FOR more than 25 years, Anita Diamant was enchanted by a 19th-century farmhouse she regularly passed while holidaying at Rockport, Massachusetts, on the US east coast.

Then one day, she peeked inside and knew she had a story. The result is the novel The Boston Girl, a first-hand account of Jewish girl Addie Baum, including her time at the women's holiday centre Rockport Lodge in the early 20th century.

“I looked in the windows from the porch and it looked like the house was ready for the girls: the dining chairs were set up around the table, there was blue willow crockery, and the parlour had a piano in it,” says the author of the 1997 bestseller The Red Tent.

The Boston Girl opens with an eerie detail, Addie telling her life story to her granddaughter. Addie starts her story in 1913, as a 15-year-old.

The youngest of three daughters of poor Russian Jewish immigrants, Addie yearns for more education — against her parents’ wishes.

A rare highlight for Addie is the prominence of women’s lives and lifestyles, which had been given to Harvard University in the past few decades.

Addie’s voice and completed years in photos, while many poems and scrapbooks created by the young holiday-makers gave the author insight into developing her characters, including Addie and her best friend Filipomena.

After researching at Harvard, Diamant realised her main focus. Diamant began researching in 2009 and bought in 1906 and used for nearly going to be the novel’s cause she didn’t plan to write a story that her granddaughter wants to tell.

From the collection Diamant was based on, by Diamant says. “I kept rewriting about her own choices,” Diamant wrote. The Red Tent while a journalist. After many rejections, it was accepted by an agent and its word-of-mouth success has changed the author’s life because fiction has become her focus.

“When I was growing up, there was a huge absence of stories about women’s lives through history,” she says.

In The Boston Girl, these people are not queens or saints of regular human beings. Hopefully, we can learn from the lessons of their lives.”

Anita Diamant, author of The Boston Girl, which charts the long life story of an intelligent woman

**FICTION**

**THE POSSIBILITIES**

Kauí Hart Hemmings

Randon House, $33

Reviewer: Carmine Henry

Kauí Hart Hemmings made her name literally off the back of the George Clooney-starring film The Descendants, based on her book of the same name. And if you enjoyed that, you’ll probably also enjoy this one with its dash of quirky family drama and off beat, darkish humour.

Sari St John, who lives in the upstairs side town of Breckenridge in Colorado, lost her 22-year-old son Cully in an avalanche three months ago. She’s trying to get back to work as a host on a local television show, but can’t quite get her head around the silliness of it. She lives with her aging father and has been seeing a bit more of Cully’s dad, Billy. Into this mix comes Kit, a girl who initially offers to shovel snow off her driveway. She has some secrets to reveal adding to Sarah’s growing realisation that there was much more going in Cully’s life than she knew.

Grief and moving on are twin themes of this warmly written, and unusually not overly sentimental, novel about what happens after a loved one dies. **Verdict: Rather quietly**