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Garrison Keillor's retreat on the St. Croix River includes four buildings, including the main house.

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Garrison Keillor's above-average St. Croix River retreat for sale

YOU CAN HAVE IT FOR ...

\$995,000

By JIM BUCHTA • jbuchta@startribune.com

Garrison Keillor bought the parcel of land on the St. Croix River in part because he was yearning for the lost tranquility of his childhood home in Brooklyn Park, where pavement and rooftops long ago replaced meadows and woods.

"I saw that stretch of land and I just fell in love with the contours," he said.

Intending to live there permanently, he built a log house and several outbuildings, including a studio — surrounded by spruce, aspen and a stretch of wild river — where he could write.

"Then life carries us in a different direc-

tion," said Keillor, the longtime host of the popular "Prairie Home Companion" radio show.

The 11-acre retreat, located about an hour from the Twin Cities, is now on the market for \$995,000. The property was once part of a farmstead, but in the early 1990s, Keillor transformed it into a family compound with four buildings, a clay tennis court and acres of forest.

With the help of his son, Jason, Keillor reassembled three Swedish settlers' cabins on the property. Two were combined to become the main house, the third a guesthouse.

For a few years, Keillor did live there. It's where he wrote one of his books, where the family celebrated birthdays and holidays, where his daughter was baptized.

Keillor continues on H8 ►

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The main house is a combination of two log houses plus a new addition.



The studio, where Keillor did his writing, was also a good place for him to be surrounded by nature.

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• KEILLOR FROM HI

Since then, however, he's only visited about once a month, to spend time with his grandkids.

Jason Keillor and his wife, Tiffany Hanssen, raised their two sons on the property.

"For little boys with dogs it's a beautiful place to grow up," Hanssen said.

But now that the boys are older (9 and 11) and more focused on activities in the city, it's time for the family to move on.

Keillor said he's grateful for his time in the woods, especially for how it helped him appreciate Minnesota's most vilified season: winter.

"Whenever it snowed it was beautiful beyond words. It really was," he said. "I remember walking down the long driveway with the snow falling, with cast members from New York, and it was like a scene out of a Russian novel with the snow falling and people in long coats with

their arms around each other. There's nothing like having a little piece of woods to really experience fall, winter and spring."

Keillor, who now splits his time between New York City and St. Paul, said that at age 69 it's time to divest his real estate holdings. He still owns a historic house on Summit Avenue, a New York pied-à-terre overlooking Central Park and the Brooklyn Park house his dad built in 1947.

But he considers the Wisconsin property his "ideal. It was my only romantic real estate adventure," he said.

And while he admits it's hard to say goodbye, he's philosophical about it.

"It was a whole country life that I imagined, then I woke up here this summer and realized I was not going to live there," he said. "It's nothing compared to losing people."

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KEILLOR'S WISCONSIN RETREAT

The land: 11.5 acres with 460 feet of St. Croix River shoreline

Main house: Made by combining two historic log homes, the 1,874-square-foot structure includes two bedrooms, a woodstove and a sprawling porch.

Guesthouse: A turn-of-the-century log cabin with 690 square feet of space.

Studio: Built in 1994, this 1,592-square-foot building has 20-foot ceilings in the main room, two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a pool table room and bedroom/office.

Office: A 15-by-15-foot building with built-in bookshelves and a desk. Keillor used this as his writing studio and when he wrote "Wobegon Boy."

Listing agents: Joyce and Ralph Peterson, Coldwell Banker Burnet.



The rustic guest cottage, above and left, mimics the look of the main house. Keillor said they often used the St. Croix retreat as a place for family gatherings.



VIEW PHOTOS
of Garrison Keillor's
Wisconsin retreat at
startribune.com/homes

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