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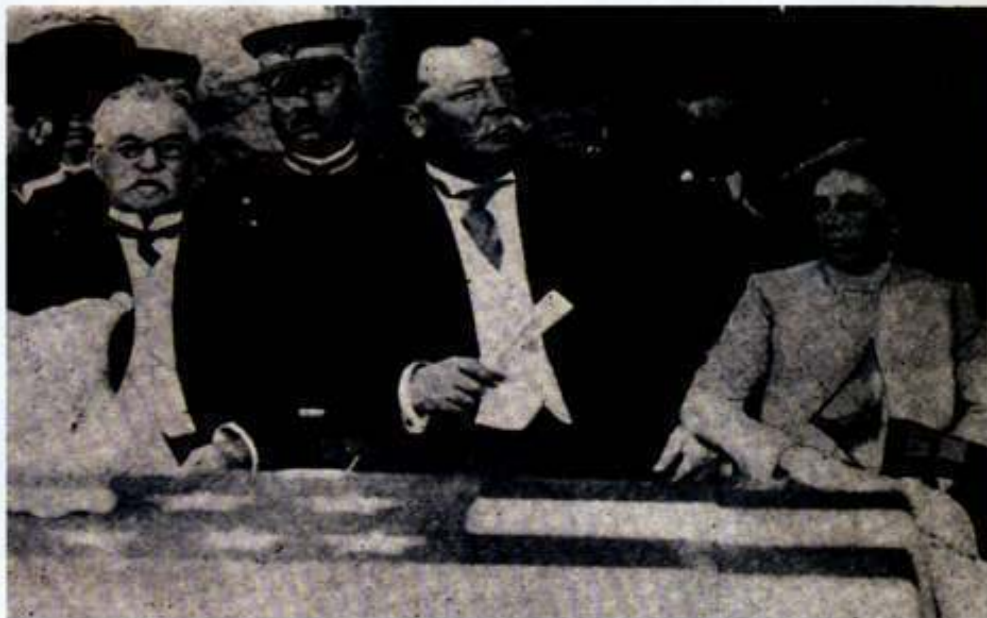
100 YEARS STRONG

by susan spencer

photos courtesy of the pilgrim monument and provincetown museum



Festive crowds lined streets draped in patriotic regalia at Provincetown's impressive Pilgrim Monument dedication ceremony 100 years ago. President Taft and his wife, Helen, above right, attended the August 5, 1910 event.



THE PILGRIM MONUMENT AND PROVINCETOWN MUSEUM'S 2010 CENTENNIAL PLANNERS HOPE AMERICA'S PRESIDENT WILL COME TO P'TOWN ONCE AGAIN.

Provincetown is hosting a celebration this summer, and the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum plans to party like it's 1910. To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the dedication of 252-foot granite monument atop High Pole Hill, organizers are planning a "Rededication Ceremony", that echoes the original celebration that took place on August 5, 1910, and the season leading up to the occasion is full of events that reflect the cultural richness of today's Provincetown.



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The stately 252-foot monument commemorates the 1620 landfall of America's Pilgrims and the signing of the *Mayflower* Compact in Provincetown Harbor.

Founded in 1892, the Cape Cod Pilgrim Memorial Association was the Cape's first nonprofit cultural organization. The association—now known as the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum (PMPM)—raised money for and oversaw construction of the monument between 1907 and 1910. The monument was intended to commemorate the *Mayflower* Pilgrims' first landing in America on November 21, 1620, as well as the signing of the *Mayflower* Compact while the ship was anchored in Provincetown Harbor. The compact famously created a government for the Commonwealth by "a civill body politick."

James Bakker, PMPM's executive director, says that the monument and the 100th anniversary celebration highlight Provincetown's role as the starting point for the Pilgrims' settlement, a fact that has been overshadowed by the colony's later establishment in Plymouth. "The American Bus Association named us one of the top 100 destinations for August 5, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation named Provincetown one of this year's Dozen Distinctive Destinations, so I think it's going to be a very big year," Bakker says.

The Committee 100, co-chaired by Lori Meads and David Roberts, has been preparing to make this a grand event—and the committee has the benefit of historical documents

from the 1910 dedication to guide it. Handwritten minutes from the General Committee meeting of July 14, 1910 note that the Music Committee was authorized to "procure such music as they think fit for the occasion" and instructed to negotiate with an orchestra to furnish a ball at Town Hall on the evening of August 5. The minutes then state, "A telegram was read from J. Henry Lewis, Esq. announcing that President Taft would be present at the celebration on August 5. A letter from Rear Admiral Seaton Schroeder was read stating that a fleet of warships would arrive at this port August 4 to join in the celebration." It should be noted that President Taft wasn't the first U.S. president to visit the site. President Theodore Roosevelt presided at the cornerstone-laying ceremony that launched construction of the tower in 1907.

While President Taft arrived at the dedication ceremony on the presidential yacht *Mayflower* with an escort from the U.S. Navy's Atlantic fleet, this year's centennial organizers have orchestrated a campaign to invite President Obama and his family, who would most likely arrive by helicopter or airplane. "We're hoping with the presidential precedent, it would seem like a good occasion for President Obama to come," Bakker says. PMPM sent an official invitation to the president, followed by letters of support from the Board of Selectmen, chambers of commerce, and others.

Even schoolchildren have gotten into the act. Kim Pike, district principal for Provincetown's schools says, "I thought about the kids at our schools and how neat it would be if they wrote

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The Pilgrim Monument is the tallest all-granite structure in the United States.



