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Gail Levin

The City University of New York, sandragaillevin@gmail.com

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Mapping Edward Hopper: Jo Hopper as her husband's Cartographer

Gail Levin *

City University of New York

Abstract

Josephine Hopper's two hand-drawn pictorial maps of South Truro and Cape Cod link art and cartography. She made them to introduce the places she shared with her husband, Edward Hopper, to collectors who bought his painting of a site she mapped. Her mid-1930s maps have little regard for accurate scale, showing artistic rather than technical style. They feature landmarks, both natural and constructed, from either Edward's or Jo's paintings, or both. The style of her maps resembles both contemporaneous American and turn-of-the-century pictorial maps of Paris. She projects her inner vision of the outer world that she and Edward both depicted.

Résumé

Dans les années 1930 Josephine Hopper dessina deux cartes—l'une de South Truro et l'autre de Cape Cod—pour des collectionneurs de son mari, Edward Hopper, qui avaient acheté des tableaux représentant des vues de ces régions. Ces cartes ne tiennent guère compte de l'échelle exacte, et relèvent plus de l'art que de la cartographie. Elles présentent des points de repère, à la fois naturels et architecturaux, provenant des peintures d'Edward ou de Jo, ou des deux. Stylistiquement, ces cartes ressemblent aux cartes américaines contemporaines ainsi qu'aux cartes picturales parisiennes du début du siècle. L'artiste y projette la vision intérieure du monde extérieur qu'elle et Edward représentaient alors dans leurs tableaux.

** Gail Levin, Distinguished Professor of art history, American studies, and women's studies at City University of New York, is the author of Edward Hopper: A Catalogue Raisonné, Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography, and Hopper's Places. Her subsequent work, often focused on women artists, includes biographies of Judy Chicago and Lee Krasner.*

Two hand-drawn pictorial maps of South Truro and Cape Cod, Massachusetts, charted a journey for patrons of the artist, Edward Hopper (1882-1967). They had purchased a painting featuring one of the mapped sites on the rugged peninsular, where he depicted the area's distinctive rolling hills and dunes as well as its vernacular architecture. The cartographer in question was Hopper's wife, the artist Josephine Verstelle Nivison Hopper (1883-1968). Edward produced the major canvas these patrons acquired soon after the Hoppers built their own Cape house in South Truro in 1934. Jo's maps of ca 1936 exemplify a connection between art and cartography, but they tell a much bigger story.¹

Though Jo Hopper did not design her maps to be printed and distributed, her efforts nonetheless must be seen in the context of pictorial map-making in popular American culture from the 1920s to the 1960s. Such artistic renderings of particular places often aimed to tell a visual story.² Jo combined mapping to convey directions with images of architecture and aspects of the landscape, occasionally adding a bit of text, all aimed at setting the context for her life with Edward Hopper on Cape Cod. Thus, these maps provide pictorial representation documenting the lives of two artists, in effect illustrating reality as they saw and depicted it in their art work. Jo's role as an artist in her own right was often belittled by her husband and by other men in the art world. After her 1968 bequest of her husband's and her own work, the legatee, the Whitney Museum of American Art, discarded all of her stretched canvases and some of her best watercolors (which she had framed). As a result, we have been reduced to knowing only a tiny fraction of Jo Hopper's *oeuvre*, seen mainly in old black and white photographs.³

Without much regard for accurate measurements and with artistic rather than technical cartographic style, these maps illustrate landmarks. Jo's maps

are not drawn to scale. Their features are both natural and constructed. Most of the landmarks appear in either Edward's paintings, or in her own paintings, or in both of their pictures. Jo even imitated certain aspects of modern topographic maps. She gave hints of elevation, showing the land as if seen from above at an oblique angle. She sometimes used contour lines to show valleys and hills, or the steepness or gentleness of slopes.

To dub Jo her husband's cartographer is to point out the suggestive etymology of the term, which derives from the French *cartographie*, meaning "the making of maps." The term ultimately derives from the medieval Latin *carta* for paper and *graphie* from the Greek verb *graphein* "to write, to draw."⁴ Then, too, as we shall see, Jo saw the "art" in cartography and took this opportunity to make colored drawings, to feature her own work, as well as to highlight her unique role in Edward Hopper's universe. In both these maps and in the diaries she kept, she "charted" his creative progress, which paralleled and overlapped with her own.

Jo surely knew other pictorial maps when she made her own. One possible source were contemporaneous pictorial maps of the Cape. One was by Coulton Waugh (1896-1973), which he first published in 1926. The gregarious Jo might have met Waugh when she summered in Provincetown in 1922, before her marriage to Edward in 1924. At that time, the town was known for its art, literary, and theatrical productions and many, like Jo, came from New York's Greenwich Village to summer in similar intellectual and artistic circles.

Waugh had moved to Provincetown in 1921, where he ran a shop for model ships and hooked rugs.⁵ Jo is also known to have produced hooked rugs (one of which is visible in her lost portrait of *Edward Hopper Reading Robert Frost*, ca 1955).⁶ One of Waugh's pictorial maps of Cape Cod, which he produced and published as *The Map of Old Cape Cod*

The author wishes to thank Mary E. Murray, Curator at the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute in Utica, New York.

