



PEGGY BACON
Clams and Clodhoppers, 1933
Drypoint engraving
Museum Purchase, 2014.13

Clams and Clodhoppers



Peggy Bacon (1895-1987) Connecticut-born artist Margaret (Peggy) Frances Bacon had an unconventional childhood. She was educated by private tutors rather than attending school, and studied only subjects that interested her, such as mythology, Latin, Greek, ancient history and ancient geography. As a young girl, her family lived for several years in France and England and spent a year in Bermuda. At the age of fourteen, wealthy family friends paid her tuition at a boarding school, where she learned mathematics. After high school she studied at the Art Students League in New York, where her artistic skills expanded to include printmaking, pastels, and painting. In a heralded career that spanned five decades, Bacon wrote and illustrated many children's books (beginning with her first book at age ten!), short stories and a collection of poems. She was best known for her humorous satirical caricatures of famous and infamous celebrities, a collection of which was published in 1933 (*Off With Their Heads!*).

A product of its time

For thousands of years before settlers arrived in New England, Native Americans harvested clams and oysters from the ocean's bounty, cooking them layered between stones and wet seaweed in pits dug on the beach. This below-ground steam pit cooking was readily adopted by the settlers. Over time, clam bakes became a festive, traditional food-sharing activity, a gathering among families and friends. In *Clams and Clodhoppers*, Peggy Bacon pays homage to her Connecticut roots, using her trademark caricature drawing style to capture a celebration of food, family, friends, and fun.

Take a closer look

Bacon was an accomplished printmaker. She was self-taught in the technique of drypoint printing, the style she used for *Clams and Clodhoppers*. In drypoint, lines are inscribed directly into a copper plate using either diamond-tipped or carbide-tipped steel needles. Burr-edged lines are the result of the metal curling away from the needle during the carving process. Through her skilled drypoint techniques, Bacon has achieved a wide spectrum of line and value, including sharper, barely-burred lines for soft light grays to heavily burred lines for deep, rich black tones. From the sandy, rocky coast to the aprons, coats, hats, and dresses of the crowd, Bacon has created a multi-textured, visually engaging scene of a lively beach banquet.

Did you know?

Clodhoppers are heavy, strong boots often associated with farmers and working class people. Pictured in heavy boots, gingham dresses, and loose-fitting suits while surrounded by family pets, the folks in Peggy Bacon's *Clams and Clodhoppers* look like hard-working, everyday people taking time to enjoy the world they live in with friends and family.

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www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/drpt/hd_drpt.htm