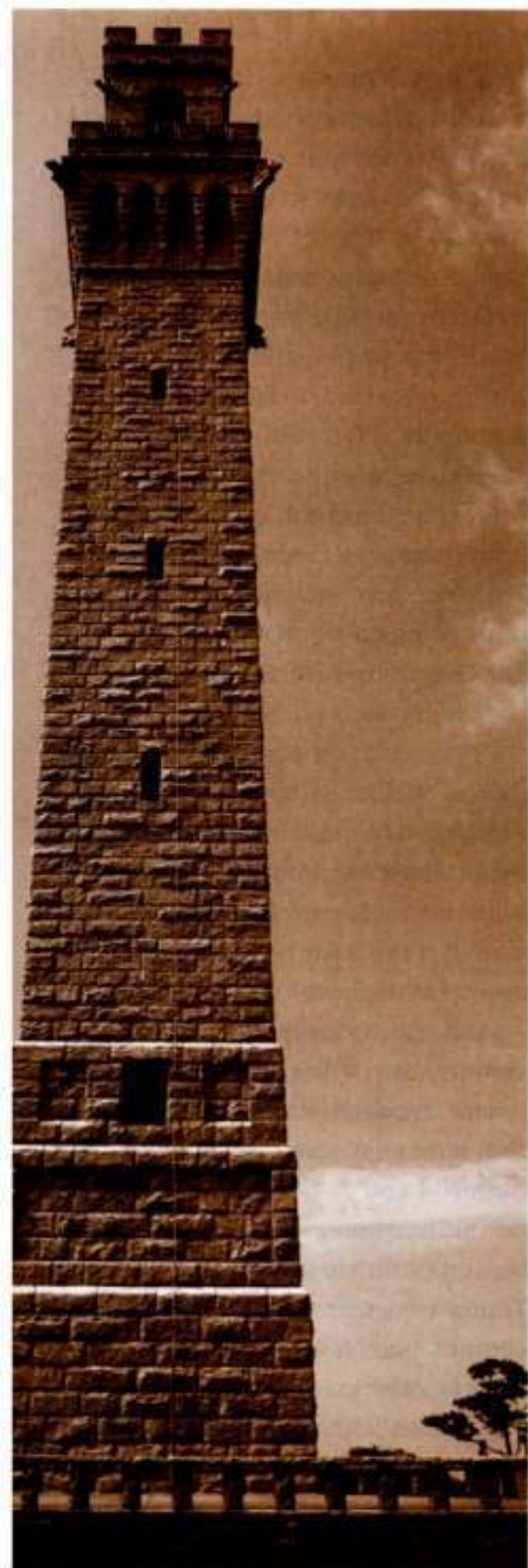
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letters not only to President Obama, but to the Obamas' daughters—from a kids' perspective, letting them know how great a place Provincetown is and offering to be tour guides in this beautiful part of the world." Anyone



else—young or old—interested in forwarding an invitation to the president can use the e-mail template on PMPM's Web site.

Vestiges of 1910 will be reflected in the centennial parade on August 5 at

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10 a.m., Bakker says. Each of the 175 towns that donated inscribed granite blocks, which line the monument's interior, has been invited to send representatives to participate in a motorcade of antique autos. The parade will pass a reviewing stand where town officials, dignitaries, and trustees will be sitting, and head up High Pole Hill for formalities afterward. The inscribed stones are an attraction for visitors who make the climb up the 116 steps and 60 ramps to the observation tower. The tower also includes such artifacts as a geological remnant from the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, donated by the California Mayflower Society.

This season, Provincetown will also look a bit like it did in 1910. Bakker says, "One of the things we're launching is a bunting project. We're hoping other businesses in town will get into what it was like in 1910. We'll have an award for the best bunting."

And the melodies and lyrics of a century ago will converge with the town's modern artistic creativity at the centennial ceremony concert on August 4 and 5. The Outer Cape Chorale Chamber Singers, conducted by Jon Arterton and featuring John Thomas on piano, will sing the 1910 composition "A Trip to Provincetown," "I Hear America Singing!" composed by Thomas with words by Walt Whitman, and an original piece by Thomas based on excerpts of speeches from the monument's dedication ceremonies.

Committee 100 has spread out the wining and dining festivities, a departure from the grand ball of August 5, 1910. A Cornerstone Dinner was held

in April at the Lobster Pot restaurant, with a five-course presentation prepared by Chef Tim McNulty. A Century Party at Truro Vineyards on May 19 showcases the limited release of two Century Wines, blended in honor of the monument's anniversary and bearing labels designed by Truro artist, Rebecca Bruyn.

Inside the museum, this summer's exhibit, "100 Views of the Monument," provides historic and artistic perspectives of the monument with paintings, prints, and decorative objects from the past century. The Pilgrim exhibit in the Mayflower Room is updated with new exhibits and texts highlighting the Pilgrim experience.

With the celebration, Bakker hopes the attention focused on the monument 100 years ago is renewed. "The anniversary is definitely creating higher visibility for the institution. We're hoping to double our membership," he says. And for a town that prides itself on its remoteness, the centennial festivities are wonderful ways to reconnect with the rest of the region—and the country.

Visit www.pilgrim-monument.org for more information about the 100th anniversary festivities. For excerpts of letters from Provincetown children inviting President Obama to the centennial celebration, visit www.capecodlife.com.

Susan Spencer is a freelance writer and photographer who lives in Whitinsville, MA, and Brewster. She contributes frequently to Cape Cod Life Publications



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