¹ These maps are now in the collection of the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, in Utica, New York

² See Stephen J. Hornsby, *Picturing America: The Golden Age of Pictorial Maps* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 2.

³ See Gail Levin, "Josephine Verstelle Nivison Hopper," *Woman's Art Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring - Summer, 1980): 28-32

⁴ <https://www.etymonline.com/word/cartography>. Accessed on January 10, 2018.

⁵ See Hornsby, *Picturing America*, 46.

⁶ Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 492. Known only in this black and white photograph, this canvas is one of those presumed discarded by the Whitney Museum of American Art. Several of Jo Hopper's paintings are reproduced in this volume.

in 1930, includes the South Truro Church, a local landmark shared with Jo's own maps. Hers, however, are much more personal in their selection of landmarks, featuring those that she and Edward depicted in their paintings.

Jo could also have known a second pictorial map of Cape Cod, which was published by Houghton Mifflin in 1926. It was designed by Mélanie Elizabeth Leonard, who lived in Sandwich on Cape Cod.⁷ Jo might have appreciated her touches of art nouveau, a style in which she herself had worked in the drawings she had produced two decades earlier while attending the Normal College of New York.⁸ Leonard's earlier map, though covering all of the Cape, included some of the same features as Jo's: the railroad tracks and Highland Lighthouse as well as the towns of N. Truro, Truro, South Truro, and Wellfleet. The Hoppers might well have purchased either Leonard's or Waugh's pictorial map of the Cape when they first arrived together in 1930, intent to explore the area by car.

Moreover, as I will show, Jo, who liked to travel, was surely familiar with pictorial tourist maps of other places with which hers can also be compared. Most likely, she drew upon multiple sources for her own pictorial maps. Some of her inspiration she might have found through her ventures across the Atlantic. To fully understand Jo Hopper's two Cape Cod maps and their origins, we should consider the transnational style of this kind of map.

With their pictorial monuments shown in outline and aerial perspective, Jo's maps recall turn-of-the-century maps of Paris with their illustrated monuments. One such map is the Garnier Pocket Map or Plan of Paris from 1900, captioned "*NOUVEAU PARIS MONUMENTAL: ITINERAIRE PRATIQUE DE L'ÉTRANGER DANS PARIS*."⁹ Another, variously dated 1911 and 1920, is captioned *PARIS MONUMENTAL ET MÉTROPOLITAIN*.¹⁰ The latter map includes the metro or Metropolitan transit system. Aimed at tourists, maps of this genre were

inexpensive. They continued in production across much of the twentieth century.

The possibility of a French model for Jo's maps is not as surprising as it might seem. A passionate and life-long Francophile, she was likely to have been inspired by such turn-of-the-century Paris maps of monuments that she would have seen during her two trips to France in 1907 and 1918. Jo was especially proud of her partial French descent: her middle name, Verstelle, recalled her father's French mother, though she gave birth to Jo's father, Eldorado Nivison, in Texas. A music teacher, Jo's father also encouraged her to study French.¹¹ By the time that she graduated with the class of 1904 from the Normal College of New York (today Hunter College of the City University of New York), Jo had studied French for more than six years.

From college, Jo moved on to study art at the New York School of Art, where she first met Edward Hopper, a fellow student, who like her, admired their painting teacher, Robert Henri, himself something of a Francophile, who had spent time in Paris. It was in 1907, that Jo organized a summer class abroad for a group of Henri's students. Though the class took place in the Netherlands, she managed to visit Paris for the first time at the end of that summer session.

After years of teaching elementary school and acting with the Washington Square Players, Jo volunteered to travel to France as a reconstruction aide for the medical department of the American Expeditionary Forces, arriving in November 1918, at the end of World War I. She became ill, however, and was sent home on January 22, 1919.¹² Nonetheless, the second and longer venture in France reinforced her love of French culture and language.

Jo turned out to share her passion for French culture with Edward Hopper. He too was proud of his French descent. His was on his mother's side, although his French Huguenot ancestor had arrived

⁷ See this map in Hornsby, *Picturing America*, plate 83, page 163.

⁸ Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*, 149.

⁹ Online at Alamy: <http://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-1900-garnier-pocket-map-or-plan-of-paris-france-eiffel-tower-and-other-162575102.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.remodelaholic.com/20-free-vintage-map-printable-images/>

¹¹ Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*, 147.

¹² *Ibid.*, 160.

in America as early as 1657. Edward once bragged about his French blood to the art critic Katharine Kuh.¹³ In fact, the Hoppers' romance finally began years after they first met in art school, when, after a chance encounter in the summer of 1923, in the artist colony of Gloucester, Massachusetts, Edward started quoting in French lines from a Paul Verlaine poem. Jo impressed him when she took up the poem where he had stopped.¹⁴ Though they were never in Paris together, Edward continued to share his wife's affection for Paris and all things French. During some forty-three years of a symbiotic and often stormy marriage, these two Francophiles preferred French for the expression of affection.

