

FEATURING THE FINEST ESTATES OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

ANNAPOLIS HOME

Downtown Classic

KITCHENS TO SAVOR

ARCHITECTURE AWARD WINNERS

PROS SHARE FAVORITE PRODUCTS

WHAT'S NEW IN 2020!

CRITIC'S REVIEW: CARROL'S CREEK

Vol. 11, No. 1 2020

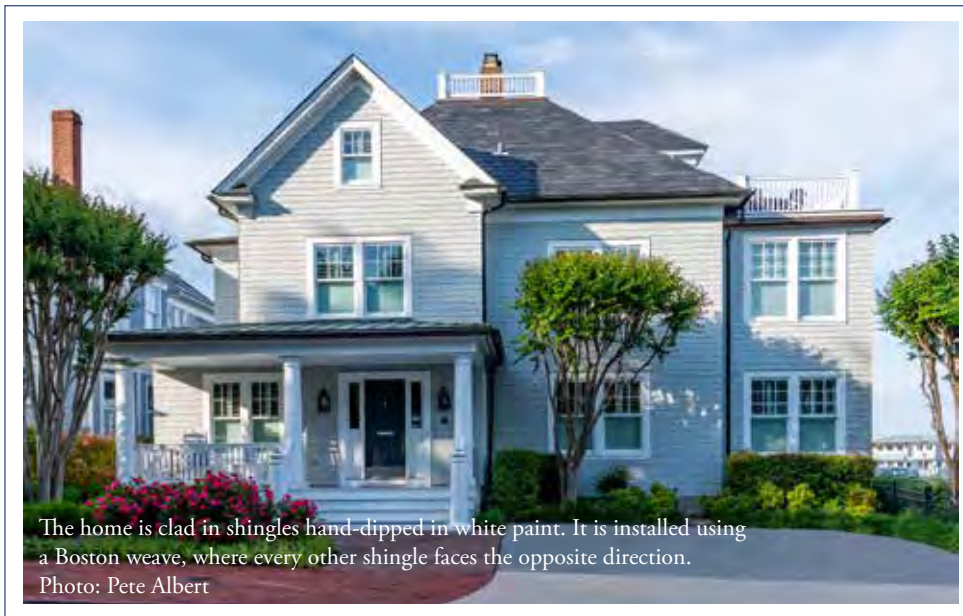




The American Four-square overlooks two of Annapolis' busiest streets: Duke of Gloucester and Compromise Street.
Photo: Pete Albert

DOWNTOWN *Classic*

BY KYMBERLY TAYLOR
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETE ALBERT & GWIN HUNT



This American Four-square anchoring the corner of the Duke of Gloucester Street and Compromise Street began as a plain kit house built around 1912, one of thirteen lining the same block, recalls Annapolis architect D. Wayne Speight. Times were quieter then. The Eastport Bridge was operated by hand, and the Bay Bridge nonexistent, with a ferry operating between the western and eastern shores.

Through the ingenuity of architecture, fine custom building, and interior design, this aluminum house has become one of the most visible and beautiful homes in Annapolis. It is adjacent to the Annapolis Yacht Club, recently rebuilt after a devastating fire. Compromise Street is a powerful block the two landmarks, one

private, the other corporate, define Annapolis' yachting and vernacular traditions.

Over the years, the nondescript house took on different forms and inhabitants, at one point becoming apartments and at another housing an engineer named Emil Knobs. Knobs was well known in Annapolis as "The Zinnia Man." In fact, there is a memorial plaque to this day honoring Knobs on the fence at the Marriot across



the street. Knobs, an engineer, according to folklore, kept watch from the first floor with a ship's wheel, gearshift and horn. He would entertain his guests by blowing the horn and tricking the bridge operator into opening the Spa Creek Bridge! In 1998, the home went through a massive remodel. Reconfigured by

In the sunroom, a camel back sofa is artfully upholstered in taupe with complimentary patterns. Photo: Pete Albert







Heavy beams, built-ins, newel post and trim, originally cherry, are painted a fresh white, a move that transforms the room's personality. Photo: Gwin Hunt



Photo: Gwin Hunt

Speight, it gained a front porch, widow’s walk and third-floor deck. In a recent remodel, in 2019, the structure was fine-tuned and its interior remodeled. Lynbrook of Annapolis performed the work both times.

In the first massive makeover, Lynbrook removed load bearing exterior walls and inserted large steel beams. A porch was added to the front façade, front door re-located, cedar shingles added, and every inch transformed and updated.

