

# Azalea Inn

217 East Huntingdon Street | Historic Savannah, Georgia USA 31401-5714  
Telephone 912-236-2707 | Toll Free 800-582-3823  
On the Internet [www.azaleainn.com](http://www.azaleainn.com)

Media Contact --  
Sandy Traub  
Spatior Storyline Marketing  
Telephone 912-232-2590  
Mobile 912-398-9828  
[straub@spatior.com](mailto:straub@spatior.com)

For Immediate Release \*\* Note Micheal is spelled “e” before “a”

## **Azalea Inn’s Historical Research Detects the Colonial Garden District in Historic Savannah, Georgia – the City Planted in a Forest Garden**

SAVANNAH GEORGIA [October 31, 2005] *In the urban forest of the Savannah historic district lies the colonial-era garden lands of Georgia’s first settlers. Patriarchal research for the Azalea Inn mansion, a historic district bed and breakfast inn in Savannah’s landmark district, uncovered a remnant history of the antebellum garden district (ca. 1733). Azalea Inn owners, Teresa and Micheal Jacobson disclose this not-talked-about Savannah garden short story, one which is more reflective than scandalous, if compared to John Berendt’s “Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil” depiction of Savannah.*

Known for its beautiful landscapes, gardens, indigenous flora, fauna and urban forests, there is an untold story of the settler gardens of colonial Savannah, Georgia. The nostalgic garden district pedigree of the Huntingdon Street mansion of Azalea Inn, with its own 19th century heritage gardens, introduces a garden story worth telling.

“It is understandable that prominent Savannahians, like mercantile executive and competitive yachtsman Captain Walter Coney, would choose to build his new residence along the wide, uncluttered streets of the colonial garden district. Before the turn of the century, new commercialization and rapid industrialization were underway in Savannah’s urban downtown, especially along “the Bay” and Broughton Street,” explains Teresa Jacobson. “Today Huntingdon Street is one of the most beautiful brick-cobbled streets in Savannah,” Teresa Jacobson continues.

Micheal and Teresa Jacobson, new property owners of the inn, wanted to know more about their Queen Anne Italianate mansion (ca. 1889), one of 1100 buildings in the National Landmark Historic District of Savannah, Georgia. The couple, parents of a Savannah College of Art and Design graduate, commissioned historian Joy Beall to research the original owner and the beautiful area of the Forsyth Park neighborhood. During her research, Mrs. Beall discovered that the Victorian-era mansion of Captain Walter K. Coney is built on lands of colonial Savannah’s original settler’s gardens – a Savannah garden district, if you will.

Today, the PBS show [Victory Garden](#) claims that gardening is today’s top pastime. However, for settlers arriving from England and Europe during the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century, family gardens and farms were necessities.

### **Background: Savannah’s Antebellum Gardens & Farms**

From 1733, the Georgia Trustees gave each male settler a tithing lot of 60 feet by 90 feet within the Town of Savannah. Begin at the Savannah River and travel to Oglethorpe Avenue and one will find the oldest urban settlement of the “first forty” lots. About 2 miles from the riverfront these settlers were assigned 5-acre-garden plots, plus farm plots of 44-and-7/8ths acres. The farm plots were set between what is now known as Gwinnett Street and DeRenne Avenue, which made the farm an easy ride from the home of the owner. Historian Walter J. Fraser, Jr., in his book entitled [Savannah the Old South](#) (Wormsloe Foundation Publications) references a “town-garden-farm lot” which was an inheritance conveyed to a female during the mid-1700s.

Page 1 of 4

Azalea Inn’s Historical Research Detects the Colonial Garden District in the City Planted in a Garden – Historic Savannah, Georgia

# Azalea Inn

[Info@AzaleaInn.com](mailto:Info@AzaleaInn.com)  
217 East Huntingdon Street | Historic Savannah, Georgia USA 31401-5714  
Telephone 912-236-2707 | Toll Free 800-582-3823  
On the Internet [www.azaleainn.com](http://www.azaleainn.com)

*Media Contact --*  
Sandy Traub  
Spatior Storyline Marketing  
Telephone 912-232-2590  
Mobile 912-398-9828  
[straub@spatior.com](mailto:straub@spatior.com)

The [Morovians](#)' account (ca. April 1735) reflects the importance of the colonial Savannah garden for the devote, university-bred men of Germany. Within five days of their arrival at the Savannah riverfront bluff "the five acre garden ... was surveyed, and work was immediately begun there, as it was just the season for planting corn.... About four acres of [one] garden [was] cleared in time for the first summer's crop of corn, which yielded them sixty bushels. They also raised some beans.... Every acre of land that was cleared and planted had to be securely fenced in, for cattle roamed in the woods, and ruined unprotected crops."

In the mid 1850s [Savannah](#) was the architectural center of the state. By 1872, the Savannah Cotton Exchange was one of only two places in the world where the price of cotton was quoted. The other place was Liverpool, England. Downtown architect [G. L. Norrman's Citizens Bank](#) (ca. 1895) had been built on Broughton and Bull Street, the site of today's SunTrust bank complex. The Central of Georgia Railroad was actively moving cotton between inland Georgia plantations and the port of Savannah, at the time recognized at the third largest port for cotton in the United States.