Jo recalled a relevant detail years later in an interview for *Time* magazine. She told how she ran into Edward, the shy man whom she recalled from their art school days many years earlier, and recounted how he "sat on a fence and drew a map of Gloucester for me."¹⁵ In a sense, when Jo made the Cape Cod maps for Edward's patron, she was returning the favor. Yet, if Jo, a self-described packrat, saved Edward's Gloucester map, it has not yet come to light.

Nor have her copies of a treasured souvenir map of Paris turned up. Yet Tourist maps featuring the monuments of Paris do appear to be the closest model for Jo's own style of cartography. In the end, however, she produced her own thematic pictorial map, focused on a specific topic, Edward Hopper's and her world. Jo was not only the cartographer of Edward Hopper's world, she was also an active participant in that world, and she also was the oft maligned gatekeeper for anyone wanting to gain entry. Our ability to identify which of the landmarks she illustrated on these maps that were painted by both of them, however, is not absolute. While Edward's work is well documented in the record books that Jo kept and for which Edward made thumb-nail sketches, little is known about the full scope of her work.

That loss for art history makes the survival of her two pictorial maps all the more precious. Made for a couple of friendly art patrons who were planning to visit them on the Cape, the maps reveal Jo's intimate engagement with her husband's art work, as well as demonstrating her own accomplishment as an artist. The maps were also intended to show how she and Edward "possessed" their Cape surroundings. Yet despite the fundamental importance that these Cape Cod maps and the territory they depicted held for Jo and Edward Hopper, no one has yet studied them closely or probed their meaning.¹⁶

The significance of these two maps is much larger than their small size might make them seem. Each measures only 5 1/8 x 16 1/8 inches. She titled one, *Map of South Truro, Cape Cod* (Figure 1), but the other is labeled only *Cape Cod Bay* (Figure 2). Jo had taken great care to make these two hand-drawn maps to guide the collectors, Edward Wales Root (1884-1956) and his wife Grace Cogswell Root (1891-1975) on their journey to South Truro.¹⁷ Root was an alumnus of Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, who became the college's first art lecturer and later served as an unpaid consultant for the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute museum in Utica, New York, located only eight miles away.

Edward Hopper first met the Roots in the spring of 1928, when a small show of his etchings and watercolors was held at the Art Society in Utica. His new champion was the younger son of a distinguished New York City attorney, Elihu Root, Sr. (1845-1937) who served as Secretary of War for President William McKinley; Secretary of State for Theodore Roosevelt; a United States Senator from New York; and won the Nobel Peace prize in 1912.

¹³ Katharine Kuh, *The Artist's Voice* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 135.

¹⁴ Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*, 168.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ These color maps are both reproduced in black and white in the second expanded edition of Gail Levin, *Hopper's Places* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press,

1998), 76, but there is no discussion of them as maps, nor of their genesis, nor of what they signify about the Hoppers.

¹⁷ See Mary E. Murray and Paul D. Schweizer, *Auspicious Vision: Edward Wales Root and American Modernism* (Utica, NY: Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, 2007), 5. The Roots bequeathed Jo Hopper's maps with the rest of their art collection to the Utica museum.

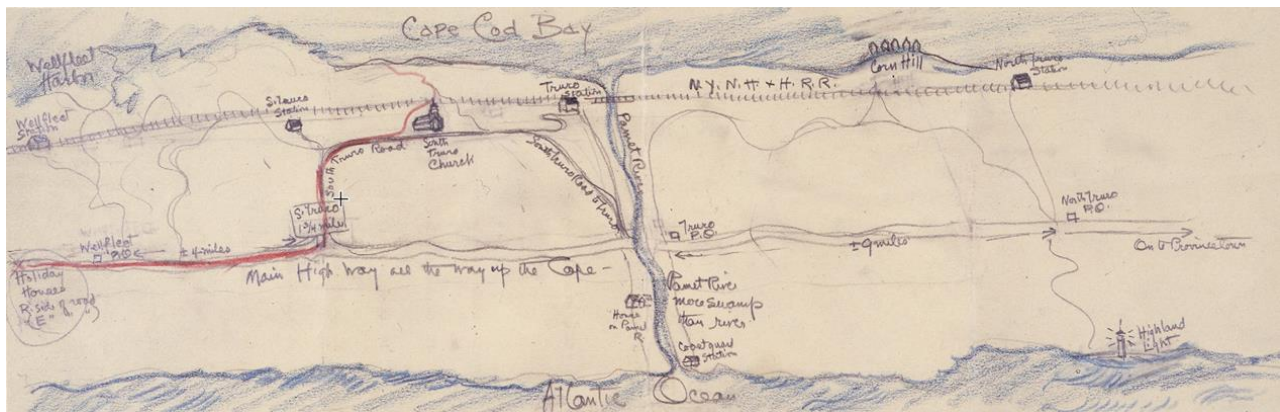


Figure 1. Josephine Verstelle Nivison Hopper, Map of "Cape Cod Bay," pencil and colored pencil on paper, 5 1/8 x 16 1/8 inches ca 1936, Munson-Williams-Proctor Museum in Utica, New York, Edward Root Bequest.

