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A PAIR OF LONE STAR
TRANSPLANTS **BRING
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TO A HISTORIC SUMMER
HOME ON NANTUCKET

BY AMY ELBERT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN BESSLER
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Working from Texas, the Fabachers coordinated with Nantucket architect Lisa Botticelli to update the mechanical systems, renovate the kitchen and baths, and make exterior improvements. The footprint of the 3,200-square-foot house remained the same, however, and rooms stayed in the same basic configuration.

Midway through the two-year renovation, the Fabachers moved from Texas to Connecticut, and tracked down Nancy Serafini, an interior designer whose work they had admired in *Traditional Home*. "We called her Boston office and found she had a home in Nantucket, too," Mary Helen recalls. Their work relationship quickly evolved into friendship as Mary Helen and Serafini traveled to thrift shops, design studios, and high-end antiques stores throughout the Northeast. Their goals were to

Left: The Fabachers celebrate Texas with a star-studded library carpet. **Bottom left:** Rawley curls up in a living room chair. **Right:** Mary Helen Fabacher sits with Rawley near a half-wall between the family and dining rooms. Mousse, a chocolate Lab, keeps them company. **Below:** A cow cutout keeps the dining room mood light. **Bottom right:** The renovated kitchen's painted cabinets and floor exude a vintage feel. **Preceding pages:** A seafaring theme in the front hall pays homage to the house's heritage. ■ Crewel curtains and a Wilton carpet inspired the living room palette.



The first clue to the homeowners' dual loyalties is the Texas state flag waving from the top of their Nantucket clapboard house—a bit of a disconnect in this iconic Yankee whaling town dominated by sailboat masts and church steeples. The flag unobtrusively announces the Massachusetts vacation home of Lone Star transplants Mary Helen and Michael Fabacher, who, once they experienced the magic of Nantucket, couldn't stay away.

The Fabachers had vacationed for several years in Nantucket and were living in Houston when they heard that an 1802 ship captain's house was for sale there. "We loved its location in the center of town. The house is a wonderful 18th-century survivor set on a deep lot with a great backyard," Mary Helen says. "We were sold before we ever set foot in the house."

Once inside, Mary Helen and Michael were delighted to find 200-year-old pine plank floors, 12-foot-high ceilings, wide classic moldings and wainscoting, mantels, and original doors and hardware. Mary Helen insisted on preserving all of it—even if (as the builder warned) the doors were crooked.

find furnishings and fabrics that would complement the Fabachers' existing antiques and furniture, creating an inviting summer home for themselves, their two college-aged children, plus family and friends. One memorable outing to an antiques warehouse yielded a big metal cow—likely a dairy business sign—that now hangs in the dining room. “When we saw this cow, we both burst out laughing. We had to have it,” says Serafini.

The designer also tackled structural issues, suggesting that the wall between the dining room and family room be replaced with a half-wall to add light and breathing room. “The house has a historical feel but is still modern and convenient,” Mary Helen says. “We’ve lived in a lot of houses; we’re always looking for the perfect one. I think we found it here.”

Architect: Lisa Botticelli **Interior designer:** Nancy Serafini

For more information, see sources on page 148

Below: Designer Nancy Serafini covered walls in the master bedroom with a paper-backed striped toile. The bedskirt, bed pillows, and shades were also fashioned from the toile. **Right:** A rear porch on the cedar shingle house offers a cool place to enjoy the seaside breezes and views of the home's lavish gardens. The house was added to over the generations, but the widow's walk at the top is probably original.

