

# A Place in History

*A son of the South honors the heritage of his Martha's Vineyard home with his precise attention to the island's architectural past.*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL PARTENIO | ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN: DUDLEY CANNADA  
BUILDER: MAGGIE WHITE, HOB KNOB CONSTRUCTION | WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY STACY KUNSTEL



Architect Dudley Cannada does not take history lightly. When renovating or adding onto homes for

clients, he's quite likely to bypass the drafting table for days of research at the local historical society. When it came to remaking a vacation home for himself and his partner, Russell Bridges, in the Martha's Vineyard village of Edgartown, the pressure to maintain a certain architectural look was almost palpable. "Edgartown is not a place for modernity;

it's a place for historic shapes and forms," Cannada says. | Set on a busy street, the weathered 1830s house, originally a mariner's cottage, had withered under years of



AN OUTDOOR LIVING  
SPACE TUCKED UNDER AN  
UPSTAIRS ADDITION IS A  
FAVORITE GATHERING PLACE  
FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY.



COMFORTABLE FURNISHINGS AND A NEUTRAL PALETTE DEFINE THE LIVING ROOM, WITH TOUCHES OF BLUE AND WHITE TRANSFERWARE ADDING A SHOT OF COLOR. FACING PAGE: THE BUFFET TABLE IN THE ENTRANCE HALL SITS AGAINST A BACKDROP OF paneled walls marked by an antique mirror, bird prints and an architectural cornice.



neglect by a series of absentee owners. Cannada, who had completed a historical renovation of an eighteenth-century Edgartown home a few years earlier, saw it as an opportunity to create something more significant, a task most buyers wouldn't have had the vision to tackle. "We purchased it as a vacation home for weekends and summers," says the architect. He and Bridges make their primary home in Washington, D.C., where Bridges is a physician and Cannada has his own architecture firm.

The house's tattered cedar shingles defied the linen-white crispness that defines most of Edgartown, and its original style had been compromised by an 1850s addition and another set of rambling rooms that were added in the 1950s. Down came the 1950s addition immediately after Cannada and Bridges purchased the house. Dormers

sprouted from the second story of the original structure, creating more space and light in the four upstairs bedrooms that their families were ready to fill come warm weather.

## Disappointed with an inauspicious entrance that opened

directly into the kitchen, Cannada added ten feet to the front of the house, creating a long, wide entry hall that connects the first-floor public spaces. "I believe that the space you enter through the front door establishes the scale and tone for the entire house," says Cannada. "The views in either direction through the living room or kitchen and on through the windows tell you how the



house feels and relates to the garden. I am a great believer in tying the important rooms together with generous spaces that facilitate flow. The hall is not only the reception hall, but it is also the connector between all the rooms and an important space in its own right."

It's a different treatment than the typical center-hall colonial that many in the Northeast inhabit, but something that, growing up in Mississippi, Cannada was familiar with. "This is quite contrary to the traditional utilitarian New England approach to entrance halls, and exactly what I like about the traditional Southern plan, where the hall is often the largest room and serves as the main living area," he says.

Further defining the home's entry, Cannada punctuated the exterior with ogee arches, an unusual choice for Edgartown, but one not without historical precedent. The arches,

which have generous curves that culminate in a sharp point, originated in Islamic culture but were adapted in Europe, some say as early as the fourteenth century. "They were used in Edgartown in Greek Revival and Victorian houses," says Cannada. He carried the shape inside, using an ogee arch carving in the center of the living room mantel.

"Everything about Martha's Vineyard buildings dictates convention," the architect says. "Nothing is more out of place here than structures that are not consistent with historical shapes and styles. Historical shapes, roof pitches and a limited material selection create the magic that is Edgartown. Brick or stone houses with the wrong windows break the spell. Here you have to nuance any 'statement' you may want to make."

Cannada worked with the existing structure, using the



PART OF THE ADDITION TO THE HOUSE, THE DINING ROOM LEADS TO A SUN PORCH JUST BEYOND THE FRENCH DOORS. *FACING PAGE:* THE WIDE ENTRY HALL AND FLARED STAIRCASE ARE ATYPICAL OF DESIGN ON MARTHA'S VINEYARD. CANNADA ADMITS THEY ARE SOUTHERN CHARACTERISTICS.





original volumes and roof pitches to establish the scale of the house. In keeping with early Martha's Vineyard houses, he kept windows to consistent sizes on each floor. About the home's detail, Cannada says, "The exterior and interior detailing I did is just traditional Colonial Revival with a light touch."

The new front porch, arches and dormers gave the house the personality it had previously lacked. Cannada and Bridges also painted the entire house white, adding clapboards to the street-side facade. "The painted clapboard front is another Cape Cod conceit, which indicates a higher style of more affluent owners," says Cannada. "In Edgartown originally, everything was shingled. When people had enough money to put on airs they put clapboards on. Rarely would you see clapboards on all four sides."

Though the lot is small, Cannada deftly maneuvered an outdoor living space underneath the upstairs addition. Here, a giant white painted fireplace serves as a favorite gathering point. Accessed from the kitchen and family room through French doors, the space is just two steps





OPEN TO THE KITCHEN, THE INFORMAL FAMILY ROOM WITH ITS CASUAL WOVEN FURNISHINGS BECOMES THE CENTER OF ACTIVITY IN THE EVENING. FACING PAGE TOP: SIMPLE V-GROOVE BOARD PANELS KITCHEN WALLS, WHILE THE WHITE SUBWAY TILE BACKSPLASH ADDS SHEEN AND TEXTURE. FACING PAGE BOTTOM: HOMEOWNER AND ARCHITECT DUDLEY CANNADA.

from poolside. Cannada tucked the pool into the back corner of the property, creating diagonal views from the pool to the open porch and keeping part of the back and all of the side yard open and grassy.

The architect credits his builder with making the eleven-month renovation and new construction go smoothly. "I was her first client," says Cannada of Maggie White, owner of Hob Knob Construction as well as an Edgartown inn of the same name. "As an architect he was a great first client," says Maggie. "Dudley's a stickler for details. He has a very specific style and sensitivity toward architecture. He's very precise and historically correct. It's almost intellectual how it's studied, and he has a very developed sense of how things are to look."

That specificity flowed inside, where khaki walls and white trim unify the downstairs rooms. Shots of preppy blue and white transferware provide color and pattern throughout the living room, entrance hall and kitchen. The pieces, some new, others old, are antique and auction house finds. Clusters of jars and bowls along with large platters,

most of which are Portuguese, provide the decorative elements in the subdued interior. Where he wanted more color, Cannada chose earthy greens and natural woods to create an elegant, in-town sophistication.

## Inside and out, the house blends seamlessly, although

not unnoticeably, into the fabric of the village. Cannada considers himself a "town" person and likes that he and Bridges can walk from their home to stores and coffee-houses. He particularly loves being able to hear the bells of the Old Whaling Church.

"In Edgartown you're limited by the vocabulary you can use for a house," Cannada says. "There aren't many materials you can use beyond what people have used over the years. We're not in the historic district, but I certainly didn't want to go stirring the pot." **NEH**

**RESOURCES** For more information about this home see page 244.