



The History of Provincetown

- 1602:** The first recorded visit to Cape Cod was by European explorer Bartholomew Gosnold. Provincetown's well-protected harbor offered excellent shelter from storms and, as a result, was a common stop for explorers, who landed to rest and repair their vessels.
- 1620:** Pilgrims arrive on the Mayflower and make the first landing in the New World in Provincetown Harbor. The Pilgrims stay in Provincetown for five weeks, where they create and sign the Mayflower Compact. They then continue on to their ultimate destination of Plymouth.
- 1727:** The first permanent settlement in Provincetown was established with fishing being the primary draw for settlers.
- 1800:** Provincetown's population swelled by the middle of the 19th century. It had developed as the prime maritime, fishing and commercial center of Cape Cod. Portuguese sailors, who joined American ships in the Azores and Cape Verde Islands, moved to Provincetown by the 19th century to continue working on whaling and fishing boats. The Portuguese became an integral part of the community, bringing their families and traditions to the New World. A strong Portuguese community in Provincetown began to flourish.
- 1875:** Provincetown became the state's most populated harbor, boasting 25 coastal and 36 ocean vessels, which was more than any other port in Massachusetts.
- 1898:** The Portland Gale sweeps away half of the town's wharfs and decimates the fishing industry. Provincetown embarked on a tourism campaign to fill the economic gap. Artists and bohemians were among the early visitors. They were attracted to the incredible natural beauty, eclectic population, and sense of acceptance found in Provincetown.
- 1899:** Painter Charles Webster Hawthorne arrived in Provincetown. Shortly thereafter, he founded and taught painting at the Cape Cod School of Art for the following 30 summers. Prominent art students and teachers followed Hawthorne to Provincetown and established their own schools. New art schools were spawned, which eventually led to a year-round art community of young, aspiring artists working under the watchful eyes of established mentors and teachers.

- 1910:** The Pilgrim Monument is dedicated by President Taft commemorating the Pilgrims' landing in Provincetown.
- 1915:** Eugene O'Neill, considered the father of modern American theater, mounted his first play on an East End Provincetown wharf, thus establishing Provincetown as the birthplace of modern American theater.
- 1916:** Provincetown's place as an active art colony was cemented when *The Boston Globe* ran a front-page story titled, "Biggest Art Colony in the World in Provincetown." Hans Hofmann, Franz Kline, Mark Rothko, Blanche Lazzell, Milton Avery, Jack Tworkov and Edward Hopper are some of the other artists who have ties to Provincetown.
- 1920's:** Provincetown's art and theater productions were creating an international reputation. The abandoned sites of maritime businesses became the new homes of the seasonal visitor and warehouses and barns became studios, galleries, and shops. The gay & lesbian presence flourished as contingents of artists, writers, playwrights, poets, novelists, and journalists begin to summer in Provincetown. They were instrumental in developing and growing Provincetown's famous art colony.
- 1961:** Creation of Cape Cod National Seashore by act of the U.S. Congress
- 1970's:** Marked Provincetown's rise as the gay and lesbian mecca that it is widely considered today.
- 1992:** Creation of the Stellwagen Bank Marine Sanctuary by act of the U.S. Congress
- 2004:** Gay marriage became legalized in Massachusetts. Shortly thereafter, Provincetown became "the place to get married" with over 1,400 marriage licenses issued to date.
- Today:** Today, Provincetown is a haven for artists in every medium – painting, sculpting, theater, writing, and music. The vibrant arts community, atmosphere of experimentation, vast teaching and learning opportunities, and palpable energy draw artists year after year to share and deepen their talents.

Located at the base of the Pilgrim Monument, the Provincetown Museum pays homage to the town's fascinating history through featured exhibits on the Pilgrims, the building of the historical Monument, its rich maritime history, and the early days of modern American theater.

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Source: Provincetown Tourism Office