



Mi Casa

Two new B&Bs arrive in the Museum District

By Terri L. Jones

Williamsburg has 13, Charlottesville has 11, even Lexington has seven. But despite its abundance of history and big old houses, Richmond had only five bed-and-breakfasts — until recently. Visitors can get a true neighborhood experience at two new B&Bs in the Museum District: One's already open and the other's on the way.

The Museum District Bed & Breakfast, which opened in October, is a gracious 1922 Colonial Revival at 2811 Grove Ave. It welcomes guests with a white-picket

fence and double-decker front porch, complete with de rigueur porch swing. Innkeeper Anna Currence, a former bookstore executive and retail turnaround specialist, chose to turn this home into a B&B because of its location. Not only is it across the street from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, it's also just a short walk from Carytown. "I just love the Museum District," says Currence. "It's like Georgetown or Old Town Alexandria without the [high] price tag."

The down comforters will make trav-



Maury Place at Monument, owned by Mac Pence (seated) and Jeff Wells, is currently being converted into a four-room B&B scheduled to open this fall.

elers feel "like they're visiting friends" and guests will choose four big or small pillows. Public rooms as well as the three suites, including accommodations in the carriage house out back, are furnished with the fruits of four decades of an-

tique collecting. From a bed in the front suite that's identical to Mark Twain's to a "Freudian" couch in the library, most of Currence's eclectic finds are from the '20s and feel right at home in the cozy B&B.

While Currence has worked hard to retain the home's original character, she also added modern amenities for comfort. Take the master suite's bath, where a tiled, walk-in shower/steam room with a double showerhead shares space with a brand-new claw-foot tub. And business travelers will be happy; each suite is equipped with cable and Wi-Fi.

Just a stone's throw away, Maury Place at Monument is currently under renovation and scheduled to open this fall at 3101 W. Franklin St., intersecting with Belmont Road. Where Currence's B&B is intentionally laid-back, at Maury Place, grand features like 12-foot decorative plaster ceilings, columned doorways, and marble surrounds on fireplaces provide travelers with a different sort of getaway.

Built in 1916 for a mere \$10,000, this London-style townhouse was purchased in 2007 by Mac Pence, president of Pence Auto Group, and his partner, attorney Jeff Wells, who will serve as full-time innkeeper. The previous owners included 12 pages of historical easements in the contract. "Anything we do to the interior has to be approved by the Department of Historic Resources," says Wells, who's working with general contractors Franko LaFratta Construction Inc.

From the palatial 29-foot-by-15-foot suite with sitting area and breakfast service, to the tucked-away maid's quarters, the four turn-of-the-century suites could've been plucked from the pages of an Edith Wharton novel — all rooms even have the original call buttons for the service staff. But if you're a bit homesick, Wells offers, only half jokingly, "you can have Chico (one of the inn's pooches) for 20 extra bucks a night."

Of course, accommodations are only half of the B&B equation. Both Currence and Wells are devoting almost as much



The Museum District Bed & Breakfast on Grove Avenue has three rooms including one in the carriage house out back. The master suite's bath (above) features a double-showerhead walk-in shower/steam room, plus a new claw-foot tub.

attention to their breakfast offerings. Currence is buying the freshest meats from nearby Belmont Butchery, and Wells is planning an herb garden to flavor his breakfast dishes.

Rates are \$175-\$275 for Maury Place and \$125-\$195 for the Museum District Bed & Breakfast. For more information visit www.MauryPlace.com or call 353-2717, or www.MuseumDistrictBB.com or call 359-2332.