



*by the numbers*

1746  
Year Built

3  
Previous Owners

\$185  
Price Paid for the Property in 1872

4  
Rooms in the Original House

1  
Documented Ghost

# Third Time's the Charm

After restoring two historic homes, a Nantucket couple puts their hard-earned know-how to use on a character-rich keeper.

*written by* RHONDA REINHART *photographs by* DAVID LAND *styling by* ROBERT RUFINO



Vanilla Milkshake  
Benjamin Moore

*add charm with...*  
**Horsehair Plaster**

Homeowners Elizabeth and Peter Georgantas wanted their home's new plaster walls to look as close to the original horsehair plaster as possible, so they worked with a restorationist and went through seven iterations before landing on the right look. The room's decor is also a mix of past and present, including an antique trunk paired with a new sofa. Elizabeth found the vintage macramé art piece at local antiques shop Atlantic Nantucket.

Interior designer Elizabeth Georgantas and husband Peter (*livegeorgantas.com*) had already restored two other historic houses in the Town of Nantucket when Peter happened upon the property that would one day become their forever vacation home. Built in 1746, the house—which sits on a former fish-drying lot—had fallen into major disrepair. If anything, though, that only intrigued the couple, who divide their time between Nantucket and Boston. “We didn’t want to buy something that someone else had put their heart into renovating,” says Elizabeth. “We wanted to do that.”

At times, however, the couple got more than they bargained for. “Remember the Tom Hanks movie *The Money Pit*?” Elizabeth says. “That was literally our house.” The almost 300-year-old structure, which included several additions that had been built over the years, hadn’t been updated since the 1940s or ’50s. Plus,



powderpost beetles had infiltrated the woodwork, disintegrating many of the beams, and the original plaster walls crumbled at the touch. “We wanted a project, and we got ourselves a project!” Elizabeth says. “It took three years of actual blood, sweat, and tears.”

In addition to replacing the damaged beams and plaster, the couple patched the wood floors where needed and installed a foundation, as the house previously sat only on a collection of loose stones. When they needed to replace any wood, they were careful to bring in reclaimed pieces close to the age of the original. The Georgantas, who have two teen daughters, also created a basement stretching the entire footprint of the house, where they could add a new gym, laundry room, family room, and guest rooms while still maintaining the 18th-century feel of the home’s upper floors.

“To take an old house and rip the history out of it and make it something it doesn’t want to be is really sad,” Elizabeth says. “We felt strongly about preserving the past and recreating it where previous owners had removed it.”

**Elizabeth is drawn to nautical antiques: Vintage ship dioramas and sailor’s woolies—embroidered ship portraits that date back to the 1800s—line the entry (left), and Nantucket lightship baskets add local lore in the living room (above).**



add charm with...

### Vintage Barstools

Because the kitchen wing of the house, which had also included a small laundry room and bathroom, was added in the mid-1900s, there were few historic details to be preserved, meaning the Georgantas had more leeway with their reno options. Removing a small upstairs bedroom created a double-height ceiling in the room and exposed the original wood beams, which along with the beaten-up dark wood floors and vintage stools provide a rustic counterpart to the white walls and oversize island.



THERE IS A GOOD STORY BEHIND THAT...

### Chandelier

When the contractors forgot to install one of the glass bottles, Peter had the bright idea to add his own special touch: a Bud Light bottle. “It’s been his joke that this was his one design contribution to the house,” Elizabeth says, “so I left it.”



*add charm with...*  
**Cross Beams**

To infuse some airiness to the dining room (below), the Georgantases relied on a bit of visual trickery. By removing the original plaster to expose the purlins, or cross beams, they made the ceiling feel taller without actually raising it. The antique English refectory table gets plenty of use during the family's frequent pizza parties. The newly installed reclaimed beams in the breakfast nook (right) mimic the exposed beams that are original to other parts of the home.

Elizabeth covered the custom banquettes in faux leather for easy cleanup.



When the house was lifted to add the foundation, the fireplace crumbled to the ground. They rebuilt it by hand, brick by brick, and added a pizza oven to the dining room side.



**THERE IS A GOOD STORY  
 BEHIND THAT...**  
**Butler's Pantry**

The rich wood cabinetry was salvaged from the library of an 1800s Boston brownstone. The vintage daffodil glassware gives a nod to the Nantucket Daffodil Festival, "an absolute favorite" event of Elizabeth's.

add charm with...  
**A Canopy Bed**

A low ceiling in the guest bedroom didn't deter Elizabeth from aiming high with the bed. Crafted by a father-and-son team in North Carolina, the Sheraton-style bed was made the same way their family has made them for generations. "My husband thought I was out of my mind," Elizabeth says, "but I think the canopy bed makes the ceiling feel taller, and it feels authentic, like it was always there." A coat of white paint prevents the ceiling beams from competing with the bed's dark brown arches.



*"We felt strongly about preserving the past and recreating it where previous owners had removed it."*

—Homeowner Elizabeth Georgantas



add charm with...  
**Statement Antiques**

The homeowners left their bedroom pretty much as is, cracks in the beams and all, then decorated the space with a chinoiserie-style antique decoupage bed. The bathroom (left) required more work, though. To complete the space, Elizabeth turned an antique dresser into a double vanity. When she found the carved-wood mirror in a Boston showroom, she didn't know where it was going to go, but she knew she had to have it: "It was one of those things that said, 'You have to own me. We'll figure this out together,'" she says.

