like the Armstrongs and the Champlins asserted they have become experts in managing sand with fences and plants. These are relatively low-technology solutions to potentially major problems. The sand fences (snow fences) are purchased from the stores. They are thin pine slats wired together so as to gap a few inches, standing about three to five feet in height, and in long lengths. They are relatively cheap, lightweight, and flexible. Their design

slows wind blowing through, allowing sand to be dropped along the fence. As described above, the Champlins modified fences and positioned them in ways designed to use the wind in moving sand, to prevent sand from accumulating in the wrong places, and to remove sand from one place to another. Dune grass was used in the same manner. Where it was planted, dunes stabilized and grew. Blowing sand is caught by the grass and dropped, building the ground surface. The buried grass sends out new runners and tops, growing above the new surface. When terrain reached an optimum height for the shack, dune dwellers might trim or pull or relocate the bunch grass.

The Clemons-Benson family set sand fences and planted salt rose bushes to help secure the slope on which their shack sat. At one point, its precursor (the Fearing shack) almost toppled over, so slope management was a foremost concern. Peter Clemons explained to me the reason he placed fences across the dune's face below his shack:

It's for wind and for sand. Remember that Marianne said at one point this whole dune blew out from under the shack? Well, that's because the wind just comes right down this valley. The wind just comes through. If you walk down and kill any of this beach grass, you eliminate the possibility of it holding. The fence helps break the wind in the winter. We've planted fifteen or twenty *rosa rugosa* bushes. That bush is at least twenty years old. It hasn't grown much. That's another one that's doing better. Some of these fences I've put up around them to help them resist the elements.

According to Paul Tasha, the rose species growing profusely on the dunes and planted by Clemons on his slope were accidental introductions to the cape:

You see the rose hips and the bushes with the rose flowers on them next to the shack? Those are an introduced species. They're not native. Apparently somebody had a big shipload of them from Japan, a hundred years or something ago or more. The ship wrecked and they got spread up and down the east coast. I guess the roots floated ashore all over the east coast, from Nova Scotia to Virginia. They survived and now they're all over the place. But they're a good plant.

The Armstrongs managed plants without the use of herbicides or insecticides, preferring to accomplish slope management in low-impact ways:

Connie: We've avoided bringing certain chemicals out here. We absolutely don't bring certain chemicals. We don't spray any of the insects or kill any of the beasties with poisons.

David: We use pruning shears mostly.

Connie: Pruning shears at the right time of the year to get rid of the nests, and then just burning them. Plus, you're out here, you say, "You just can't get rid of all those things. They're going through a seven-year cycle. You just have to live through it." You go on faith.

Despite the on-going, low-tech efforts of dune residents to manage sand with fences and plants, at times the sand moved into configurations that jeopardized a shack or shack access. This often transpired over a number of years, but it might happen over a single winter under unusual circumstances. At these times, some shack residents have used equipment like backhoes to move sand, digging out areas in the vicinity of the shack to restart the efforts with fences and plants.

Careful placement of trails was another way long-term dune residents managed sand. Trails around shacks were routed in ways to avoid alignment with prevailing wind directions. This was

done to avoid blowouts. When signs of blowout conditions developed, shack residents commonly placed fences or tree branches to block footpaths and to encourage sand deposition. There were two customary rules commonly followed in using footpaths. In more heavily-traveled areas, particularly around the shacks, the rule was to use footpaths. Sticking to paths protected dune grass and other plants off the path, helping to stabilize dune systems. In less-traveled areas, some dune dwellers said they purposively avoided using standard routes. Taking different routes prevented the creation of footpaths that might eventually blow out or erode. During the middle of an interview, I observed Peter Clemons attempt to enforce these customary rules with strangers who were not using footpaths near the Fowler shack, a conversation incidentally recorded on tape:

*[Yelling to the hikers.]* Excuse me! Can you stay on the path please? There's no path over there! Who are you looking for? Well, stay on the path! *[To himself.]* How rude.

The hikers apparently did not know the customary rules for using footpaths near the shacks, or were disregarding them. The intervention by Clemons was intended to protect the dune grass that helped to stabilize the hill by the Fowler shack.

### Minimal Infrastructures

Because of their low-impact accommodations with the landscape, dune shacks represented a relatively unique experiment in human settlement on a barrier dune system. This was the opinion of Graham Giese, an expert on the geomorphology of Cape Cod and former dune dweller. Giese was once a co-owner of a shack in the eastern grouping (the Vevers-Pfeiffer-Giese shack). His wife, Barbara Baker, also was a former dune resident, having lived at the Jackson shack for a number of years. Their home was on High Head in North Truro overlooking the dunes.

According to Giese, the typical approach on the eastern seaboard has been to substantially modify coastal zones to accommodate human settlement. Soils are contoured and hardened in place with concrete and other fortifications. Rivers are redirected. Wetlands are dredged and filled. Jetties are built. Vegetative covers are substantially transformed. Such large-scale modifications characterize human settlement along America's shoreline. They are done to stabilize a base for houses, harbors, and coastal industries. These types of changes were visible throughout Cape Cod. Impacts on sustainable natural systems have been huge. Scientists like himself scramble to document and understand impacted natural processes such as ocean sand transport and wetlands productivity. But Giese saw in the dune shacks a uniquely different approach. Instead of modifying the barrier dune system, dune shack residents have built simple structures, attempting to fit them into their immediate surroundings without substantially altering natural systems. It represented a type of low-impact habitation rarely seen on the east coast within a sustainable community.

He stated the dune shack society might be viewed as an instructive, ongoing demonstration of compatible human-nature relationships with potential lessons for coastal dune ecologists. For example, the dune shacks provided a practical demonstration on how people might live on barrier beaches without disrupting natural cycles of sand deposition. The usual course of action for homes on beach bluffs was fortifying bluffs or to changing coastlines with breakwaters. These structures commonly disrupted sand flow, threatening the barrier beaches that protected salt marshes important for wildlife and fisheries, among other values. By contrast, the dune shack community had no similar structures. The shacks were slightly relocated with changing sand

conditions, allowing the beach to contract and expand, fitting into more natural cycles. To what extent this altered cycles of sand deposition was a researchable question.

As Giese observed, an important feature of dune shacks as a general house type was the minimal infrastructure built to support the neighborhood of shacks. It was what a shack lacked, as much as what it had, that defined it as a distinct house type. In general, the dune shack settlement had no concrete barriers, no breakwaters, no fortified bluffs, no paved roadways, no drainage ditches, no storm drains, and no extensive conduit systems for electricity, water, and sewage. As a general house type, shacks were built on skids or pilings allowing an accommodation with the fluid substrate. For managing dunes, the community used indigenous plants and portable sand fences. These choices set certain limits on (or challenges regarding) the amenities in shacks. They also made the dwellings inherently vulnerable, exposed to wind and water, floating on changing landscapes like boats in slow-motion, susceptible to careening tilts by scouring or inundation by building dunes. But the design was preferred over alternatives that transformed the natural landscape. The vulnerability of shacks was accepted in exchange for intimacy with the landscape, the goal of living close to natural systems. Dawn Zimiles described this accommodation between dunes and shacks as “really exciting”:

You know, the shacks kept falling down because the sands would shift. Part of the culture there was this complete care of the natural landscape. The thing is, if you stepped on the dune grass and broke it, the houses would fall down. Part of the way of maintaining the life there was that you had to be careful of everything. This was the feeling there. It was really exciting.