Following a trend towards highest and best land use, city planners formalized the repurposing of the colonists' garden and farm lands. On the east and west of Forsyth Place (today's Forsyth Park) are the 5-acre plots assigned to the colonists for gardens, including those of the Azalea Inn on Huntingdon Street -- named for England's Countess of Huntingdon, Lady Selina Shirley Hastings, a benefactor to Savannah's [Bethesda Orphanage](#) and [Phillis Wheatley](#), the first African American published poet.

In the New Orleans Garden District of Louisiana, large elegant mansions in Greek Revival, Italianate and Queen Anne Victorian architecture were initiated also in the 1850s by successful entrepreneurs — the "nouveau riche" of that time. Sadly, the Savannah colonial garden district has remained an untold story, until now.

## **Predilections to Gardening**

"This beautiful old mansion seems to encourage that we honor its heritage and carry on a legacy to be active in the Savannah garden scene. Jake and I had planned a 19<sup>th</sup> Century heritage garden before we knew of the mansion's legacy," concludes Teresa Jacobson. "Learning of its heritage makes our love swell for this old mansion and our Forsyth Park neighborhood."

With diligent efforts, today Savannah's rich landscape conveys still a cosmopolitan "cool, airy, and rural appearance" which one Savannah visitor described long ago. The international world-class city in a garden -- with its genteel, political, artesian, artistic and intellectual tapestry woven so complementarily together -- reflects nearly three centuries of diverse cultures, lifestyles, and forward-thinking momentum. With the exception of a few glitches of embarrassing modern-day thinking and destruction, the city's beauty today projects an enriched model

# Azalea Inn

217 East Huntingdon Street | Historic Savannah, Georgia USA 31401-5714  
Telephone 912-236-2707 | Toll Free 800-582-3823  
On the Internet [www.azaleainn.com](http://www.azaleainn.com)

Media Contact --  
Sandy Traub  
Spatior Storyline Marketing  
Telephone 912-232-2590  
Mobile 912-398-9828  
[straub@spatior.com](mailto:straub@spatior.com)

enlarged upon from world-famous city plans of British Parliamentarian James Oglethorpe and his colleague engineer surveyor, Colonel William Bull.

## About Azalea Inn

The historic Savannah bed and breakfast mansion of Azalea Inn is located in the Landmark Savannah Historic District within two walking blocks of Forsyth Park, the city's infamously verdant and captivating central park. Guests are invited to rendezvous where life is a celebration ... of the present and the past. Amid the breezy quietude of the Landmark Savannah Historic District's Huntingdon Street, relaxed southern comforts allure guests seeking casual Savannah charm. The historic inn's amenities include a southern U.S. cuisine full breakfast, courtyard garden pool, private parking, newly planted 19<sup>th</sup> century heritage garden, sociable rattan rockers under tree canopied balconies, and inviting porch verandahs. Each of the inn's 10 guest rooms features themed décor depicting Savannah's gardens, distinguished history, and fashionable lifestyle.

The Queen Anne Italianate urban manor (circa 1889), built on farm plots formerly designated for colonial gardening (ca. 1733 Georgia colonization) features original mantles and handsome craftsmanship from Savannah's Victorian era. The period was a time when cotton was king; the invention of the tabulating machine; Colombia phonograph; and changing attitudes about acceptable activities for women, which made sportswear popular for women, with such notable examples as the bicycling dress and the tennis dress acceptable. The mansion's original owner, the former Confederate blockade runner, robust sporting yachtsman and beloved mercantile executive, Walter K. Coney – a Savannah Cotton Exchange member, Georgia Militia Captain, founding member of the Savannah Trade Association and the Savannah Bank and Trust -- was affectionately mourned with many shops closed on the date of his funeral. The executive's urban mansion, now the Azalea Inn, was purchased in August 2005 by Micheal "Jake" and Teresa Jacobson, parents of a graduate of the Savannah College of Art and Design. 217 East Huntingdon Street, Historic Savannah, Georgia USA 31401-5714. Toll Free 800-582-3823 (within the USA). Telephone 912-236-2707. Email [info@azaleainn.com](mailto:info@azaleainn.com). Internet [www.azaleainn.com](http://www.azaleainn.com)



Photo Credit: Historic Savannah's Forsyth Park © 2005 Nancy Heffernan

# Azalea Inn

217 East Huntingdon Street | Historic Savannah, Georgia USA 31401-5714  
Telephone 912-236-2707 | Toll Free 800-582-3823  
On the Internet [www.azaleainn.com](http://www.azaleainn.com)

*Media Contact --*  
Sandy Traub  
Spatior Storyline Marketing  
Telephone 912-232-2590  
Mobile 912-398-9828  
[straub@spatior.com](mailto:straub@spatior.com)



Forsyth Park Lamp on Colonial Garden District Lands in Historic Savannah, Georgia © 2005 Nancy Heffernan