

Mocomanto sits directly on Lake Agawam



# Monumental Mocomanto

**A storied Southampton house is ready for its next chapter**

**M**ocomanto isn't the most famous house in the Hamptons. These days, that honor would likely go to a steroidal structure owned by the sort who, as a local grande dame used to say, "puts on air conditioners." But Peter and Maya Tufó's shingled Victorian off First Neck Lane on Lake Agawam in the heart of the Southampton estate district, on the market for \$11.995 million through Saunders & Associates, is symbolic of all that is best about this perfect little village. And not just because the 7,000 square foot, seven-bedroom house, pool house and gunite pool on 2.2 acres, is an ideal setting for the sandy-floored lifestyle that was once the height of Hamptons chic. Mocomanto's provenance makes it a monument as well as a landmark that can't be torn down.

In 1640, English settlers from Lynn, Massachusetts, landed at Conscience Point on Long Island's South Fork and founded Southampton, the earliest English settlement in New York State, though it was then part of Connecticut. That December, the settlers won a deed from nine sachems of the Shinnecock Indians who inhabited the land. Two hundred forty years later, in the early 1880s, a patent lawyer, Frederic Henry Betts, acquired a large parcel and built six "cottages" on the

shore of what was called Lake Agawam. The one he kept for his family, named for one of those sachems, made their village world famous after Betts' wife had a gondola shipped in from Venice; she used it to go to church on Sunday.

Betts was one of the first summer colonists, attracted to the east end of Long Island by its natural beauty, which became easier to appreciate after 1872 when the railroad came east. The Bettses co-owned a public bathing pavilion on the pristine village beach (land now part of the private Bathing Corporation, known as the beach club). And they were behind that Episcopal church, St. Andrews, set on the dunes. Once a government lifeguard station, it was moved to land at the foot of Lake Agawam donated by Betts' brother C. Wyllys, another patent lawyer, numismatist and club man (he belonged to the Century, Union, University and Knickerbocker). When Wyllys died at 42 in 1887, his most notable bequest paid off loans on his family's Southampton properties, including the land beneath the church, which he gave to Frederic, requesting him to convey it to St. Andrews if he chose. He did.

By 1899, Southampton's social position was assured. "The absentees this summer will not be many, while several deserters are returning,

GARY NOLAN

and the new arrivals will be numerous,” a local newspaper said. Frederic Betts died in 1905, but his wife survived him and lived on in their house until 1925. The Long Island Society Register left her in situ another four years even though Mocomanto had passed to their nephew, Wyllys Rosseter Betts Sr., a Yale man and stock broker who married a Woolworth and dabbled in marine science. In 1939, he divorced, remarried and moved to Arizona, and Mocomanto’s next owner was Edith G. Betts Wood, the wife of Sydney B. Wood Jr., who won Wimbledon in 1931 at 19, becoming its youngest-ever champion. They divorced after World War II and Edith married W. Cary Potter, a grandson of Henry Codman Potter, Episcopal Bishop of New York, who’d also shed his spouse. They remained in the house until 1967.

Mocomanto finally left the Betts family in 1969, when it was bought by Marion Dodge Dorland, “a strong-willed woman,” says her son Dodge, an investment manager. A descendant of the first territorial governor of Wyoming, of the first father and son team to serve together in the U. S. Senate, and of one of the builders of the transcontinental railroad, and a past president of both the National Women’s Republican Club and the Dames of the Loyal Legion of the United States, she’d moved to Southampton after her husband, an

insurance and real estate man with family ties of his own to both Dutch New York and the American Revolution, died. Seven years later, she married F. Ryan Hunt, a furniture dealer, in “rather a sudden” ceremony, according to Aileen “Suzy” Mehle, who noted that Marion was also a former regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Her son suspects that the marriage was tax-related, and adds that though it was quickly annulled, he

en’s clothing stores. According to Tufo, she saw the house across the lake, and induced Petrie to buy it sight unseen for \$250,000, only to have him take a walk-through and declare he would never set foot in it again. He preferred Palm Beach style. Seven months later, he sold it to Tufo for a \$25,000 profit. Tufo swam across the lake to christen it with a bottle of Champagne.

A handsome, charming lawyer who spent

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## PETER TUFO MADE AN EARLY SPLASH IN SOUTHAMPTON WHEN, AFTER A FIGHT, HE PUT A DEAD SHARK IN LEE RADZIWILL’S SWIMMING POOL ON GIN LANE AND SHE RETALIATED BY DRIVING HIS PORSCHE INTO IT, TOO.

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thought Hunt a gentleman.

Four years later, in 1980, Marion sold Mocomanto to Milton and Carroll Petrie. Four times married, she was the former Marquesa de Portago and lover of platinum king Charles Engelhard. He was the vastly wealthy and philanthropic proprietor of a chain of wom-

decades in government and public service—most recently as Bill Clinton’s Ambassador to Hungary—Tufo was also a social player, having arrived in Southampton as the escort of Lee Radziwill, sister of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, after divorcing his first wife, Alexandra Gardiner Creel Goelet, the co-owner of Gardiner’s Island. He admits he made an early splash in Southampton when after a fight, he put a dead shark in Radziwill’s swimming pool on Gin Lane and she retaliated by driving his Porsche into it, too. He subsequently married Francesca Stanfill, the writer and daughter of a former chairman of 20th Century Fox; Kimberly Paige, the step-daughter of a former partner of Harry Helmsley; and Maya Rana, the daughter of a Nepalese industrialist who he’d first met as a 12-year-old.

Tufo and interior designer Mica Ertegun updated the place, added the heated pool and pool house on the lake, turned third floor servants’ room into a huge guest suite with a vast deck with ocean views and briefly renamed it Great Gables. But “as you get older, you want to simplify and have freedom,” says Maya Rana Tufo, who plans on finding something smaller. “It’s too big. A family should be here. They don’t make them like this anymore.”

Adds Tufo, “That’s what she once said about me.” ♦

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The shingled Victorian boasts a wrap-around porch and a deck with ocean views