



UNLOCKING *the*  
ADIRONDACKS





**Left:** Nick Politi at Camp Rush, on Upper St. Regis Lake. **Top and bottom:** He sold Upper Village at Eagle Nest, in Blue Mountain Lake, and Camp Joyland, built in Lake Placid in 1904 for Victor Herbert. **Right:** Politi recently listed an estate on Lake Placid's Adirondak Loj Road, once owned by golfer Craig Wood, winner of the 1941 Masters Tournament.



**F**rom Camp Rush's boathouse, Nick Politi looks out over Upper St. Regis Lake, the water still, an iconic Idem sailboat anchored nearby, motionless.

Politi loves this spot. The view probably hasn't changed much over the course of 134 years, when the Great Camp was built. Water, forest and peaks in the distance—it's the complete Adirondack package. Politi brokered Camp Rush's sale two years ago, and he can point out other showstoppers hugging the shoreline that he's also sold: Camp Dancing Bear and Camp Woodmere. He just finalized the sale of another nearby camp for more than \$13 million, the highest price ever for a boat-access-only property in the Adirondack Park.

Politi grew up in Lake Placid, so he knows this region's waters and history. He also grew up in a real estate office. His dad, Roby, bought Merrill L. Thomas





Politi sold the 1920s-era Camp Hilgarth, built on the western shore of Lake Placid. Above is the estate's four-slip boathouse.

in 1983, a year after Nick was born. Being surrounded by “my dad and his great agents,” says Nick, meant an education not just in sales, but in understanding the background of the park’s properties, and the people who built and owned them.

After college, Nick moved to New Jersey and worked as a sales agent with K. Hovnanian Homes—a national public home builder—until 2010, when his dad was diagnosed with lymphoma and asked him to move home to join the family business. “My dad still comes to the office every day—he’s a mentor and his insight into business relationships is critical.”

Merrill L. Thomas has positioned itself as the leader in Adirondack waterfront sales, most of those properties, like Camp Rush or Camp Topridge on Upper St. Regis, that are feats of craftsmanship—extraordinary getaways deep in what was, in many cases, still howling wilderness. Classic examples of this include Pine Tree Point’s pagoda Tea House and Camp Katia’s 1890s grotto-like octagonal boulder boathouse.

But there’s also the human history, says Nick. “We talk about the Vanderbilts and the Rockefellers—they’re a part of the story of these places.” When you come across “real estate that blows your mind and is impressive in every aspect, you try to find people who will continue that property’s legacy. So much time and effort and mon-

ey has been put into keeping these places going—you just want to see them last forever.”

He adds, “There’s an opportunity for a new written history on these camps. Who are the next Vanderbilts and Rockefellers? Who will be the next stewards of these places?” These, often new Adirondackers—“some of the most successful people in the world”—will invest in keeping lake traditions and Great Camps alive, he explains, but they’ll also care about and support the park’s environment and its communities.

Nick says he’s seen “a lot of market fluctuations through the years. The tragedy of 9/11 changed the landscape of real estate here. More and more people came up. Then there was the market crash of 2008—until about 2018 you had to find creative ways to sell homes.” The pandemic in 2020 “was an insane time for the Adirondack Park for real estate—I’d never seen anything like it. In 2024 things have remained strong with low inventory levels.” He says real-estate trends show that as blistering temperatures, forest fires and severe storms overtake much of the country, the Adirondack Park is seen as an oasis. “It’s cooler here, with lower humidity.” Certainly that’s the case this summer morning at Camp Rush, where you’d want a sweatshirt or a blanket while drinking your coffee by the lake.

There were five agents in Roby Politi’s early days at Merrill Thomas; today there are 41. In 2022 the Politis partnered with Gillis Realty, Inc., based in Tupper Lake. That expansion—with Rob and Lisa Gillis on board and still operating from Tupper—has furthered Merrill Thomas’s reach. “Exciting things are happening in Tupper Lake,” says Nick. “The area is doing so well.”

So are other places. Recent sales include Camp Watch Rock, on Long Lake; Camp Forestmere, in Paul Smiths; Big Rock, on Upper Saranac Lake; Upper Village at Eagles Nest, in Blue Mountain Lake; Camp Asulykit, on Lake Placid; and Camp Two Pines, on Kiwassa Lake. All are multi-million-dollar properties, though Nick has a listing for a sprawling estate on Adirondak Loj Road, in Lake Placid, that’s on the market for \$28.5 million and will set a record when it sells. The property was once owned by golfer Craig Wood, winner of the 1941 Masters Tournament, and later by George Holley, who invented the Holley Carburetor. Holley’s friend Thomas Edison helped construct a hydropower dam on the West Branch of the Ausable River, which flows through the property. The dam is a marvel that continues to power the estate to this day.

There are numerous other incredible properties in the Adirondacks that are unlisted because, says Nick, sellers want “a high level of confidentiality.”

Holding the keys to so many places with storied pasts and connecting them for their preservation “is an honor,” says Nick, and real estate “is a passion—it’s what I love to do.” And now, as he walks away from the water’s edge on this perfect morning, he adds, “Sometimes I feel like I’m living a vacation.”

See all of Merrill L. Thomas’s listings as well as vacation rentals at [adirondackestates.com](http://adirondackestates.com).

### Lake Placid

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### Tupper Lake

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