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“We are here, Lafayette,” at the newly restored Storer Mansion in Kennebunk.

BY COLIN W. SARGENT

Restored for modern living, Kennebunk’s fabulous Storer Mansion remembers the world under sail.

How many Maine homes can say, “Lafayette visited here”? How many can add, “and the tree that grew on this lawn became the emblem for our town crest.”

The Lafayette Elm gave shade to the Marquis de Lafayette when he visited the Storer Mansion in Kennebunk on June 25, 1825. The landmark was once described as floating over the lawn for two centuries “like a giant green cloud” that rose to 131 feet before Dutch elm disease claimed it in 1969.

Its magnificent absence today still haunts the lovely Col. Joseph A. Storer Mansion (1758), along with the ghost of historical novelist Kenneth Roberts (1885-1957), who was born in a second-floor bedroom here.

Listed recently for \$625,000, the Federal manse boasts interiors that have been exquisitely decorated by artist David Wiggins, the for-





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TALKING WALLS

mer owner “who lived here and renovated” the Federal landmark *in situ*, says broker Maureen Adams Weaver. In particular, the spacious dining room delights with hand-painted murals that depict “the travels of a Kennebunk sea captain,” with panels showing The Tropics, Europe, Boston, and then, near the massive fireplace (one of six), safe passage Home to the Kennebunk River. Deftly, a wet bar is to add a splash of verisimilitude to this voyage.

The gourmet Colonial-style kitchen, featuring mustard-hued paneling accented with beadboard interiors; black soapstone counters; and 21st century appliances is just the ticket for entertaining guests swanning around in the three enormous rooms downstairs. Follow the original staircase and rail upstairs and you'll find three bedrooms. In one of them, Wiggins has designed a frieze that shows facing silhouettes of Lafayette and Washington.

“This is where they say Kenneth Roberts [*Arundel, Rabble in Arms, Northwest Passage, Boon Island*] was born,” Weaver, a Kennebunker herself, says.

With early paneling throughout, much of it bolstered by tasteful restoration, ancient brass hardware, and many original wide floorboards—some Period-perfect in black and white diamonds—this is one yare showplace where you can unpack your sea trunk.

The classic post-and-beam barn has a tree growing through it (with windows inside to watch it grow), an in-law apartment, and massive barn doors that slide together and apart under power like pocket doors (engineering by Door Services Inc.). Taxes are \$6,114.

N.B. This story completes an eccentric Kenneth Roberts triangle for *Portland Magazine*. We've covered Roberts's 1938 stone estate, Rocky Pasture, in Kennebunkport; Stall Hall in Kennebunk Beach (1925); and now this house, his birthplace, as feature stories. Only Blue Roof, his writing studio across the road from Stall Hall (both face the first hole at Webhannet Golf Club), remains. Better yet, next stop, “The Half-Baked Palace,” Roberts's getaway villa in Italy. ■



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