Dawn’s family knew this first hand. The Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack toppled several times in its life. The family’s response to this was not to substantially modify the natural setting, but to be more careful of it. Ways of living were adjusted to Nature, rather than the reverse. This was a high value expressed through dune shack architecture.

### Moving a Shack: A Case Example

Most dune shacks, perhaps all of them, have been moved at least once during their lifetimes to save them from falling into the sea or being buried under dunes. Among the first stories told to me by dune dwellers during interviews were accounts of relocating shacks. The stories were free of any bitterness or blame or regret. Instead, they were stories of awe, describing powerful natural forces, and of pluck, describing common people accomplishing great works under difficult circumstances, banding together to resolve dilemmas created by sea, sand, and storm. Dune residents came alive telling the stories. They commonly brought out photograph albums to illustrate the heroic events, laughing, pointing, saying “remember this?” and “remember that?” This genre, the “shack move” story, was emblematic of dune life. The stories were testaments to a central feature of dune living – that dune dwellers accommodated to the fluidity of the barrier dunes. In the long term, the sand and storms were in charge, not the dune dwellers. To survive in this place, on occasion one had to move everything up and over to sustain the dune settlement. Flexibility, not permanence, was the nature of the dune life.

The following case example illustrates the shack-move genre – the lifting of the Isaacson-Schechter shack. When I first visited the dunes in June of 2004, I was told by Seashore guides that sand was burying the Isaacson-Schechter shack. They took me out to see it. And there it sat, far down a hole in the sandy soil.

I learned from Gary Isaacson and Laurie Schecter what had happened. The dune the shack used to sit atop began to grow, accumulating sand dropped grain by grain by the winter winds, collecting in surrounding patches of wild rose and beach grass, becoming higher each season. Isaacson and Schecter battled encroaching sand that began to spill down onto the shack. Every spring they dug out the door and walkways and separated the shack walls from the surrounding sand hills. They carved out and shored up with boards hauled to the site, scavenged or bought. Eventually, boards on one side held in place tons of sand, preserving a narrow walking space separating the sand dune and the shack. And still the dune continued to grow each year. By 2001, the windows' vistas were gone. A person stared into sand. The shack sat in a hole, encased within a walled-up dune, effectively surrounded. The land's contour had reconfigured. The shack rested on the surface of an older time. Isaacson and Schecter said this was not an unusual event. Such things just happened in the course of dune life:

Isaacson: This is what I think is a ten-year event for every shack. You're either going to get blown out, or you're going to get filled in. It was never accounted for in our lease [with the Seashore]. So we took it on ourselves to do it.

Schecter: In terms of tradition, you know, the thing we discovered was that some people let it get buried and built on top of it – you've heard these stories that people have found that there are whole buildings under their building, if they look – or they would bring out a little backhoe, and like snow, they'd just move the sand away. But because it's now a Park, you can't just bring a backhoe into the Park and start rearranging the sand. Although...

Isaacson: It may have been the easiest way.

Schecter: Yeah, that's what I would have liked to have done. And I'm not sure that it would really have wrecked things because this is always moving. But, you know, I respect the Park. You can't just start rearranging part of the Park because it suits you. So I appreciate what they are saying, but I do think a backhoe is the way to go with this stuff, because if you build on top and then you get a blowout it creates a dangerous situation. The backhoe is just moving sand.

Getting buried had happened to many other shacks before. Like them, it was time to adapt to the inevitable. If they couldn't remove the top of the dune with a backhoe, then it was time to lift the shack to the top.

The buried Isaacson-Schecter shack offers an interesting case example of lifting a shack. It illustrates the technical challenges involved. It also illustrates two very different ways to approach it, which I will call "customary approaches" (within dune shack society) as distinct from "standard approaches" (within government agencies). Ways of lifting shacks established over time within dune shack society can be called "customary approaches." The principal features of customary approaches include personalized labor relations, small-scale technologies, and well-matched materials, with economic factors (labor, equipment, and materials) frequently donated, bartered, found, or acquired through informal economic arrangements. Ways of accomplishing construction jobs (like lifting a shack) through government agencies can be called "standard approaches." These approaches are guided by formal agency rules and standard operating procedures, at times involving contractors and federal, state, and municipal entities. As this case illustrates, the Isaacson-Schecter shack was lifted using a "customary approach" rather than a "standard approach." The customary approach proved more timely, more efficient, and less expensive. In addition, it proved much more personally satisfying, at least for the dune shack residents.

I pieced together the project's history from information acquired during interviews. I also had the good fortune of seeing the Isaacson-Schechter shack in its hole in July, and then freed of the hole in August after its ascension. In this story, standard approaches were initially explored but then abandoned in favor of a customary approach, which was successfully implemented. Undoubtedly I've missed some details, but I believe this is the gist of the story. It's worth telling in some detail, perhaps as much as \$90,000, the amount the customary approach may have saved taxpayers.

My understanding is that in 2001 Isaacson and Schechter contacted the Park Service with a proposal. They wanted to lift their dune shack. The two shack heads huddled with Seashore staff to figure out how best to do it. At this point, many approaches were under consideration, including alternative ways to address labor, materials, equipment, techniques, and impacts. Regarding responsibilities for monetary costs, the shack's lease agreement was examined. The lease contained no specific language regarding lifting the shack if swallowed by sand. Shack rehabilitation and routine shack maintenance were clearly specified. After consideration of these matters, the monetary costs of lifting a buried shack could be reasonably assumed to be something additional, not included in the specific lease terms. If this assumption was accepted, the monetary costs might be paid by the Seashore and not the shack residents.

Monetary costs were estimated at about \$15,000 during the discussions of 2001. One potential option was to have costs paid by the residents at the time of the work, and then prorating the costs over the remainder of the lease, effectively reducing the residents' monthly rent. Essentially, long-term rents would be paid in advance. This had an advantage of avoiding the necessity of tapping into government money, typically fully allocated to other projects. Park Service solicitors were consulted regarding this potential approach.

Meanwhile, several approvals were deemed advisable given the potential impacts of the project. Sand would be moved. Equipment such as trucks hauling materials might be used. The preservation of a shack of potential historic value had to be reviewed for potential effects on natural and cultural resource values. Approvals from three entities were solicited – the Town Conservation Commission for moving sand within one hundred feet of a coastal bank (part of coastal zone management provisions), the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program for protecting endangered species, and the Massachusetts Historical Commission for avoiding adverse effects on historic properties. Such approvals generally take months to procure, so these reviews postponed the project through 2001 and into 2002. By August 2002, the Seashore informed Isaacson and Schechter that the project had passed the reviews, although with modifications. Larger equipment would be needed, including a small crane, if the shack were placed on a platform. Placing the shack on a platform offered a longer-term solution for moving the shack than simply lifting a shack on beams, the original concept. The work was approved for September. However, given the changes in the initial plan, a revised estimate for monetary costs would be needed.