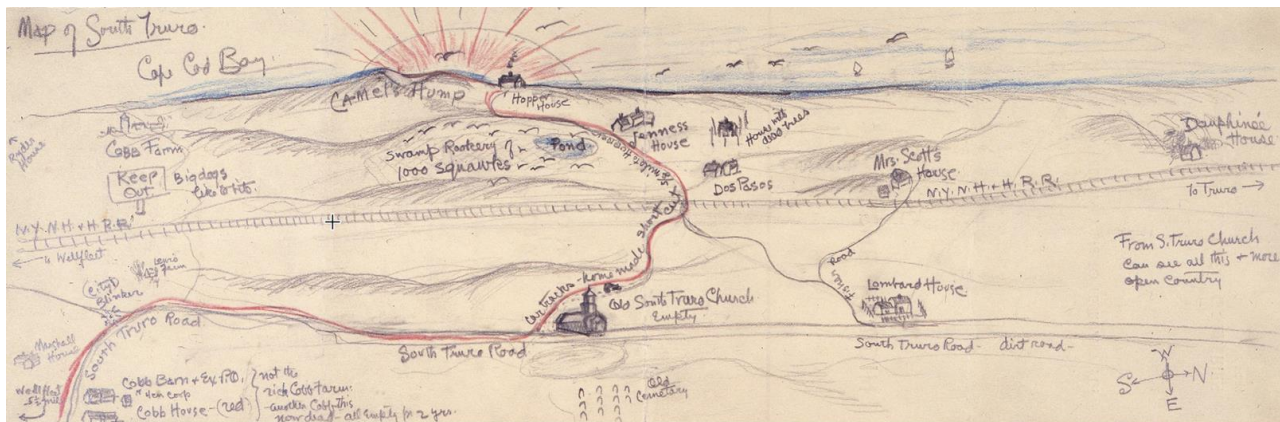


Figure 2. Josephine Verstelle Nivison Hopper, Map of "South Truro," pencil and colored pencil on paper, 5 1/8 x 16 1/8 inches ca 1936, Munson-Williams-Proctor Museum in Utica, New York, Edward Root Bequest.

Two years younger than Hopper, Edward Root, did not just collect art, but he was drawn to contemporary American art, developing adventurous tastes. Having begun his career as a journalist, he felt that he had discovered an artist worth knowing. So he sent an enthusiastic article-length letter to the editor of the local newspaper in Utica, extolling Hopper's work and signaling what he saw as its distinguishing features:

His feeling for the brilliant sharply defined iconic appearance of the American landscape; his sense of architectural surfaces which enables him to give a stronger suggestion of mass in his pictures of buildings than the buildings themselves are able to give; his ability to eliminate the unessential from each and every part of the picture; his instinct for the effective utilization of the elements of design....¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹⁹ Edward W. Root, "To the Editor of the Press," *Utica Daily Press*, March 3, 1928, 9.

Root's collecting focused on twentieth-century American painting and works on paper though he eventually moved on from Hopper's realism to embrace Jackson Pollock and other abstract expressionists. Root's bequest of his collection to the Utica museum in 1956 included both Hopper's *The Camel's Hump* (Figure 3), a 1931 oil painting, and *Skyline near Washington Square (Self-Portrait)*, an important early watercolor of 1925, as well as Jo's two maps, which the Roots carefully conserved for some two decades.²⁰ Both the canvas and Jo's *Map of South Truro, Cape Cod Bay*, depict the bare saddle-shaped dune located behind the South Truro Church, another landmark on the maps, which both Edward and Jo Hopper had already painted.

²⁰ For reproductions of all of Edward Hopper's paintings, see Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995), vols. 2 and 3. Many of the works mentioned here are also widely reproduced online.

If one imagines this striking Cape Cod topography as the back and hump of a camel, the rider's perch is shown as bare sand, lacking any foliage. Edward painted this scene, known to be an old Indian campground, in the late afternoon, when the hills in back were dramatically cast in shadow. The area Hopper painted in *The Camel's Hump*, was already quite familiar to him. The previous summer, he had painted the same landscape from a slightly different perspective. He called that canvas, now in the Cleveland Museum of Art, *Hills, South Truro*.

The Roots probably visited the Hoppers on Cape Cod, just after they had purchased *The Camel's Hump*. In fact, someone else, Eleanor (Mrs. Arthur N.) Pack of Princeton, New Jersey, had first bought this painting in the fall of 1932 from the Frank K. M. Rehn Gallery, which represented Hopper from 1923 until the end of his life. The likely reason for the Roots' visit to the Hoppers on the Cape was to see for themselves the motif that inspired *The Camel's Hump*, as delineated by Jo on her map. The Roots purchased the canvas in February 1936, through Frank Rehn, who got it back from Eleanor Pack. The Packs, who had loaned the painting to the Museum of Modern Art for Hopper's first retrospective held there in 1933, were probably more invested in Arthur's efforts in conservation and photography than in collecting art. The Roots had also loaned their Hopper oil, *Freight Cars at Gloucester* (1928), to Hopper's retrospective.²¹

The Roots' visit to the Hoppers probably took place in the summer of 1936, just after the fecund early years for Edward's work in South Truro. It was only in 1934, after renting on Cobb farm for four years, that he and Jo had committed to building their own house and returning there after spending every winter and spring in New York City. Though they continued to love the home that Edward designed for them overlooking Cape Cod Bay, Edward soon became bored by his surroundings and often felt the need to travel elsewhere to seek inspiration.

