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For Some in the Hamptons, It's Not a Home Without a Dock

By **Marcelle Sussman Fischler**

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A love of boating has brought Marybeth and Ed Condon of Nissequogue, N.Y., on the North Shore of Long Island, to the Hamptons every summer. For two years, they spent weekends in Hampton Bays, living aboard their 34-foot Sea Ray Sundancer powerboat at a local marina.

But with the ceiling in their two staterooms too low to stand up, “it was claustrophobic,” said Ms. Condon, 63, an office manager.

When they were in the Hamptons, they would scour tag sales, go out for brunch and visit open houses, limiting their search to waterfront properties.

“We were hoping to have a place with a dock,” said Dr. Condon, 71, an endocrinologist who used to race sailboats with his three sons in Manhasset Bay. “We looked at other places where we could mushroom in the water,” he said, referring to a type of permanent anchor or mooring off shore reached from land by a tender or small craft.

About a year and a half ago, the Condons finally found their boaters' paradise in Hampton Bays: a \$975,000 four-bedroom, three-bathroom house on a 0.56-acre lot with a balcony off the master suite, an in-ground swimming pool and a dock on a canal off Shinnecock Bay.

“During the summer, the boats are going back and forth like street traffic” along the canal, said Dr. Condon, who prefers to dock his boat at home to save on marina costs, which can run as high as \$15,000 a year. “It's so beautiful. You really feel part of the maritime community.”

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While the Hamptons may be widely recognized as a summer resort and party hub for the rich and famous — with oceanfront homes often commanding eight-figure prices — it is also a haven for boaters and water enthusiasts, from paddle boarders, kayakers and sport fisherman to powerboat and mega-yacht owners. And when it comes to real estate, it is not just any waterfront home that these boating aficionados covet.

For some people, “the vision of having a house in the Hamptons is having a boat at the end of their dock,” said Gary DePersia, an associate broker with the Corcoran Group, noting that a dock will add a premium of about five percent to the value of a house.

Whether they like to fish, water ski, explore creeks and bays or cruise to the North Fork, “if they are boaters, they need a dock,” said Enzo Morabito, an associate broker with Douglas Elliman. Living on the water, he said, “is no fun if you don’t have a boat.”

The Hamptons communities most likely to have homes with private docks are Hampton Bays and Sag Harbor.

In Hampton Bays, about 25 percent of buyers insist on a dock, said Constance Porto, a sales agent for Douglas Elliman. Boaters “want to be able to go to a restaurant on the water; they want to watch the boats go by,” Ms. Porto said.

When the Sea Ray is tied to the dock, the younger of the Condons’ 11 grandchildren and 15 nieces and nephews play pirate ship on board.

This summer, the Condons plan to regularly breakfast on the boat, cruise out to Shinnecock Bay, “drop anchor and read the paper,” Dr. Condon said. Mrs. Condon said she planned to jump in the water off the boat’s three-foot long swim platform “as long as there’s no jellyfish.”

For boaters who live “south of the highway” — or south of Route 27, the main artery on the South Fork — “there is a lot of interest” in moving to Sag Harbor, said Edward Haugevik, an associate broker with Brown Harris Stevens. The village’s protected cove, he said, is “one of the few places you can keep a yacht.” Larger yachts sometimes anchor in the middle of Sag Harbor, tying their launches at the public docks or at a yacht club.

Last summer, Robin Baker Leacock, an artist and filmmaker, and her husband, Robert Leacock, who is also a filmmaker, traded the ocean breezes of Water Mill for a \$3 million house on two acres in a gated community in Sag Harbor that has a beach on Peconic Bay and a newly redone communal dock, large enough for a 70-foot yacht.



A view of Howard Deutsch's North Haven, N.Y., home from his 245-foot dock. Next to the bulkhead is a sleeping cottage. Eric Striffler for The New York Times

“It’s beautiful,” Ms. Leacock said. “There are white Adirondack chairs and a sloping lawn down to the dock. You can look at the bay and see the sunset.”

Mr. Leacock likes to sail and boat, Ms. Leacock said, and they are working on a vessel to call their own.