When the revised cost estimates came in, costs had jumped from \$15,000 (the original job) to \$39,500 (the modified job). This brought the planned September work to a halt. Covering costs of this magnitude through prorated rents was not feasible. Other solutions were discussed. The Seashore considered whether \$40,000 might be available in its next-year's budget, perhaps through the Cultural Resources program. Tentatively, this appeared possible. However, this would necessarily delay the project, postponing it to 2003 when the funding might become available.

Under this approach, the government would have to buy the service. The work would go out for competitive bid. Accordingly, the Seashore developed a scope of work, put out to bid during the winter of 2002-2003. Details of competitive bids are the privileged information of federal procurement entities. But according to scuttlebutt, the returned bids were “horrrifying,” that is, magnitudes higher than previously-assumed estimates. Outside bidders figured their costs for lifting the Isaacson-Schechter dune shack, using a crane and other equipment, from \$80,000 to \$100,000. Higher monetary costs might be attributable to several factors, such as the platform design, inflation, and federally-mandated wages, workman’s compensation, OSHA standards, overhead rates, insurance liability indemnification, and project management add-ons (such as project oversight by federal historic preservation experts). All these expenses must be built into a bid for a firm to see a profit. By going out for competitive bid, it becomes a “deep-pockets” project, at least deeper than the pockets of most dune shack residents.

In 2003, the high bids once more brought the project to a halt. Participants huddled again to assess potential options to reduce costs under standard government approaches. Possibilities included a contract with a refined scope of work; a cooperative agreement with a nonprofit organization; cost sharing, with the Park contributing materials; local Seashore staff doing the work; Historic Preservation staff from Lowell doing the work; a volunteer project sponsored by Friends of the National Seashore; an RFQ saying “this is the problem, tell us how to fix it”; an amended shack lease with reappraised values, revised rents, and longer terms; a terminated lease; a postponement until general standards were developed – these and others were considered. None felt right. Another year passed without the shack getting lifted.

By this time, 2004 was approaching. Three years had gone by since the initial proposal by Isaacson and Schechter to lift their shack. The shack was still buried, and getting buried deeper. Isaacson and Schechter worried that further delays jeopardized the building’s structural integrity due to wood rot from damp sand. A preservation specialist from the Park’s Northeast Region Cultural Resource Center believed delays would not necessarily hurt the building.

One set of approaches still presented itself, sidelined during discussions. Dune residents might lift the shack using customary methods. Under this approach, shack users would provide labor and arrange for equipment and materials. Local experts within dune shack society would deal with technical aspects. Dune shack residents would protect historic, cultural, and natural values following guidelines developed in consultation with the Seashore. In sum, the shack would be lifted as shacks typically were lifted, using customary methods within dune shack society.

As 2004 unfolded, that is what transpired. The dune residents lifted the shack using a customary approach. I interviewed Gary Isaacson and Laurie Schechter in August, soon after the job’s completion. They recounted events, beginning with their reasons for moving ahead:

Schechter: When the Park said “no” and decided the project wasn’t feasible, we said, “You know, our original proposal was this. We’ll go back and just do that. We can do that by hand.”

Isaacson: We had our shack three years in the ground. So Laurie just said, “We have to do it. We have to do our work.”

Schechter: Three years. The sand was up to the roof. You saw it. We can’t keep waiting because the thing was rotting. We’re watching all our work rotting away.

Isaacson: So Laurie said [to Park staff], “You have to do what you have to do, we have to do what we have to do.”

Schecter: So, the Park staff got all the regulations for us that we needed and we went ahead and did it. It would have been way easier three years ago. This was really hard because of how deep we got. Three years ago we wouldn't have had to raise it as high. It just wouldn't have been the same amount of work. But we just got to the point to say, "I know it's taking a while, I know it's going to take you time, but we're going to have to just do it. We can't keep waiting."

The shack, resting on several beams, was lifted using small, hand-pumped hydraulic jacks. Once at the proper height, the beams were bolted to large posts set vertically into the sand. This was done with volunteer labor without a crane or a heavy supporting platform. Isaacson and Schecter described the low-tech method to me, with substantial pride of accomplishment:

Isaacson: The first thing we had to do was bring the beams in, eight people carrying one beam with their backs to this porch wall in a space that's only two-feet wide, and then dropping the beam, avoiding their feet. So the first thing is getting the beams down close to the shack. Well, actually, the first thing was to dig out enough sand so that those beams could get under the shack.

Schecter: That was a feat. We had to build sand walls [wooden walls holding back the sand], which made the area even more enclosed than it was originally. So we were working in a teeny area and then working about twelve inches under the building. To get even twelve inches of sand out under this building was a huge feat.

Isaacson: My favorite was Genevieve [Martin] going under the shack on her back and then kicking the sand out instead of shoveling. She couldn't sit up. She couldn't dig it. She could just kick it out from under.

Once we got a clearance of about twelve inches, the beams needed to get under there. But if you've got posts holding up the shack, how do you get them under? So we had to support the shack and cut the posts away to put the beam in place. Three beams. Then we attached the beams to the building with plates. The three beams were in position.

The beams had to be put on posts. So we needed to set these big eight-by-eight posts that weighed about four hundred pounds. In order to set those posts, we had to dig holes. In order to do this, we sank a galvanized garbage can to keep drying sand from falling back in. So we dug sand out from a garbage can, tapping the sides down until the top of the can was flush with the sand. So now we had this starting cavity with wet sand at the bottom. Then we took a huge sand auger, twelve-inch head, and we started taking up the sand carefully, two people lifting the sand auger, tapping it out. It had to be eight feet deep.

Schecter: We knew we had to sink the posts eight to ten feet deep. Once the sand walls were removed we knew we'd get extra sand [securing the posts]. So it was between seven to eight feet deep that we dug each hole.

Isaacson: Now, how do you get a four-hundred pound post vertical into that hole? And the post can't hit the sides of the hole on the way down.

Schecter: And it had to be done fast, so the sand wouldn't dry out in the hole. We had to dig the hole and set the posts within a certain period of time, hours, so the sand hole wouldn't collapse.

Isaacson: We used a tripod with sixteen-foot legs. The beam is also sixteen feet. How are we going to get that vertical? We came up with an idea that saved us. We made a shelf out of two-by-six pressure-treated stock, the back of which had two-by-four legs with points, six feet long. We hammered those legs into the sand with the back of the two-by-

fours resting against the shack, a five-foot wide shelf with handles. Two of the legs of the tripod would fit into those two corners against the shack. They want to go against the shack and out. We screwed them into that shelf. The third leg was out on the bank. We used a chain fall.

Schecter: It's a pulley system that allows you to go a fraction at a time by pulling on a chain. It won't allow itself to reverse.

