

house of the month



JULIA HALL

White Castle

BY COLIN SARGENT

You, too, can live like the Countess da Gama at her former Watchic Lake manor in Standish, for \$710,000.



Vasco da Gama explored the far reaches of the globe. But his descendants didn't make it to 22 Hartford Lane in Standish, on the edge of Watchic Lake, until World War II. What better place to wait out a tumultuous time where your loyalties are in conflict?

"The Countess da Gama lived here during the war, with her son," says seller Bill Drummey. "Her picture's upstairs [see photo, left]. I heard the legend from my parents—who bought the house in 1959. My neighbors for 45 years still speculate about it. From everything I've heard—and I'm not suggesting that you take any of this at face value—the young man was a citizen spy for the Germans, watching all the shipping in Portland Harbor and then driving back in a

black sedan here to the lake in the dead of night and transmitting the information to U-boats offshore."

The corners of his mouth turn up, Watchic Lake sparkling behind him.

"I can confirm this much. There was a lot of old wiring in a spiral along the perimeter of the second and third floors—an indoor loop antenna for a short-wave radio. I saw it myself when my son-in-law and I took it down." Somehow the son [think John Turturro in the movie version of this story, Lauren Bacall as the countess] got the power by cable from across the lake. Who knows? The innkeeper at Apple Row a couple doors down told me, "He was too dumb to be a spy."

But smart enough to live at one of the

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DAVID HEATH

most fabulous homes ever to stun the edge of the Maine lake. With two stories of glass-wraparound porches, this eight-room multi-level Southern colonial looks like a showboat stopped at the edge of the lake, or a three-tiered wedding cake.

"It was built in 1908," says Drummey, a former Nabisco executive who does in fact know a little about electricity—his father, John F. Drummey of Peekskill, New York, was an electrical engineer for the Morganite Carbon Co., who worked on the atom bomb projects at Oak Ridge, Tennessee. "Everything was ultra secret. We didn't know what they were working on all the time."

So where else to summer afterward but this quintessential Southern-style cottage reflected against three-mile Watchic Lake, "shaped like a question mark" and replete with a white sandy beach, enormous white pine trees, and lovely cooling breeze.

There is a winding walkway leading to the entrance that also invites guests to stroll through the surprisingly lush gardens. Striking is the curved cement bulkhead with steps to the gradually deepening water. The little cedar arbor leading guests out to the removable pier is the perfect place to steal a kiss.

The house, whimsically shingled in three different patterns, all painted white, has many of its original furnishings and fixtures. Inside, there's a long, paneled living



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room with fireplace, a dining room with built-in cabinets and wainscoting, a kitchen with original beadboard cabinets, five bedrooms and an alcove on the home's three floors, and two baths—one with a lavender corner tub.

But it is the double-decker glass-enclosed wraparound porches that are the most sumptuous, at least 12 feet wide and surrounding the house on three sides on two floors. It's not enough to call them sleeping porches; it's more accurate to call them dreaming porches as they glow with spectacular views of this quiet lake and the whispering pines. These indoor/outdoor rooms are gracious enough to host a dozentable bridge championship or a rainy day ping-pong tournament.

The manicured grounds also include a wonderful two-story barn in old red paint. The electricity has been updated to circuit breakers and 220 volts, and—as though receiving an echo of this home's unique past—a satellite dish.

"We watched our children play hide and seek here," Drummey says, and now it's time to leave.

Represented by David Heath of Krainin Real Estate, 22 Hartford Lane has annual taxes of \$4,177 and no comparables. We can confirm this. Try as we might, we could find no other houses da Gama in the immediate area. ■