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Magnificent Absence

Two different times struggle for the same space in “the **Lake of the Woods.**”

BY COLIN W. SARGENT

IT'S MARCH 9, 1921. The British steamship *Wandby* has a date with destiny. She's bound for Portland through a white fog, but she hasn't sighted land since Algiers. Suddenly, the bridge watch echoes with, “Breakers ahead!” Blind to fortune, the freighter crashes into a lovely cove in Kennebunkport right beside Walker's Point. At 11 knots.

Immediately across the street, in the same time/space continuum, another collision is happening 98 years later. A “modern” dwelling straight out of the Brady Bunch has made the mistake of crashing into 2019's real estate market. Usually, it's a good idea to consider saving a building. But this one, like the *Wandby*, is sadly a total loss.

DIVING INTO THE WRECK

It's so out of true “its doors are flapping,” the listing company says. Its porches are rotten and dangerous. Few will weep when

the 1,700-square-foot structure is torn apart board by board and taken away. No one is presently living up here in this elevated lot with its unforgettable views of Wandby Cove. A side window is open, inviting intruders. Lonely but defiant, the *chirp* of a single neglected smoke alarm calls to the curious as they approach the front door.

“It used to be owned by a retired doctor in his nineties,” says builder Kevin Lord of Dr. Robert F. X. Gilday, 89, who bought the property in 1981. With partner Tim Harrington, Lord purchased the outmoded wreck with its dreamy lot “in July” of 2018 for \$1.2M. Now, having discovered this site—“the house was invisible from the street”—Lord & Harrington LLC have had a new design created [*chirp*] by Fiorentino Group Architects of Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

DARE TO DREAM

Because the new design is a Shingle Style

marvel with a turret that is “nearly 5,000 square feet,” the proposal must “go before the Planning Board on February 20,” Lord says.

We step gingerly across the front porch and look at the magnificent absence of the *Wandby*. When the ship crashed, the sickening sound of metal gnashing against rock carried a reported three or four miles. Kennebunk schools closed so students could run to see history in the waves. [*Chirp.*]

What a spot for you and your loved one to eavesdrop on the world. Hearts' memory summons a picture of Dr. Gilday and his wife, Judith, up here, toasting their good fortune. To the right is Walker's Point. Further to the right are views of the beaches as they rush toward Mt. Agamenticus. It's this singular lot, and not the house, that makes this location our “House of the Month.” Behind it is the old swampland known as “the Lake of the Woods.” You could “probably ice skate there because I believe it's fresh water,” Lord says.

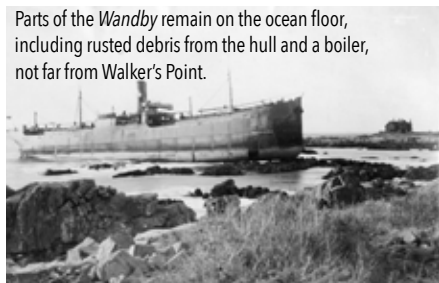
“It's a gem of a site,” Lord says. “We're calling it Sanctuary. The purchaser will get an approved house design. Central Maine Power is working on the engineering drawings to bury the telephone wires underground” to guarantee an even better view. “The \$2.5M price also includes a tie into town water. The price includes the house being demolished and taken away”—(roughly a \$25K value). “I've gone fishing right out there,” he says of Wandby Cove, a difficult place to anchor. “I throw in a mackerel, and the stripers come!”



21ST CENTURY RELEVANCE

So what value has Lord added himself? “People don’t understand what you can do with a property like this if you abide by the proper channels,” he says. “The drive-under garage will be designed for three cars.” Meanwhile, the ghost of the *Wandby* may be part of the star-maker machine. “The brewery and distillery we have, Batson River, already has a *Wandby* beer... It’s a pale ale.”

Parts of the *Wandby* remain on the ocean floor, including rusted debris from the hull and a boiler, not far from Walker’s Point.



LIKELY BUYERS?

As for who will buy the new house, “I was talking with President Bush 43 a couple of weeks ago about some repairs at Walker’s Point. Forty-three (former President George W. Bush) got the

Fiorentino Group Architects’ blueprint of the proposed house.



main house at Walker’s Point. Neil Bush owns the little ranch house nearest the cove [and nicknamed *Wandby*]. Jeb built a new house on the Point a few years ago. Doro has one, too.”

That leaves former President George W.

We think the lot’s asymmetry calls for the star power of the house in the 1950 film noir *The Second Woman*.



Bush’s daughters, Jenna Bush Hager and her sister Barbara, homeless. [Chirp.] “Tim is close to the Bushes,” Lord says of his business partner. “There’s been some discussion about that! All they’d have to do is cross the street.” Taxes are \$7,813. ■

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: JAKE DOOLITTLE; THE SECOND WOMAN, 1954; COURTESY PHOTOS



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