Isaacson: So we positioned the tripod, two of the legs nearly vertical because it's only nine inches away from the building, the third leg on the bank about eight feet from the building, so that the chain would be directly over the hole. Then we wrapped the chain one foot off-centered around the post, so that it would want to go down. So we start hoisting. We get it directly over the hole. We have one or two people on each leg, one person at the chain fall with the pulley, one person on the roof guiding the post, one person at the hole guiding it in so it doesn't hit the wall, about seven people altogether, and then we had straps attached to the posts as it goes up so it's not going to wobble, and then we start lowering it into the hole. We get it square to the building, and we get it set.

Schecter: A video of that would have been great.

Isaacson: One of the postholes on the northwest side, in the middle of the shack, was down three or four feet and we hit a rotted two-by-four. So, we had to step down. The walls collapse, and we have to re-dig. We're now down all the way. We get the post in. And the sand bank gives way from a small leak not bigger than three or four inches around, underneath. All the dry sand goes whoosh! And it filled up that hole automatically. Had we been twenty minutes later, we would have had a filled hole again. Each of those posts was a chapter.

Wolfe: To lift up the shack, how did you do that?

Schecter: We had to dig down below the building to set jacking stations. The first lifting was hard because we had to dig into a hole to set the jack. We had to set it on something that was strong enough that wasn't going to sink into the sand when we started to jack the building up. We had to dig a hole, build a little platform, and put the jack under the shack.

Isaacson: At one point I'm on my back, midway underneath the shack, and I need a hammer. But because the beam is resting on the sand and I didn't want to crawl, you know, pull myself, I started digging underneath the beam until I saw daylight and I put my hand up and yelled, "I need a hammer!" And I took the hammer and hammered on down. We had maybe about nine jacking points at that stage, little hydraulic jacks, twelve-ton and six-ton. I'd call out...

Schecter: Gary sat in the house and measured with a level. He told each person at a jack...

Isaacson: "... Laurie, five more pumps! Joyce, ten more pumps! Ok, Everyone together!"

Schecter: When it got level, everyone would do it.

Isaacson: This is because everyone is pumping at different rates. Every jack is going to produce a different result. And we didn't want the shack to break. The porch is kind of independent. And the roof is independent.

Schecter: So basically, we wanted to lift it all level at the same time. So he was in here with a level watching that it stayed level and he would tell whatever station to pump, and they pumped. Then, when any one of them reached their maximum height, everyone stopped. We put blocking in to hold the building. Everyone's station was blocked. Gary ran around to check to make sure it was safe and looked good. Then we released the jacks. It would all sink a little bit, just like an inch or so. Then we set new blocking stations higher on the cribbing. And we did it again. It only took three days of doing that. This was surprising. The time was taken in doing all the prep work, which was setting the

beams, setting the posts, getting the sand out of here, that took three or four weeks. The actual jacking only took three days. And we were very slow and very methodical.

Isaacson: We didn't want any accidents.

Schecter: We didn't have a scrape. Nothing.

Isaacson: The posts are lateral supports. We made them long enough so that we can go up another two-and-a-half feet [in the future if necessary].

Schecter: It's attached with bolts.

The method described by Isaacson and Schecter is an example of a customary approach to lifting a dune shack. This is evident by where the ideas came from. Isaacson and Schecter tapped into the knowledge base of dune shack society during project planning, as they explained.

Schecter: Because we've done so much work doing [shack] maintenance, we know things. We're a wealth of resources. I can say this of other shack owners too. When we went to raise this building we went to everybody we personally knew who had done this kind of work out here in the Park before, not that we knew everybody who had. But as we came across people, we interviewed them. We talked with them. We'd say, tell us, how would you do this? What about this? What about that? And so we gathered a ton of information about how these buildings were raised or maintained in the past related to the sand. We asked, how have people traditionally maintained and worked on these buildings? So, we gathered a lot of information.

Wolfe: This information, this knowledge you consulted, it's not written down anywhere?

Isaacson. No.

Wolfe: So it's an oral tradition. Are people willing to share it with you?

Isaacson: Oh yes!

Wolfe: They don't say it's proprietary knowledge?

Isaacson: Oh no.

Wolfe: Why is that?

Isaacson: Why are they willing to share? Well, they want to preserve the shacks, I think.

Schecter: Yeah. I think a lot of people do. Like Will Hapgood has done a lot of maintenance and has lived here since he was a child. He's seen how these buildings were either taken care of, or not taken care of. Bill Fitts was maintenance for Peaked Hill [Trust] and has done a lot of Cape work. And then there's Winkler, the guy who has the crane business on the Cape here. And Scott Dunn has done work. I don't know that I can list all of the people. But if somebody said, "You should ask so-and-so about this," we would. Of course, we went to all the Park specialists too, anybody who had anything to do with construction.

Wolfe: They have salaries for this, right?

Schecter: Those people do. Yes, the Park people do.

Isaacson: There was one fellow who came out unrelated to doing any work in the shack. I had thrown my back out. So he worked on my back. He's a masseuse. He said, "How's the job going?" I said, "It's going well. I've got some concerns. I still don't have a real handle on whether the beam size is going to be sufficient, because no one really has been able to tell me." He says, "Well, I've worked in raising shacks, buildings, and construction on the Cape for twenty years." So after he worked on me, we climbed down, got under the shack, which was pretty much eighteen inches or a foot space, and he looked and said, "You've got a great infrastructure, you don't need this beam, you don't need that one, this is what you should use." It gave us confidence to move ahead.

Wolfe: He didn't charge you for that information?

Schecter: [Laughs] No.

The labor for the project primarily came from Isaacson and Schecter's network of friends, but also through word of mouth. Some workers heard about the project and showed up. This system of labor resembled that described by Beebe and Simon in Chapter 3 when they renovated their shack. Isaacson and Schecter consulted the Seashore as well. It was not the case that the "customary approach" and "standard approach" necessarily involved different sets of people. Some local residents were comfortable working in either system – the customary system where work is often done through informal, personal arrangements, and the standard government system, where work follows formalized rules and standard government procedures. Isaacson and Schecter were willing to work in either system. Apparently, so was a crane owner in Provincetown.

Isaacson: Now take Winkler who does crane work. We were going to take delivery of four-by-twelves, 24 feet long, three-hundred to four-hundred pound beams.

Schecter: As background, he came out three different times to bid on this job, once for us, once again for us and the Park, and once for the Park. He didn't get any of the jobs. We knew he had blocking, which is the wood for cribbing to keep the building up while you're working on it.

Isaacson: He didn't get the job, so I was, like, a little embarrassed to call him to ask for help. Here we were taking delivery of all these beams, but how do we get them out here? Well, I tried to rent a truck that would have done it, but the trucker was out of town. So I went to Winkler and I said, "Could I have the lumber delivered to you, and then, do you have a truck that would take it out for us?" He said, "Not a problem. Anytime you want it delivered, we'll have it delivered." And I asked, "Can I use some of the cribbing?" He said, "Not a problem." So the lumber was delivered to Winkler. He's about five miles from the gate [to the dunes]. They loaded it right onto a truck. He brought it in. We had a group of volunteers to get it off the truck. Then he went back and got the cribbing. And then in one load he brought it out. I mean it was amazing to see this thing coming up that first dune, a flat-back truck. Then he raced in reverse, stepped on the brake, and the cribbing came flying off. *[Laughter.]* We got our cribbing. So I asked him, "Um, how much?"

