

## Home of the Week: Upstairs, Downstairs

Once a home for notable Annapolis families, inn is now a home away from home for visitors

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In a building owned by Marc and Maureen Lucas, a gesture as simple as passing under an interior arch transports you from the 20th century to at least the 19th century.



Shannon Lee Zirkle — The Capital

Marc Lucas, along with his wife Maureen, own the building which houses the State House Inn, which faces State Circle, and Ristorante La Piccola Roma, which faces Main Street.

### [Home of the Week: State House Inn](#)

Marc and Maureen Lucas own the State House Inn on State Circle and overlooking Main Street.

That's the fun of exploring 25 State Circle, site of the State House Inn. Across four centuries, the building has been a home to generations of Annapolitans and the site of several businesses.

The part of the building facing State Circle is newer, added to an existing structure. The older section of the building, listed as 200 Main St., houses the 23-table Ristorante La Piccola Roma, rated among America's Top 1,000 restaurants in the 2008 Zagat guide.

The building is a blend of styles, reflecting the needs and tastes of its nearly two dozen owners through the centuries.

"The current building on Main Street was built around 1821 - that we know," said Marc D. Lucas, who owns and operates the inn and restaurant with his wife, Maureen. They purchased the building in 2007 from jeweler Ron George, a state delegate. Initially, the Lucases handled just the inn, but they have managed the busy restaurant, too, since the autumn of 2009. Its former chefs, brothers Jose and Ulices Ayala, were hired back by the Lucases after the restaurant's previous owner went out of business.

### **Downstairs, Main St.**

"A building was constructed in 1720, but there's no record of its demolition," Marc said. Between 1908 and 1913, a large addition was constructed that faced State Circle. It originally served as a saloon and restaurant. From the 1700s into the mid-1900s, the building housed a succession of families, some with familiar Maryland names. Among them was the son of a mayor, Dr. Abram Claude, who himself became a mayor through several terms.

A stroll on Chancery Lane, a brick walkway which runs alongside the building and links State Circle to Main Street, reveals the not-so-seamless union of the old building and its newer, 100-year-old addition. Midway along the lane, there is a visible demarcation in the American bond brickwork which rises to form the outline of a long-gone chimney on the building's side wall.

Legend has it this is the same walkway George Washington strolled through en route to a waiting drink at Reynolds Tavern after resigning his commission of commander in chief of the U.S. Army at the State House on Dec. 23, 1783.

Marc noted Main Street didn't always go by that name. In the 1930s it was still known as Church Street. During that period, the building housed the Capitol Restaurant, a popular lunch spot. A sign, "Tables for Ladies," was posted to encourage unescorted women to feel comfortable dining out.

### **Upstairs, State Circle**

A low wall and a hedge enclose a small brick courtyard at the entrance to the State House Inn. Two canvas umbrellas shade a pair of black wrought-iron tables and chairs set on either side of the pocket-sized oasis.

The street number 25 on one of the porch's Doric columns is another accident of history. The inn is actually tucked between 14 and 18 State Circle. The Marion Warren Gallery is located at No. 14, and No. 18 houses the Maryland Federation of Art. No surprise, this anomaly drives Google Maps and Global Positioning Systems crazy.

The building has a slate-shingled mansard roof rising 2 1/2 stories on State Circle and 3 1/2 stories on Main Street. The facade of the inn is a brick veneer, currently painted a buttery yellow. The sash windows on either side of the bright red front door have black wooden shutters, and a white wooden porch runs the length of the Colonial Revival addition. Its handful of Adirondack chairs looks inviting.

"The inn is painted in the colors of the Maryland State flag," Marc pointed out. "In the past, it's been a few colors, including mauve."

In addition to his innkeeping and restaurant management responsibilities, Marc is an actuary and real estate investor in his civilian life. A 1991 Naval Academy graduate, he is an active member of the Navy Reserve. He's been called back to duty three times to teach math courses at the academy, and is currently on campus several days a week.

Marc and Maureen live with their five children in a historic home on Duke of Gloucester Street. The kids are John, 9; Max, 8; Sam, 5; Lauren, 3; and Marie Alessandra, 1. The older three attend St. Mary's Elementary School.

## **Inside the inn**

Stepping inside the State House Inn, the center hall Colonial looks a little like an art gallery. Marc explained that one of the inn's previous owners operated a gallery in West Annapolis and installed a number of gorgeous pieces of art throughout the building. They remained behind when it was sold.

Off to the right is a salon, a place for the inn's guests to relax and fix themselves a cup of coffee, tea or hot chocolate. There is a refrigerator and a microwave, handy for a quick meal. Comfortable chairs and sofas are mingled with vintage side tables. For a bigger meal, La Piccola Roma offers room service during the hours it is open.

The door to Marc's office is behind the main stairway to the right. Walking down the hall to the Queen Mary guest room, a visitor passes under the arch that marks the original and newer sections of the building.

The Queen Mary Room is one of three rooms in the building with king-size beds and a Jacuzzi. A fourth room has a king-size bed and a full tub. Another room has a queen and double bed, and the final two have a single queen-size bed.

Each bed is covered with a snowy quilted coverlet, evoking images of a more homespun era. In addition to fine art, the rooms feature vintage or antique sideboards, tables, chairs or benches.

All the guest rooms have antique armoires, too.

"Years ago, the City of Annapolis taxed the number of rooms you had in a house. A closet was considered a room, so people bought armoires instead of building closets," Marc explained. "On house tours, you see armoires in a lot of the houses as a result."

A few rooms also have elegantly carved mantels dating from the Victorian era. The fireplaces, though handsome, are not currently in working order. That's on the "to-do" list.

Every doorway and window is framed by fluted molding accented on the upper edges with a classical square rosette.

Each of the rooms also offers a peek onto the bustling scenery of 21st-century Annapolis. The St. Anne's Room, with its hand-carved headboard, provides a picture-perfect view of its namesake Episcopal church on Church Circle.

The Prince William Room has a spectacular bird's-eye view of the capitol's dome.

"It's really striking at night, when the dome is lit up," Marc said.

Meanwhile, from a window in the Lord Calvert Room, you can look down Main Street. The harbor and the bay glint in the sunlight.

"You can see all the way to Europe from this window," Marc joked. Almost.

The State House Inn's Web site is [statehouseinn.com](http://statehouseinn.com).