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By BETH GREENFIELD
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PROVINCETOWN was good to Mark Doty and his partner, Paul Lisicky, who shared an 18th-century Cape-style house there for the first 10 years of their 12-year relationship. Mr. Doty had gone there first, to seek solace with a former partner who was dying of AIDS, and wound up staying on for years with Mr. Lisicky. It was the ideal place for the pair of writers — rich with both literary and gay history, and home to an inspiring mix of dreamy landscapes and thrumming resort-town life.

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Doug Kuntz for The New York Times

Mark Doty, at far left, and Paul Lisicky on a boardwalk near their Fire Island Pines home.

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Doug Kuntz for The New York Times

Still, near the end of their time there, the magic began to wear off, mainly because of the influx of moneyed home buyers, which they felt was changing the scruffy, bohemian village into a spiffed-up Cape Cod version of the Hamptons. They decided to sell. “The way I could find what I needed there, in terms of metaphor, had come to an end” is how Mr. Doty put it.

So it may seem surprising, then, that they left Provincetown for yet another moneyed gay vacation spot: the Fire Island Pines, off the south shore of Long Island.

This time, though, there would be less room for disappointment. “We really romanticized P-town,” Mr. Lisicky said.

Although neither man had set foot on Fire Island until 2005, the two started to zero in on the slim spit of sand as an alternative, in part because of its proximity to their New York City home. They visited two of its communities, Cherry Grove and the Pines, and during the year that followed, Mr. Lisicky said, he began to long for the dune-swept landscape. They purchased, for \$735,000, the first

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The stress-free blind date

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The couple's house is a 1960s ranch with clerestory windows.

house their agent showed them: a 1960s contemporary ranch in the Pines, nestled in a grove of holly trees.

“At first we were thinking, ‘Oh, this place is going to be too gay,’ ” recalled Mr. Lisicky, a tall, sunny-faced man with a sharp wit, laughing. “But we fell in love with the landscape right away,” he added. “We were smitten.”

“Too gay” may sound like a funny notion for a pair whose primary place is in Chelsea, and who spent a decade sharing a house at the tip of Cape Cod. Still, writers have a way of putting romantic twists on the facts of their surroundings. And these two men — the poet and memoirist Mr. Doty (“Atlantis,” “School of the Arts” and the recent “Dog Years”) and the novelist and memoirist Mr. Lisicky (“Lawnboy,” “Famous Builder”), who are also both professors of literature — have done just that.

While living in Provincetown, which they balanced for years with various teaching appointments around the country, the couple spent much of their time at home by a fire or walking the beech-forest trails with their two dogs, one black Labrador mix and one golden retriever (whose lives and deaths are recounted in “Dog Years”). And in the Fire Island Pines, the two have been settled in their unwinterized home since March, savoring the solitude.

To avoid in-season crowds, they plan to head to Manhattan on most weekends, and they hope to extend their time on Fire Island well into winter. Last year they came back and forth to the house right up through Christmas, when the Great South Bay froze over and the ferry stopped running.

“People from Manhattan think of the Pines as a party culture, and they assume it’s always ra-ra, cha-cha,” Mr. Lisicky said. “But for us, coming here is more a place to hide out and write, and to regroup.”

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The house itself, just a five-minute stroll from the ferry dock, is set back with a long entry boardwalk off a wide sandy track called Fire Island Boulevard (there are no cars in the Pines). The house is fronted by a large shaded garden that Mr. Doty is in the process of reworking.

“When it’s in full bloom, the color scheme sets your teeth on edge,” he explained, noting the bright blue hydrangeas sharing space with orange daylilies and a fuchsia peony. Mainly it’s a joy, though, he said, noting that the garden is sprawling compared with the cramped bed of rose bushes he tended in Provincetown.

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Though both that house and this one are “floaters” — meaning they were floated over on boats to their present sites — they are aesthetic opposites. The one the couple sold had low ceilings with hemlock beams, three old fireplaces and small windows. “It looked hunkered down against a storm,” Mr. Doty recalled. “It was a great winter house.” The new one has vaulted ceilings with white beams, a wall of sliding glass doors, and clerestory windows that flood it with light from both the sun and the moon.

I think what spoke to me about this house is that it was a newish place that actually seemed to have a soul,” said Mr. Doty, who usually prefers older structures.

The fact that the new house had a pool and a small deck in the bamboo-edged backyard sealed the deal — and further informed Mr. Doty’s view of the Pines.

“It feels like a nice mix between a rustic camp,” he said, “and something very glamorous.”

They have furnished the ranch with a similarly eclectic style. Chic touches include a Georges Briard vase, a glass Calligaris dining table surrounded by four Eames chairs, and a white Tord Boontje paper cutout, hung like a large snowflake on the living room’s west wall. Those are blended with Cape Cod souvenirs, including a whitewashed “Our Summer Place” B&B sign scored at the dump, and basics, like canvas butterfly chairs and Ikea bookshelves.

Scattered here and there are objects found along the beach — fist-sized stones clustered around the freestanding fireplace, ropy lengths of driftwood, the thick section of a tree trunk, now used as a coffee table.

“Beautiful discards,” said Mr. Lisicky, pointing out his most recent haul of two thin birch trunks.

No dogs inhabit the space yet, though. “That’s coming,” Mr. Doty said.

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The house, as it turns out, had a nostalgic pull for each man. Mr. Lisicky was reminded of his family's summer house in Ocean City, N.J. And Mr. Doty said that the clerestory windows took him back to a childhood home in suburban Tucson — just one of many places his nomadic family inhabited; his father's Army Corps of Engineers job meant moving around a lot.

Because of that, Mr. Doty said, "I think I had this idea that once you found a home, a place, you would cultivate it and keep it. So it was startling to me that I was ready to move on" from Provincetown.

But several things helped them realize it was time. Most pressing, perhaps, was that the old house needed constant care. "All my houses, in my adult life, have been old ones," Mr. Doty said. "I think I was fleeing from those places my family lived when I was growing up, all those raw new suburbs." Still, the reality of upkeep crept in, as did the sadness over the loss of their pets ("That place was so filled with the lives of those dogs," he said) and the changing demographic.

"There was a feeling that the community was really changing its character around us," he said. "With such an influx of money, there were fewer year-round people and creative types."

Although the Pines has no shortage of wealthy homeowners and new development, the two are not fearful of the same change occurring there.

There is also no real town (save for a nightclub complex and a smattering of stores and restaurants) that threatens to keep growing. And while that lack of hubbub may sometimes pose challenges for Mr. Doty — who enjoys working amid the distraction of, say, a crowded cafe — it's working perfectly for Mr. Lisicky, whose small writing desk overlooks the garden. The solitude has been productive for his latest project, a novel set

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mainly in a place that's based on the Pines.

“In P-town I always felt I was missing something while I was inside writing,” he said.

“Here, I know I'm not missing anything.”

Mr. Doty added, “The silence here, I think, is deeper than just about anywhere.” And then, noting the tinny beat of Madonna's “Secret” in the not-so-far-off distance, he said,

“Although not today, of course.”

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