Schecter: We said we'd pay him for the job.

Isaacson: He said, "No, oh no." He knows this is a volunteer effort. So he lost the job...

Schecter: ...but he put all that time and effort into it. And I said, "I'll pay you!" And he said, "No." But he did say, "Do you think I could stay a couple of nights in the shack?" And I said, "But of course!" *[Laughter.]*

The above narrative illustrates formal and informal economic relations. Isaacson paid for his massage, a formal economic transaction. But the masseuse also gave a free consultation about the shack's infrastructure, which was an informal transaction. Isaacson and Schecter offered to pay money for hauling and cribbing (a formal transaction), but Winkler instead traded for shack time (an informal transaction). In the informal economic system, the so-called "underground economy" of the lower Cape (a term used by Jay Critchley and Tom Boland), these types of trades and out-right gifts are said to be common. People know one another personally. The giving and taking produce reciprocities benefiting parties over the long term. They provide personal satisfaction in accomplishing worthwhile goals through camaraderie and mutual aid. In this case, the immediate goal was the preservation of a dune shack that many local people cared about. But a suite of other values gets reinforced through the informal economy, especially good personal relationships in a small town where people must live together over the long term. After listening to their story of lifting the shack, I asked Isaacson and Schecter about the bottom line – how much the customary approach cost the shack owners:

Wolfe: It's a remarkable story. How much did the Park Service pay for this?

Isaacson: Nothing.

Schechter: Nothing.

The Isaacson-Schechter case provides an impressive illustration of shack maintenance comparing customary approaches and standard approaches. The estimate to lift the shack through a standard Park approach (a formal bid procedure) was about \$90,000. It took three years of work to reach that bid before the Seashore rejected it as unfeasible. During this time the shack was getting buried further. By comparison, the actual lifting of the shack with a customary approach cost the Seashore nothing. It employed networks of friends, in-kind reciprocity, loaned equipment, and gratis local expertise. Both types of approaches were collaborative, with the Seashore and shack residents working together to address a shack problem. But in terms of efficiencies and costs, the two approaches were exceptionally different. The customary approach proved much better suited to the challenges of repositioning a shack buried in sand.



## Chapter 12. Social Challenges

“Liquid earth.” These were Conrad Malicoat’s words for the dunes of the Backshore. And as he and others pointed out, lives constructed on liquid earth displayed fluidity as well, a creative expressiveness, a compliant malleability to a changing fundament. To an outsider like me, the shacks conveyed fragility, a vulnerability to natural forces unlike standard communities designed for stability, strength, and durability. But my seeing fragility was a partial understanding. The simplicity of the rustic shacks floating on or just above the sand on pilings was also a strength. The liquid earth of the Backshore had claimed all three Peaked Hill Coast Guard Stations, each version built strong and solid by conventional standards. Meanwhile, the fragile shack settlement around the stations had endured. The shacks survived through the constant fiddling of their occupants. The adjustments were unending by the testimony of shack users. And the work wasn’t easy, labors of love extracted through familial obligation or comradeship. Yet an enduring life on unspoiled dunes was achieved this way, a demonstration of the potential mutuality of a human settlement with dune grass, unstable sand, howling wind, and pounding surf.

Dune dwellers found meaning in shack life. Living roughly at the edge of society was not a summer project, or a vacation, or “an experience” (like programmed shack time) for long-term dune dwellers. It represented a chosen path through life. The potentials and achievements of dwelling on the dunes over a span of years were unique and irreplaceable, according to long-term residents. Living in shacks on the Backshore was part of a cherished way of life. It meant the preservation of Old Provincetown. It meant the extension of fine arts to new horizons. It meant living close to Nature. And it meant the nurturance of oneself with family, friends, and close-knit communities.

“Very tenuous.” These were Murray Zimiles’ words for life in dune shacks. As he and others pointed out, the fragile connections between dune shack society and the dunes were tenuous. They relied on unspoiled dunes, adaptable shacks, and unbroken lines of tradition bearers, that core of the society transmitting the traditional culture. Historically, dune shack residents had worked to preserve these three essential elements.

The tenuous nature of this traditional culture is the final subject of this report. The chapter describes how dune shack residents portray recent social challenges to their life in shacks. The general public’s demand for a “piece of unspoiled beach” had never been higher on the lower cape, including the shacks. The recognition of “historic values” placed new demands on shack residents. And the end of legal tenancies raised uncertainties about long-term residents. While the physical preservation of shacks was more certain, the preservation of cultural traditions associated with the shacks was not.

### “Ooos-and-Aahs”

Even in Eugene O’Neill’s time, the Backshore was a tourist attraction. In 2004, near the center of Provincetown, I encountered a billboard that sold the dune shacks as one of the main sights along the dune taxi tours:

Art’s Dune Tours. See the outback of Provincetown. Tour the awesome scenery throughout the cape National Seashore and sand dunes. Learn the history of the life saving stations and

dune shacks while enjoying the endless scenes of beautiful mountains of sand. Over 54 years.

The history of the dune shacks was promoted alongside the “awesome scenery” and the history of life saving stations (see Fig. 3). To me it raised the question, were shacks historic attractions? Or were they homes? If both, did one threaten the other?

Privacy was one of the highest values in the traditional culture of dune shack society. While valuing this, dune shack residents appeared to be tolerant of the taxi tours, operated by a Provincetown family with long, friendly relations with dune residents. The tours did not stop at shacks or visit the residents, no doubt a mutual accommodation between the tour operators and shack dwellers. Even so, the contradiction of shack privacy and tourism, this underlying tension, was subtly expressed at times. If shacks looked like “sights” to tourists, then tourists looked like “insects” on their “Anthill” (see Chapter 6).

At the root of this tension is the question of cultural authenticity. Can shack residents continue to live authentic lives if they become too much of a tourist attraction? Can artists continue to find conditions of creative solitude with strangers taking pictures? Can dune dwellers do what they have come to do on the dunes under the watchful eye of tourists? This was the point of the humorous story told by Kathie Meads about Joseph Nune’s early beach tours and Eugene O’Neill’s nude beach parties. As she told it, O’Neill supposedly yelled, “You’re really cramping my parties bringing your dune tours over here! Joe, you can stop by anytime, but don’t bring the dune tour by anymore!” Her friends laughed at the image of Boston schoolmarms cramping Eugene O’Neill’s style because the issue was still fresh, in Provincetown as well as on the dunes. Provincetown had become such a tourist destination and summer resort, its year-round residents were struggling to preserve its traditions (see Chapter 7).

A more recent version of the Nunes-O’Neill imbroglio occurred when Provincetown briefly designated the beach adjoining the Champlin shack as “clothing optional.” The Champlins had no forewarning, they told me. The designation drew substantial numbers of nude sunbathers. According to Mildred Champlin, her young grandchildren had to walk among them to access the beach. And the sunbathers were upset at the Champlins on the bluff, going about their normal shack routines. Some female sunbathers yelled at him, chuckled Nat Champlin, calling him a “pervert.” It took three years to fix the incompatibility. The town revoked the designation, restoring the beach to prior conditions.