Changing his environment had long been a part of Edward's search for subject matter, beginning years before the trips he took to Paris just after completing art school in New York. Even as a precocious boy dreaming of becoming an artist, Hopper had been motivated to make sketches depicting new surroundings. An early example is his pen and ink drawing in 1900 of his tent and campground set-up that he called *Camp Nyack, Greenwood Lake*.

In making this map for Edward and Grace Root's visit to their new home on Cape Cod, Jo may have been particularly solicitous because of the Roots' sustained support of Edward's work and the gracious hospitality that the Roots had shown the Hoppers during a visit to their home in Clinton, New York, in June 1930. By then, the Roots had already purchased Edward's oil painting, *Freight Cars at Gloucester*, and two watercolors. (Root later donated *Freight Cars at Gloucester* to the Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, in Andover, Massachusetts.) Root's enthusiasm for Hopper's work was such that he convinced his Hamilton College colleague, Arthur Percy "Stink" Saunders, a distinguished professor of chemistry, and his wife, Louise, to purchase Hopper's work for themselves. They bought two watercolors and an etching.

The Hoppers' visit with the Roots had lasted an entire week. Jo reported to another of Edward's collectors, Bee Blanchard, who owned his 1930 canvas, *Corn Hill* and many watercolors, that they "had a lovely time—were taken to tea & dinner parties at houses with Hopper watercolors on the walls. It was such satisfaction to find one's children so well situated. The Roots are the lambiest people to visit."²² Their genial host was so focused on contemporary art and artists that it is said that he requested that his name be removed from the social register, remarking that "more of his friends were listed in the Manhattan telephone directory."²³

²¹ Alfred H. Barr, Jr. *Edward Hopper Retrospective Exhibition* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1933), 7.

²² Jo Hopper to Bee Blanchard, letter of July 14, 1930, cited in Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*, 230.

²³ Aline B. Saarinen, *The Proud Possessors* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 264.

The Roots needed, according to Jo's imagination and intention, maps to illustrate the landmarks of the Cape Cod world in which the Hoppers lived and worked, so that they could easily identify the local motifs that Edward had painted so far. These maps show their immediate environment as defined by places already portrayed by Edward. This, Jo's maps proudly proclaim, is Edward Hopper's neighborhood. In fact, he had already depicted so many places around the Hoppers' home in South Truro that it is easy to understand why he soon felt that he needed to travel elsewhere in search of something new to paint. As for the places that Jo had already painted, the Roots would not have focused on her as an artist; they collected Edward Hopper's work. Jo's dual status as a woman artist and as an artist's wife made her work much less visible to them or to anyone else in the art establishment.

On her two maps, Jo carefully pinpointed the location of constructed or man-made architectural motifs painted by Edward. She divided these sites into two sets of views. We might categorize one of them as a "micro" view, close by their South Truro House, and the other as a "macro" view, captioned only "Cape Cod Bay," that extends on the left all the way to Wellfleet Harbor, in the next town down the Cape, and on the right past Truro to North Truro, the two towns abutting South Truro on the way to Provincetown, the direction of which Jo indicated on the roadway. Jo framed this map by blue bodies of water: the Atlantic Ocean extends across the bottom of the map, while Cape Cod Bay stretches across the top.

On both maps, Jo also located and recorded some of the other natural topographical features that Edward (and she sometimes) painted including the Camel's Hump, Corn Hill, Wellfleet Harbor, and the Pamet River. The maps above all demonstrate Jo's dedicated efforts as a documentarian and historian of her husband's art.

Like Edward, Jo was usually more concerned with recording man-made constructions than in painting the natural world. For example, she drew the railroad tracks that served the Cape at this time and inserted a building for each of the local train stations: Wellfleet, South Truro, Truro, and North Truro. In fact, Hopper loved to paint railroad tracks, above-grade crossings, stations, and trains—and not only on the Cape. But there he completed in 1931 an oil that he called *New York, New Haven, and Hartford* after the railroad that then crossed the Cape and appears as tracks on each of Jo's maps. In his canvas, the tracks extend across the space beneath an embankment on which two buildings stand, partially illuminated by sunlight and partially cast in shadow.

On this same map, in addition to the railroad stations, Jo depicted across the top South Truro Church and Corn Hill, the site of the Mayflower Pilgrims' first encounter with the fruits of indigenous agriculture, now adorned with its five Cape Cod style houses. Hopper had painted both an oil and a watercolor of *Corn Hill* in 1930, but only four of the five houses are visible in the watercolor. Clearly, he was taken with this locale since he painted it twice, working in two different media.

Since Jo wrote in her diary about her experience of feeling menaced by a male stranger after Edward had dropped her off to paint in a deserted area of the South Truro landscape, we know that she painted her version of the South Truro Church, which she called, *Odor of Sanctity* (Figure 3), before Edward painted this same building, viewed from the other side (Figure 4).²⁴ That same summer, Edward painted a group of watercolors including *North Truro Station*, *South Truro Post Office*, and *Highland Light*, a lighthouse tower and keeper's house,—all of which she included on this map. Thus, Jo mapped the couple's lived experience, which revolved around locations painted by the pair.