Premium properties in Sag Harbor with a dock “are commanding almost as much as oceanfronts,” Mr. Haugevik said. Two years ago, he sold a home on three acres in North Haven for \$16.5 million.

In Sag Harbor, “if you have a dock or can guarantee you can get a dock, you can get \$6 million” for .6- to .7-acre properties, he said, and an acre of land with a dock in the village can fetch as much as \$8 to \$9 million.

For Stefanie DiRienzo-Smith, 53, a former retail industry executive, and her husband, Mark Smith, 52, a surgeon, of Brooklyn Heights, a 50- to 60-foot bulkhead was what sold them on the three-bedroom Cape Cod they bought and renovated 11 years ago. The house

is on Little Fresh Pond, an inlet off Peconic Bay in Southampton, and its bulkhead allows Dr. Smith, an avid fisherman, to dock his 27-foot fishing boat at home.

“We were eyeing that spot for a long time,” Ms. DiRienzo-Smith said, although the bulkhead had to be redone. “We could have docked at a marina in Sag Harbor, but we really wanted a house where we could jump in the boat and go to the North Fork for lunch,” she said, or anchor in the bay and go swimming.

“We fish constantly. We always have a pole in the water,” Ms. DiRienzo-Smith said, adding that even their six-year-old twin sons are “into it now.”

The Hamptons market recently had 64 properties with docks for sale, said Jonathan Davis, a salesman with Douglas Elliman. Prices ranged from \$219,000 for a one-bedroom condo in Hampton Bays to \$4,395,000 for a new four-bedroom contemporary on a .30-acre lot with a deepwater dock in Sag Harbor.

“The bay is very different from the ocean,” Mr. Davis said, and has special appeal for those who enjoy jet skiing, water-skiing, tubing and other water sports. “Having a deepwater dock is like the icing on the cake. It allows you to fully utilize the Hamptons in a very unique way from the rest of the market.”

Of course, at the very high end, if you can afford it, you can have it all.

Listed for \$54 million, a 10,000-square-foot house on Southampton’s prized Meadow Lane meets the ocean at the beach end of its 3.35-acre lot; at the other end are a dock and a mooring on Shinnecock Bay.

There are few properties where you get ocean and bay front with a dock, said Harald Grant, an associate broker with Sotheby’s International Real Estate, who has the listing. “That’s part of the attractiveness of this home. People are first looking at oceanfront; when they see the dock, that adds a perk to it.”

Because of the shallow water, the 100-foot dock can only accommodate a cruiser of up to 27 feet. But its proximity to the Shinnecock Canal, Mr. Grant said, “allows you the ability to go to the ocean or Shelter Island.”

The Hamptons has a host of marinas and yacht clubs for boaters who don’t have private docks, but only those in Sag Harbor and Montauk can accommodate mega-yachts of more than 100 feet.

Seasonal rates at the village docks in Sag Harbor, which are calculated by the size of a boat, are \$67 a foot for residents and \$180 a foot for nonresidents, or about \$2,500 for residents with a 37-foot boat and \$6,660 for nonresidents. (The season runs from April through October.) Mega-yachts of 100 feet or more can stay overnight at Sag Harbor's Long Wharf for about \$600 a night. Seasonal fees at private marinas can run as high as \$270 a foot, or about \$8,100 for a 30-foot boat.

Though you can't have a dock on the Atlantic, oceanfront homes "have always carried the most value," Mr. Grant said. "Homes have sold in excess of \$100 million just because they are oceanfront."

The highest price for a bay-front home with a dock was Tyndal Point in Sag Harbor, which sold for \$36 million in 2011, said Mr. DePersia, of the Corcoran Group.

Sunset views from a west-facing dock on Shinnecock Bay, along Dune Road in Hampton Bays, N.Y. Eric Striffler for The New York Times

"Ocean people and bay people are real different," said Aram Terchunian, owner of First Coastal, a dock builder. "Ocean people are buying on the ocean because they like sand between their toes, walking on the beach, diving in the ocean, and they like to hear the

sound of the ocean.”

Bay people, on the other hand, like that “the bay is calm and serene,” Mr. Terchunian said. “All they want to do is come out and get on their kayak and explore a creek, and when done, paddle to a different creek.”