For artists in residence at the C-Scape shack, tourist visits were stipulated requirements. During the Adams-Champlin interview, Sally Adams reported on hearing talk about that kind of program extended to other shacks:

How many years ago was this? [The superintendent] had the brilliant idea that they were going to run tours out to the houses and have all of us sit around and tell our histories. That’s another thing, each time the administration changes, high-level administration or local administration, the attitude toward us and the houses and everything has changed dramatically.

Adams did not like the idea. Scheduled visits like these were directly at odds with shack values of solitude, privacy, and autonomy in the traditional culture. In other historic parks and monuments, such programs operate. In Alaska, I remembered boat cruises down the Tanana River out of Fairbanks, stopping to talk with Athabaskans at “traditional” summer fish camps. The camps were run like concessions.

During interviews, some shack residents worried that as legal tenancies ended, dune dwellers might be replaced by other kinds of users, such as those who complied with tourist visits, or occupants unconnected to the dunes except through reading or quick training by program operators. Dawn Zimiles asserted that such programs would replace the dune's cultural traditions with something else:

I just feel that if you take the people who started the house and the whole scene away from their house, you are not going to have the same culture. Do you know what I mean? If you don't have the real people that built and really lived in that place, that was their way of life, then you can't recreate it. It becomes something else. And here, I think that the original people did have this. A lot of the people are still out there from the original families. My family did have this enthusiasm for the environment and how it lends itself to the inspiration of art. And so now, because people know about that, they have a situation where the government manages the area and brings people to experience the art. But that's not what it was about.

Conrad Malicoat summarized the issue by contrasting residents with "roots" on the Backshore with the "people that flow in-and-out":

The Park is mainly interested in the people that flow in-and-out, and gawk-and-look, and ooo-and-aah. But [on the dunes] you don't get that aspect of it. There are roots out there. Don't pull those weeds up. *[Laughs.]* They're good weeds. They're very nourishing weeds. And if the Park could do that, that would be another change.

So Malicoat, in fine humor, compared the traditional culture rooted on the Backshore with "weeds." But "good weeds," he laughed at his good-natured jibe. He hoped the weeds would be allowed to continue.

### "Weird Paradoxes"

The recognition of the historic values of the dune district saved certain shacks from demolition, according to dune dwellers. It also placed new demands on shack residents. Some of these seemed peculiar to dune dwellers, particularly when working to keep a shack habitable. Andrew Clemons reflected on the "weird paradox" he felt about shack maintenance, working on his family's shack (Clemons-Benson shack):

I was always aware of the weird paradox of needing to fix things [on the shacks], but also needing to keep things looking like we haven't fixed it, that we haven't tampered with it. The Seashore was telling us we weren't supposed to change it too much.

The historic value of shacks created the paradox. Could shacks change, or must they conform to some historic period? If they must conform, which period?

I interviewed several who mentioned this pressure on the traditional culture. Josephine Del Deo recounted how shacks customarily changed over time, discussing the history of the preservation paradox:

When Olson became superintendent, all the actions he took as superintendent was to minimize the cottages, to try to get rid of them. Naturally the Park Service didn't want the

responsibility of maintaining these places. It's costly. So he started by completely bulldozing Charles Schmid's cottage after he died. That raised a hoard of wasps, of hornets, throughout the whole community, not just the dune dwellers. Everyone was incensed that that had been done. So they backed down slightly. We had this hearing in 1985 where we all tried to say, "You can't do this. These cottages are of great historic value. You must honor them."

At that point we were just trying to save the *situ*, the locus of these cottages – we had to try to save just the buildings at that point. You might say we were saving "the locations." But take Phil Malicoat. He had to rebuild his cottage at one point. The dune dwellers, we knew them all. Everybody rebuilt on their own, without expanding the footprint [of the shack]. It was because they wanted to be there.

Frenchie's cottage became very, very low. Every year she had to dig it out of the sand. Finally she said to Sal in 1976, "I'll allow you to put a structure on top of my original cottage." The Park allowed us to do that on the footprint, because really, she couldn't live there. She couldn't use it. So Sal put this cottage up in 1976.

It was in no way similar to what had been there. What had been there was a little tarpaper shack that Frenchie constructed with her own hands, with a dirt floor, unbelievable. It was just gorgeous, so wonderful. She had a pump inside the shack. It was loaded with fleas. We loved it. [Laughter.] She did everything herself. She had these lovely painted old things. A marvelous lady. But from the standpoint of historic structures, the structures changed so dramatically over the years.

You know, originally a couple of them were halfway houses. The Jones cottage, Randolph Jones, that was possibly a halfway house because the distances seem to be of that nature and also the size of the place was so miniscule, it couldn't really sustain any other kind of activity. And of course in the 1940s the Navy came and took over the Braaten cottage and they restructured that whole thing. They put soundproofing on the ceiling. You could hardly say this was the original cottage.

That's the way it went. And Sal worked on Hazel's cottages, helping to keep them going, you know. And Boris built his cottage over four times. So when the Park began to say, we were violating the historic structure by changing anything, it was kind of ridiculous. So finally, now we're historic cottages. Then this whole thing about the structure became even more intense.

As recounted by Del Deo, the historic values recognition created the paradox regarding shack renovation. Historically, shack forms were never stagnant. And the Seashore had approved substantial renovations, such as building a shack on top of Frenchie's buried cottage. This was the traditional culture. Any single historic period or particular design for a shack was simply one point in the dynamic flux.

Technology was another place the paradox was debated, as shown in the interview with Maia Champlin Peck and Andrea Champlin:

Maia Peck: One of my complaints about the historical preservation process is that people think that history stopped at a certain time. You're not allowed to put in obvious visual changes to your such-and-such period historical house because it'll alter the appearance of it. But history is ongoing, and its history is an ongoing adaptation to this environment,

like solar panels, perhaps using better equipment to move sand. So as far as what “standard,” I certainly wouldn’t set it at 1954 because we like to use the solar power out here, which is a very important thing. It’s maintaining the way of life and managing out here with the best tools that we have. We have different tools now.

Andrea Champlin: Yeah. They used the best technology that was available at the time. If they had solar panels back then, they would have used them.

Peck used solar panels to illustrate the inherent tension between historic preservation and living traditions, but there were many other examples I heard during interviews, from the shape of a roof line to whether screws securing shingles should or should not have puttied ends. Peck and Champlin asserted that shack residents customarily incorporated appropriate new technology (what they called the “best” technology). Peck asserted that shack upgrades were aspects of a “way of life,” a living tradition (what she called “ongoing history”). I observed at least three shacks with solar panels in 2004 (the Champlin shack, Schuster shack, and Armstrong shack), though there may have been others.