²⁴ Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*, 232-233.



Figure 3. Josephine Verstelle Nivison Hopper, *Odor of Sanctity*, 1930, oil on canvas, Truro Public Library, South Truro, MA.

In the center area stretching across the map, Jo indicated “Main Highway All the Way Up the Cape.” On the left side, in Wellfleet, she marked a motif, “Holiday Houses,” which Edward never painted. Her inclusion suggests that this is where the Roots were lodged on their visit, since the Hoppers intentionally lacked space for guests in their three-room house. Jo thoughtfully noted “R.[right] side of road,” giving the Roots directions. Down the center of her map is the Pamet River, which she noted on the map as “Pamet River more swamp than river.” The river marks the site of two 1934 watercolors: *House on Pamet River* and *Pamet River Road*. The inclusion of *The Pamet River* watercolors confirms that she made this map after the end of that summer, perhaps as early as the following year, though the Roots’ 1936 acquisition of the painting *Camel Hump* (Figure 5), probably prompted their trip to see the motif that Hopper had recorded in their painting.

In her other surviving map, captioned “Map of South Truro,” Jo presented even more detail. Most importantly, we see on this map alone, the house that Hopper designed for himself and Jo, perched on the bluff over Cape Cod Bay. She chose to dramatize this entire map by illuminating it with a view of a large red sunset brightening the entire vista. Although Edward never painted a view of the exterior of the house he designed for them, Jo produced several such views of it that she, ever the Francophile, called, *Chez Hopper*.

From the lower left corner of this map, Jo drew a red line on the route leading from the highway, on South Truro Road, across the dunes to their home on its high ridge above the bay. She noted on the map the words, “car tracks, home-made shortcut.” Along this route, Jo pointed out the South Truro Church, but noted that it was “empty.” Not so for her sketch of the old cemetery beyond, with its population of gravestones.



Figure 4. Edward Hopper, *South Truro Meetinghouse Church*, 1930, oil on canvas, private collection

She noted on the far north side of this map that “From the S. Truro Church can see all this and more,” calling the land, “open country.” She drew in the houses of their neighbors, the writer John Dos Passos and his wife, Katy, and the Jenness family from Boston, who had let Edward and her live there before the summer of 1934, while their house was under construction. Beneath their own house, Jo sketched in the pond and the “Swamp Rookery of 1000 squawks.” She depicted at least some of the noisy birds, giving only a hint of her deep appreciation of nature in their Cape Cod environment.

This map also includes many other landmarks painted by Edward Hopper including on the south side, various properties of the extended Cobb family, whose modest structure the Hoppers dubbed “Bird Cage Cottage” and rented for their first four years in Truro. Jo drew in the tall silo of the Cobb Farm’s barn. In an unorthodox touch for a

map maker, she added a sign warning “Keep Out,” noting that this farm had “big dogs [that] like to bite.” Beneath the main road, Jo drew in the rest of the Cobb buildings, noting, “Not the rich Cobb farm. Another Cobb. This now dead. All empty for two years.” She drew the Cobb house, hen coup, and barn as well as the “ex P.O. [post office].” All of these became motifs in Edward’s work. She also sketched in Marshall’s House, which had inspired Edward to paint a watercolor in 1932. Jo’s page proved too small to include some structures, so she rendered them as off the map, making only verbal notations. She did this for both Ryder’s House, the subject of a canvas with that title from 1933, and the town of Wellfleet, the site of several watercolors.

On the North Side of this map, Jo sketched some more of Edward’s motifs including the *House with Dead Trees*, the subject of a 1932 watercolor; *Mrs. Scott’s House*, the subject of a 1932 canvas; and the *Dauphinée House*, which they both painted in oil in