Lynbrook’s John Sasenick, project supervisor, gets right to the point when summarizing recent changes in 2019, “We had to straighten out the house,” he says. He explains that builders look at houses in ways that ordinary people do not. Over time, a home will shift, sink, and settle, sometimes imperceptibly. We look at the shadows, he says, “they don’t lie.” A roofline may appear straight, but cast a crooked shadow, he explains. Using a “string test” to ensure even lines, he and the Lynbrook team “crisped it up” by evening out the roofline, adjusting gutter boards and fascias.

Inside, they built a fireplace mantle, made the library smaller and added a powder room. The homeowner changed out the floors, substituting wide plank oak for cherry, and added a new master bath, with a stone shower and heated stone floors. Catherine Lowe assisted with the tile installation. Melissa Sakell of Kenwood Kitchens performed the kitchen remodel.

Serendipitously, Fitzsimmons knew this home well. When she was sixteen, she strolled by daily, on her way home from St. Mary’s High School. “I went to Saint Mary’s High School and loved it then... It may have been in my destiny to be a designer,” says Fitzsimmons, principal of her own firm for over 20 years. Fast forward, little did she know that she would be working on the design of the very same house, years later.

And, working with the homeowner, a pre-existing client, from Belvoir Farms, she created a “classic traditional look” using paint to create a “fresh new perspective.”

“We said goodbye to brown and replaced dark colors with light ones, even painting the massive cherry beams white,” which made a significant difference, she says.

Fitzsimmons, to unify the home, used taupe tones. “It’s a nice neutral and it’s not too yellow... I’m not a huge gray fan. It is warmer than gray and not as syrupy as camel,” she explains. She covered the sunroom couch twice before using taupe neutrals. “I’ve covered that three times and it is so still clearly wonderful... it’s tailored, it’s classic... it’s a little camelback sofa—how can you beat that?”

She purchased some unusual furnishings, such as an extra-wide secretary made in Indiana, a freestanding screen made of three

Floor to ceiling windows open onto the Eastport Bridge and Spa Creek, and also overlook Compromise Street. Photo: Pete Albert



The designer freshened everything up with a fern green on walls and crisp linen fabrics. Photo: Gwin Hunt



Photo: Pete Albert



The interior designer had recently remodeled the owner's previous kitchen. They recreated it, using same countertops, colors, cabinetry, and backsplash with dark green marble and beige background. Photo: Pete Albert



different-sized doors, and painted other existing pieces, such as the credenza from a previous dining room. She had the commode upstairs faux finished it in taupe and added a patina of black glaze.

She noticed, even as a teenager, that the home lifted her spirits when she walked by. This sensitivity, our psychological response to the material environment, is at the heart of much of her design today. “How a house looks affects you. How a room looks affects you,” she explains.

A stroll through this home reveals her philosophy at its best—light-filled rooms have buoyant palettes, composed not so much of color, but a careful execution of paint, patinas, fabrics, textures, and fixtures. As one moves about the space, there is a visual timing a credenza gleams one moment and is quieted by a taupe sofa, later offset by a glistening fixture. The elegant cadence Fitzsimmons achieves is what distinguishes this home from all others.

Its current owners bought the house because they could walk everywhere. They have chosen well. This lucky couple is, literally, steps from downtown and Eastport and, especially during the boat shows, in the center of it all. **AH**

CUSTOM BUILDER: John Sasenick, Lynbrook of Annapolis, lynbrookofannapolis.com, Annapolis, Maryland | INTERIOR DESIGNER: Gina Fitzsimmons, Fitzsimmons Design Associates, fitzsimmonsdesign.com, Annapolis, Maryland | ARCHITECTS: SPEIGHT Studio Architects, speightstudio.com, Annapolis, Maryland (1998 renovation); Scott L. Rand, AIA, Scott Rand Architects, scottrandarchitects.net, Annapolis, Maryland (Most recent renovation) | KITCHEN DESIGN: Melissa Sakell, Kenwood Kitchens, kenwoodkitchens.com, Annapolis, Maryland | TILE: In Home Stone, inhomestone.com, Annapolis, Maryland | TILE INSTALLATION: Catherine M. Lowe, ASID, Interior Planning & Design, interiorpd.com | FIREPLACE: Bay Stoves, baystoves.com, Edgewater, Maryland | BUILT-INS: East Coast Woodworks, eastcoastwoodworks.com, Stevensville, Maryland