

Of Shells and Ships and Sealing-Wax: *A Collector's House on Pease's Point Way*

LIKE THE VAST MAJORITY of ship-shape, clap-boarded shingled houses that line the streets of Edgartown, this one on Pease's Point Way has about it a certain patina of history not unlike the mellow glow of a wooden bannister rubbed by generations of hands.

It was built in the second year of the Civil War, 1862, for William Chadwick who was a skilled blacksmith and craftsman. The war marked the end of the great days of the whaling captains and when the golden tide of whale oil slowly trickled out,

men like Chadwick's son, James Edward, looked elsewhere for their futures. James Edward went to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and returned to the Pease's Point Way house to marry Adelaide Cushing. He was a man of wide interests and great curiosity; she was a woman possessing a legendary green thumb (indeed her garden was the best in Edgartown and remained a favorite stop of the tour buses for years).

He made his money in supplying the Island towns and industries with coal and owned one of the five commercial wharfs in Edgartown.

With his affluence, James Edward intensified his antiquarian and anthropological studies, collecting whaling artifacts, shells from around the world, rare stamps and coins, wooden ship models, and early deeds and documents of Martha's Vineyard. His collection was no mere hodgepodge of curios spread about on the mantels and end tables — in fact it became so big that he built a museum room just to house it in display cases. When his daughter married, her husband expanded the shell collection into an additional room. Between the marvelous gardens, and the large museum displays of ships and shells, it's not hard to see why tourists were so attracted.

The fate of all these artifacts was a strange one. Willed to the Dukes County Historical Society in the thirties by James Edward, the collections were to be at his wife's use for her lifetime. In time, this privilege was passed to the daughter and the items finally came into the possession of the Historical Society only last year. Some of the best pieces, such as the early wooden tools and crafting devices probably used by the old blacksmith, are on display in the Society's museum headquarters in Edgartown.

Today the house, emptied of its curios, has a spacious

feel that is uncommon in a house of this age. The large display room with its fireplace makes for an exceptionally grand living room or "gathering room." Connected to the gathering room is a den-sized room which once must have held hundreds of shells. Both of these "museum rooms" border the sunny deck that is situated at the back of the house. There is access to the totally renovated kitchen from this deck, which makes it the



ideal spot for breakfasting and barbecuing. The formal dining room off the kitchen has built-in china cabinets; the sprawling first floor also includes a bedroom with private bath, a half-bath, and front parlor room, and a "music room."

The front staircase spirals up to a master suite overlooking the street, consisting of two connecting rooms and a bathroom. Behind the bath is a closet/storage room. Adjacent to the master suite is another bedroom, also with a private bath.

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