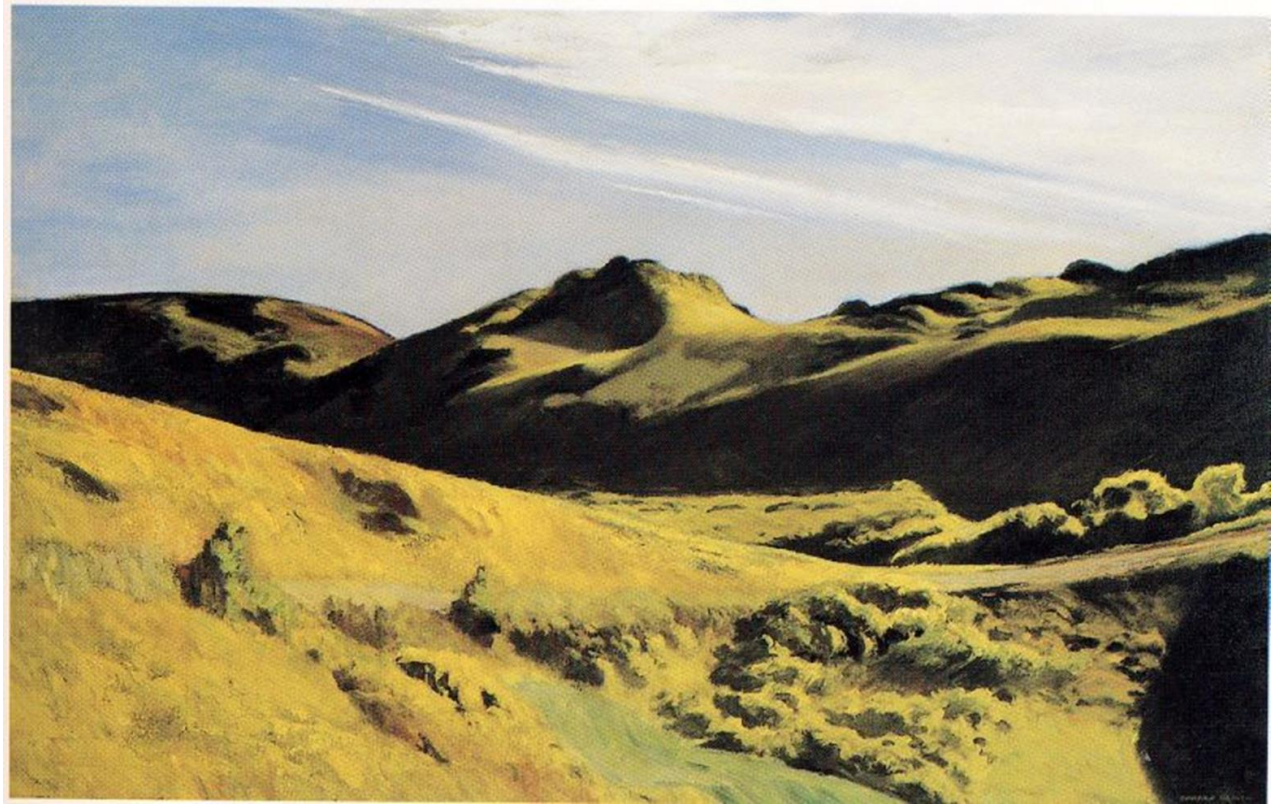


Figure 5. Edward Hopper, *The Camel's Hump*, 1931, oil on canvas, 27.38 x 81.92 cm. Munson-Williams-Proctor Museum in Utica, New York, Edward Root Bequest.

1932. Edward had also painted this same house in watercolor in 1931, calling it, *Captain Kelly's House*.²⁵ She also drew in Fisher Road and another of Edward's watercolor motifs, *Lombard's House*, which he painted twice in 1931, also calling this site, *Dead Tree and Side of Lombard House*.

In contrast to Jo's careful delineation of the sites Edward painted, the disappearance of most of her own canvases and any records that she might have kept of her work remain one of the scandals of modern art history. Her proximity to her husband, acknowledged to be one of America's greatest painters, adds documentary value to her *oeuvre*. Yet under the leadership of John I. H. Baur and Lloyd Goodrich, the Whitney Museum of American Art

discarded almost all of Jo's canvases after her 1968 bequest to the museum of the Hoppers' "entire artistic estates."²⁶ Of the ninety-two framed works by Jo that the Whitney gave away to New York City hospitals in the early 1970s, all vanished, though the Whitney has recently recovered one of them *Obituary* of 1948 (Figure 6). As it happens, the imagery of this particular painting relates to Jo's maps under discussion here.²⁷

In September 1948, on Cape Cod, years after she had made her maps, Jo, feeling melancholy in her mid-sixties, focused on painting an imaginary view out of a window. We see a bright blue vase of dried flowers on a table in the foreground, framed by a pale yellow curtain tied back on the left side. The

²⁵ See Levin, *Edward Hopper: A Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. II, 255, W-266.

²⁶ Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*, xv.

²⁷ The Whitney briefly posted Josephine N. Hopper's canvas, *Obituary* (Figure 6), of 1948 on its website, which I was surprised to discover there during the early months of 2017. I even downloaded the image, which I saw in color for the first time. I was amazed to see that the Whitney misrepresented the date that the museum added this painting to its permanent collection, giving it online an accession number beginning with the number 70 for its year of acquisition, as if it had never been sent and then vanished from Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx. In fact, the painting was one of the ninety-two framed works given away by the museum to New York area hospitals

and had never been shown as a part of the Whitney's permanent collection. *Obituary* has since been taken off the Whitney Museum website. I recently heard the story of how the painting was returned to the Whitney, but I cannot confirm more than that the image appeared on the museum's website and then was taken down after I spoke about the matter in a public lecture at the Provincetown Art Association in September 2017. Another art historian present at the lecture claimed to me that these gifts to hospitals were actually loans, but since the framed works included numerous watercolors, these were clearly not loans, since no museum could ever lend a watercolor (with fragile colors that fade) for years at a time.

blue of the vase draws us into the distance to the paler blue expanse of Cape Cod Bay, visible just below the Hoppers' house. Her beloved, but long-disappeared cat, Arthur, pokes around the curtain. The distant view on the left contains both the Hoppers' Truro House and the neighboring Jenness House with its reddish roof. On the right, however, we see in the middle ground Washington Square arch, which is visible from the Hoppers' home on Washington Square South in New York City. This fantastic combination of the Cape and New York City views could be explained if she represented here her depiction of their city view as seen in another of her canvases, rendered as a picture within a picture. If nothing else, the recovery of this image in color signals how much has been lost to art history and to Hopper studies.