The discussions over shack renovations had a “post-modernist” cast at times. In deciding how to rehabilitate the former Peg Watson shack, Gary Isaacson and Seashore staff negotiated about what “a shack” might look like as a finished product, as if “a shack” were a house type like “Cape Cod Cottage.” According to Isaacson, the discussion even came down to details such as “red” being in the kitchen to make it look more authentic (the Seashore thought it should have red). In post-modernist architecture, decorative elements may be plucked out of context and employed in exaggerated styles to make metaphoric, symbolic, and even ironic statements. The measure of authenticity is whether the building evokes a feeling of authenticity (that is, “it looks like a real shack”). Detractors might view this as the replacement of authenticity by contrivance. For instance, Jay Critchley worried that “new money” was transforming Provincetown into a type of theme park (“P-town Inc., Formerly Provincetown,” “You’ll swear you were really there”) (see Chapter 9). Yet even Jay Critchley dipped into the post-modernist palette in the renovation of the C-Scape shack. The Provincetown Community Compact purposively maintained a rustic, simplified quality to foster solitude, self-confidence, and self-reliance in programmed users. In such cases, “shack” becomes an objectified and manipulated concept, contrasting with the humble precursors of today’s “respectable buildings,” using Conrad Malicoat’s terminology (Chapter 11).

Andrew Clemons (Clemons-Benson shack) said he felt at times that shack residents were living in a “piece of art”:

One of the things about living out here, for me anyway, was this: in everything you do, you sense the artistic qualities in small things. You’ll go down and you’ll be pumping water and you’ll be thinking, ‘I’m living a very interesting life right now.’ You know how subconsciously, when you look at a piece of art, when you look at a really great piece of art, you know that there’s something beyond what’s just right in front of you. I think living here reinstates that there is something else. But it’s not just a pretty picture. It’s the fact that you’re doing something in that pretty picture. You’re a part of that picture. It reinstates the great stuff about life.

I feel this way about tourists. I have this feeling that tourists have this image of the perfect little Cape Cod town. That’s what they go to try to experience. But it’s impossible to experience the little quintessential Cape Cod town just by walking around buying postcards and buying t-shirts. If you really want to experience that little Cape Cod town, come live there for a while. Come work on a scalloping boat for a day and see how your hands peel off.

Accordingly, some tourists might think they experience “the little quintessential Cape Cod town” by “buying postcards and buying t-shirts.” But for Clemons, living on the dunes since his childhood, an authentic life was manifested by “how your hands peel off” and his internal sense of greatness behind surface forms. To him, authenticity was personally living and working in it.

### An Uncertain Future

In my assessment, no dune shack resident I interviewed felt secure about the future of the dune shacks or the cultural traditions associated with them. From the histories they recounted, preservation had been a longstanding concern for shack residents and others on the lower cape (Chapter 2). The preservation effort had variously focused on preserving the dunes against development, preserving the shacks against demolition, and most currently, preserving dune dwellers from dispossession as legal tenancies ended. In 1988, the concern for the future was expressed in a statement from Josephine Del Deo writing to the Massachusetts Historical Commission about historic values:

We believe that you believe that an entire heritage belonging to the best of American traditions is at stake here, something that does not just vaguely fall within your purview, but is substantially within your jurisdiction. This cultural legacy is now in total jeopardy. It can disappear forever from the American landscape; it may well do so. If it remains, it will remain to remind us, and generations to come, that art is part of the nation’s honor; that poets are indispensable statesmen; and creativity, no matter who expresses it, carpenter or astronomer, is the heart of a nation’s survival. Kemp may be a minor poet, but he wrote:

Our sun, with all its worlds, drops down the sky  
For, banked in shining heaps, the great suns fly  
Onward in fiery swarms like golden bees,  
While from all sides the everlasting seas  
Of night break on them as they thunder by...  
And ignorant generations live and die  
Amid this storm of stars, and feel at ease.

Can we feel at ease with our conscience if we deny that this kind of vision has existed in the cottages at Peaked Hill and might exist again? In asking the Massachusetts Historical Commission to declare the entire group of eighteen cottages as a cultural unit to be preserved as symbolic landmarks at the very edge of our continent, we request much more for the future than for ourselves. As I have stated previously and which I feel it is appropriate to repeat:

This constellation of dune cottages constitutes a continuous enrichment of the American dream traditionally derived from the freedom to imagine and to advance new worlds.

This freedom and this dream should not be lost.

In her statement, Del Deo (1988) portrayed the “cultural legacy” of the shacks as a living tradition (“a continuous enrichment,” “the freedom to imagine and to advance new worlds”). In her assessment, the cultural legacy was in “jeopardy.” Similar fears for the future still prevailed among dune dwellers in 2004.

Dispossession was the focal concern at present. This opinion was voiced by Dawn Zimiles, whose family's connections to the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack were described as "tenuous" by her uncle:

Most of the people I've been in contact with have not lost their shacks yet. Like Paul Tasha has not lost it but is always afraid of losing it. There are other families. I think most people are afraid of ending up how my family has ended up. That's what they are afraid of.

As described in Chapter 2, Paul Tasha compared the pending loss of the Tasha shack to losing his mother. For him, the prospect was dispiriting, degrading the experience of being at the shack.

Generally, I do not like "what if" questions in interviews, like asking, "What if Boston vanished?" – the door's wide open for speculation. Even so, to explore this concern, I asked some shack residents what it might be like, not living in the family's shack. Zara Jackson spoke from experience. She had lost her shack to arson in 1990 (see Chapter 5):

That was like the loss of a limb. It was a terrible feeling to have lost it. I was in a state of mourning. It's like an adjunct of myself. When I was a kid, and my parents were separated, I lived in different places. But this was the consistent place. I could always depend on coming back here.

The images she used was "losing a limb," "mourning," and missing the "consistent place" in her life. Her reservation of use with the Seashore allowed the shack to be rebuilt.

Peter and Andrew Clemons discussed the prospect of not living on the dunes in a shack during the interview at the Fowler shack:

Andrew: I feel that I need to say, I have never experienced an absence of the dunes. But I have to say I'm scared of the possibility of that, really scared, actually. Because I mean, you grow up out here and you have it, and it's like, 'I have a shack.'

The thing is, I know enough about myself now to not plan a life that does not include the shack. I want to move to L.A. and live there, but I'm always, like in the back of my head, I'm like, 'Well, how am I going to get back to the shack? How often am I going to come back?' That's always a part of my process wherever I go.

Peter: I think that's an interesting piece of our experience on the dunes. We had three children, for the last 25 years, and we had so many family and friends, so many of our children's friends and their parents and all, that there were always kids around [the shack]. And I think that's one of the things that owners have contributed to the dunes – there isn't any other mechanism for that. Family. You can't plant families here for a week and have the kids kind of get it. If it's a visit or an afternoon or something, we have had hundreds of kids introduced. But our kids knew it. It was their place to explain. It is the essence of having these places stay in family, to try to keep this whole thing, this tapestry. It will be blown away if it's not part of a family.

Like Zara Jackson, Andrew Clemons had grown up connected to a shack. He asserted that the shack was "always a part" of "my process," and the possibility of losing it was personally frightening. For Peter, the deep connections to the dunes developed by long-term families were at stake.