Along the eastern bank of the Shinnecock Canal in Hampton Bays, ground will be broken next month for the Boat Houses at Shinnecock, a development with 37 two- and three-bedroom townhouses, 20 boat slips and a floating dock for transient boats, said Gregg Rechler, a managing partner of Rechler Equity Partners, the developer. Prices will range from about \$1,000 to \$2,000 a square foot.

Though several condominiums from Water Mill to Hampton Bays have docks, the new development will be “one of the first places on the East End where you can get into Shinnecock Bay, into the ocean or Peconic Bay,” Mr. Rechler said. Years ago, the site was a marina; later it became Tiderunner, a restaurant frequented by boaters.

If a home doesn't already have a dock, getting permission to build one can be challenging, Mr. Terchunian said. For creeks too shallow for a traditional boat dock, he often designs and builds paddle boarding or kayaking docks. Along the waterfront on the various bays in the area, Mr. Terchunian said, about half of the houses have docks.

The landlocked are also testing the waters. At Barn & Vine Bridgehampton, where the last 10 of 37 single-family homes from \$2.9 to \$4 million will be ready by year's end, the development will offer homeowners access to yachts for rent as a concierge service, providing priority booking at a discount.

“Not everyone has a boat,” said Jane Gol, president of Continental Ventures and co-president of Continental Pinewood, the developer. “We have afforded our homeowners an opportunity to easily enjoy the beautiful water surrounding the Hamptons.”

For those who want to soak up the St. Barts atmosphere at Sunset Beach on Shelter Island for lunch, or cruise to Duryea's or Navy Beach in Montauk, Ms. Gol partnered with Bruce Tait, of Tait Yachts in Sag Harbor.

“It gives us access to additional high-end clientele, and they can get the access to boats that they might not have,” Mr. Tait said. Tait Yachts offers a half-day charter on a 44-foot sailing catamaran for about \$2,900, including captain and crew; a 115-foot yacht costs \$17,000 for an eight-hour day, plus food and tips.

Howard Deutsch has owned a house in North Haven for 37 years, and he knows it wasn't the five bedrooms, the private beach or the waterside heated pool that convinced renters to lease the house two summers ago. The 245-foot dock beckoned.

The tenants also rented a 40-foot boat and hired a captain to take them out regularly. "They said they spent the entire summer at the end of the dock," said Mr. Deutsch, a TV producer who rents out the house when it is convenient. (He is renting it this summer for between \$175,000 and \$195,000 a month.)

When Blaze Makoid, an architect, built his own house on Morris Cove in Sag Harbor 10 years ago, he included a 100-foot ramp and a 20-foot dock, although he grew up in Philadelphia and knew nothing about boating.

Bill Collage, a screenwriter and friend who lived in Sag Harbor, gave him a 10-minute boating lesson. "We bartered sharing his boat for my dock for three years," said Mr. Makoid, 56, who subsequently designed his own 26-foot dual console outboard, collaborating with Vanquish Boats, in Newport, R.I. Mr. Makoid named the boat *It's Just Lunch*, after the dating service where he met his wife, Tracy Mitchell, 55, executive director of Bay Street Theater, in Sag Harbor.

They take the boat out three or four times a week, heading to Sunset Beach, Greenport or Montauk with friends for lunch or a picnic and a swim in a cove off Shelter Island. "Boating opened up an entirely new world for us out here," Mr. Makoid said. "It really did change things dramatically."

Although they are now a two-boat family — his wife and daughter share a 14-foot whaler — their life is still more sedate than the fabled Hamptons party scene. Friends with boats often cruise over and tie up at the Makoids' dock for a barbecue.

"I find that way more pleasurable," Mr. Makoid said.

On weeknights, he will often take a 20-minute sunset cruise, savor a glass of wine aboard, watch a sailboat race with a friend or head to Greenport for cocktails. "The advantage of being docked at our house is we can turn on the key and take off," he said.

And when he gets up in the morning, Mr. Makoid loves seeing his boat at the end of the dock.

"I can't wait to get home and get on it," he said. "It's my blood pressure medicine."

Correction: May 18, 2018

An earlier version of this article misstated the age of Blaze Makoid, an architect who built his own house in Sag Harbor, N.Y. He is 56, not 59.

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