Figure 6. Josephine Verstelle Nivison Hopper, *Obituary ("Fleur du Temps Jadis")*, 1948. Oil on canvas, 24 1/8 x 19 15/16 inches. Josephine N. Hopper Bequest to the Whitney Museum of American Art.

To contextualize the loss of Jo Hopper's canvases for art history, one should realize that it occurred just as feminist artists were protesting the inadequate percentage of women artists in the 1969 Whitney Annual: eight women out of 151 artists. Faith Ringgold, one of the activist artists, recalled: "The Whitney Museum became the focus of our attention. We went there often to deposit eggs. Unsuspecting male curatorial staff would pick up the eggs and experience the shock of having raw egg slide down the pants of their fine tailor-made suits. Sanitary napkins followed..."²⁸ Unfortunately for Jo, she died too soon to benefit from any attempt to rectify the discrimination that she suffered as both a woman artist and, among her female peers, as the wife of a celebrated and privileged male artist, who did nothing for their cause.

Indeed, the survival of these two maps is all the more valuable because most of the papers of both Jo and Edward Hopper suffered sequestration for fifty years after his death in 1967. More than four thousand documents from the Hoppers' papers recently surfaced in the collection of the children of Arthayer Sanborn. He was a Baptist preacher, who was a neighbor to Edward's only sibling, an older sister named Marion, who lived and died a spinster in their childhood home in Nyack, New York. As the lonely sister aged and became more and more infirm, Sanborn, along with a group of ladies from the church up the street, began, as a part of his pastoral duties, looking in on her. Once he had obtained the key to the house, he discovered what he would call in a recorded public lecture the "treasure trove" of art and documents stored in the attic.²⁹ At some point, as his phrase, "treasure trove" suggests, he took it upon himself to exploit the trove and began helping himself to the treasure. Sanborn's decision to hoard and sequester such a vast number of documents (and the fact that his heirs kept them hidden for ten years beyond his death) raise questions as to how and why this could

²⁸ Faith Ringgold, *We Flew Over the Bridge: The Memoirs of Faith Ringgold* (Duke University Press: 2005), 175-178.

²⁹ Arthayer Sanborn in a public lecture recorded on July 22, 1982, at the Rockland County Historical Society, New City, New York.

occur.³⁰ In any case, Sanborn retired from the church in his mid-fifties and kept busy marketing his examples of Edward Hopper's art, all the while promoting himself as a close friend of Edward Hopper, which written documentation in Hopper's own hand disproves.³¹

The Whitney announced the "gift" of these four thousand documents from the Hoppers' papers on July 29, 2017.³² These four thousand documents, hidden for fifty years, could well contain more examples of Jo's maps and records of her lost work. These documents, however, have not yet been made accessible to either the public or to scholars. (The Hopper House in Nyack, New York, has also recently announced a "loan" of another thousand items, including art works, from Sanborn's heirs.)³³

Despite what has been lost, Jo's two surviving maps project her inner vision of the outer world that she and Edward both depicted in their art works. On her maps, she interprets objective data through the lens of her subjective perspective and her own perception of her husband's point of view. Caring about the Roots' journey, she tried to achieve a level of accuracy. Above all, Jo meant for these two maps to function as guides for the supportive patron-couple's journey to visit them on the Cape. But these maps suggest that they were also intended to do more than lead the visitors to the Hoppers' home, well off the main roads.

Looking at the two maps closely, we must recognize Jo's concern not only in creating these maps as utilitarian guides, but also as making objects of art historical and artistic value. Though she never saw herself competing with Edward, she was concerned that her own work as an artist receive some recognition. Like most women artists of her day, she found the going rough. Discrimination against women in the art world was rife and especially insidious at home. Together with the record books and her diaries (a group of which have recently

been given by the two sons of Mary Schifffenhaus, to whom Jo bequeathed the Cape house and all of its contents, to the Provincetown Artist Association and Museum on the Cape),³⁴ Jo's maps, despite the destruction of so much of her own art work, will insure that her unique role in Edward's creativity goes down in history.

³⁰ Robin Pogrebin and Kevin Flynn, "Hopper Expert Questions How Minister Got an Art Trove," *New York Times*, November 20, 2012.

³¹ See Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*, 565, which quotes a 1964 letter from Edward Hopper to his sister telling her that he had no time for her or "Dr. Sanborn" at the opening of his Whitney retrospective, where a huge crowd would be present.

³² A date that suggests that the museum did not want this press release to get the attention of the vacationing art press.

³³ "Edward Hopper House Unveils New Collection of the Iconic American Artist's Early Years and Memorabilia," July 19, 2017.

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/edward-hopper-house-unveils-new-collection-of-the-iconic-american-artists-early-years-and-memorabilia-300490740.html>

³⁴ <https://www.paam.org/exhibitions/the-hoppers/>. Accessed on January 10, 2017.