The Armstrong family discussed this question among themselves. Connie and David Armstrong had a life term reservation for the Armstrong shack, but the next generation of family and friends (including Janet Armstrong and Richard Arenstrup) faced the prospect of loss:

Wolfe: What would be the effects, personally and on the family, if this shack were no longer available in the way it's been?

Janet: It would be like the greatest member of the family dying.

Connie: It's sort of a character in all our lives, even before our children were here. Our children were so passionate about it. We expected to have it the rest of our lives, but this would be up to Janet and Ruth to answer. When we signed the stipulation, our lawyer gave us a reason for taking life instead of the 25 years.

David: We were at an age when he thought there was a good chance that one of us would live more than 25 years. And furthermore, if you took the 25 years and you still were here, and they were out here with bulldozers, you'd feel really bad.

Janet: What an awful choice to have to make. In that sense, if you might compare it to an old, elderly relative dying, it's very sad and you loved them but the time has come. But it's more like a young child dying suddenly. That's what's tragic. That's even more tragic, a child with a future, with a whole life in front of him taken away.

Arenstrup: It's a future that's dying.

David: Depending upon who or what was responsible for it, I don't like to think what my attitude toward them, or it, would be.

Connie: Hopefully, we wouldn't be alive to know that.

Arenstrup: This is particularly difficult on their children, because their children are going to have been here for half a century, and all of a sudden they are going to be ripped out of this environment. They cannot find someplace else.

Janet: It isn't just a house. It's a spirit, a life.

Arenstrup: It's not like you can just pick yourself out of a city neighborhood and move yourself to another neighborhood and say, 'You know, it's approximately the same thing.' This isn't somewhere else.

Wolfe: There's a special attachment?

David: Absolutely.

Connie: There are really deep-felt roots for us. We wanted them to be grounded, to love the place. But I will feel guilty too, if their love... if they're hurt. There are six people involved here, seven.

David: And many others.

Connie: And many others too.

Like Paul Tasha, Janet Armstrong compared the prospect with losing a loved one. But for her, it was like a young child dying suddenly, "a child with a future, with a whole life in front of him taken away." Connie Armstrong expressed feelings of guilt for teaching her children to love a place on the dunes ("we wanted them to be grounded"), then leaving them "hurt."

In this final exchange, members of the Champlin family (Mildred, Paul, Maia, Andrea, and Lydia) and the Adams family (Marcia, Sally, and David) turned their response into a free-form discussion about family. Its thread is that their shacks held their families together:

Maia: I would say this is definitely one of the things that brings us together. We come as a family. We make a point of rendezvousing here at the cape at the same time, even though it's very difficult. We all have jobs and lives and we do not live on the cape. I

see my childhood friend. I grew up with this woman, and I see her a couple of weeks in the summer. This is what holds our group together.

Sally: The same is true of our family. This is where we congregate. This is where we had a service for Ken.

Mildred: They didn't actually bury Ken here, but they had a service.

Marcia: And the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary party.

Paul: Leo's ashes were scattered here.

Mildred: The girls came up, Maia and Sally, for Leo's interment. We threw the ashes in.

Sally: Well, not really an interment – more like an ex-terment. *[Laughter]*

David: Leo is all over the dunes.

Paul: But the kids, Maia and Andrea, John and Tom and everybody would get together, for the parties we did have. We'd go in back and we'd play flashlight tag and king of the hill.

Mildred: And the age range for king of the hill was 16 down to 3.

Sally: And still is.

Maia: And Sarah did point out that we are continuing it – me with Sarah, and Tom with Lydia. And you're starting to make new friends down at Emily and Evelyn's and their son.

Paul: Emily has a 10-year-old son, Sean, who is just a real crack. He's a dunes person. He's a real "dunie."

Mildred: Last night, Paul's family came. We had mostly kids. They had to go back out on the dunes. We had the greatest time watching those kids. It's just like the old days.

Maia: I think if we didn't have access to the houses, we're geographically dispersed, and there would be definitely degradation of the ties. We wouldn't have this experience together year after year. I think it'll have a huge impact.

Andrea: And I think there's value in having a place like C-Scape where people can come and have their needs taken care of for a week and make beautiful pictures, and that's lovely. We're sad because the person who was there, it was the end of his lease, and so he had to leave his home. But there is a value for a place like C-Scape. But there's also room and value for places where there's continuity. You need that continuity.

Sally: And certainly a week at a time is not the experience out here.

Mildred: It would be a totally different experience.

David: Our 16-year-old grandson is currently with us. We got such a kick last night watching all the kids go out over the dunes, including the 16-year-old, down to 4, I guess. They're all leaping, rolling.

Andrea: And they're all learning something about the dunes and rare ecosystems. I used to work with wetlands biologists who were very envious that we came to these understandings. Now here's another bunch that's starting to learn about how sand moves.

Mildred: We go out every night and look at the stars, with a star book that I have that's all marked up.

Sally: Kyle brought his from Michigan.

Andrea: We've also known people down at C-Scape. They are transient community. But the art community isn't that big, so I know people from New York who have done the C-Scape thing, or want to who have applied and not gotten in. Remember Portia Munson

came out with her husband and child? We visited with them. I know her in New York. They have a house in upstate. They're not living in the city anymore.

Mildred: So, I think it would really be, regarding your question, what would happen – I think it would kind of fall apart.

Sally: Fall apart.

Mildred: We would carry on our lives. We would try to get together one on one, but it's very difficult to get everyone in one spot.

Maia: And we'd lose a common interest. She's an artist in New York City. She has an entirely different life than we do. We have the suburban life, my husband is an academic. We'd have very different interests. This is a common thing. We pool our resources and we come together and try to work out our problems, and celebrate, have our celebrations.

Lydia: Since some of us live far away from the ocean, it's a real treat for us.

Maia: She's going to my childhood haunts, yesterday at the flats, picking blueberries and going to the dunes.

Sally: I guess we might even show you our secret blueberry stash.

David: There's an extra charge for that.

Andrea: No, it's fascinating. We have the only memory on the beach of half of the stuff out here and half of the artists. Everybody's gone. The Park personnel changes on a regular basis, except for one person.

Mildred: If we go, it's like the Smithsonian burning down.

Paul: That's already happened to a great degree in town.

Sally: And the same thing is true in our family. Except for a couple of years that we missed, this is where we've been in the summers. This is how we've spent our lives. It's our identity, really.

For the Champlins and the Adams, the question of potential loss of the families' shacks evokes a kaleidoscope of thoughts and memories from everyone. It's a blur of past, present, and future, of old and young, and of the living and dead. There are recollections of who visited who and when at the shack, the gatherings of sisters and brothers and cousins and best friends, the ties that bind. And about last night's "king of hill" after dinner by flashlight, "just like the old days." And learning about the dunes. And the marked-up star guides. And the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary party. And the scattering of the ashes of their beloved Leo "all over the dunes." And "the girls" coming up for it. And the newest neighbor, the 10-year-old boy who's a "real crack." And tomorrow's promise to reveal the "secret blueberry stash" to the latest grandchildren. It's a blurred catalog of dune life, flashing before mind's eye. And the matriarch Mildred proclaims in recalling it, even just last night's joys – "we had the greatest time."

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