

Past Perfect

A dedicated preservationist shares her passion for historic Savannah and a taste of sweet Southern hospitality with guests from around the world.

BY K. Faith Morgan | PHOTOGRAPHY BY Richard Johnson

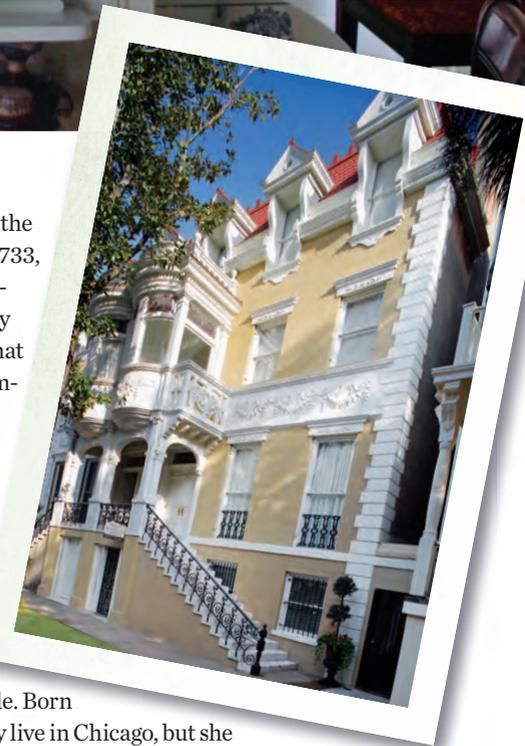


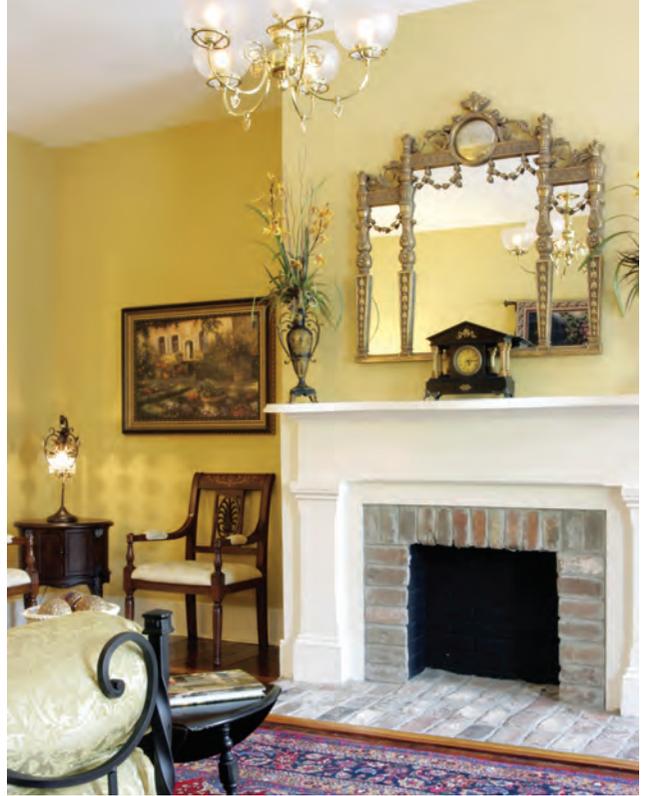


When it comes to splendid historic architecture, Savannah is one of the jewels of the South. Founded in 1733, the city boasts iconic examples of styles ranging from 18th-century colonial to midcentury modern. It was this architectural diversity that inspired Tammy Jo Long to establish her company, Luxury Living Savannah, renovating and renting out historic properties as vacation escapes. “For as long as I can remember, I’ve had a love affair with historic homes,” says Tammy Jo. “I was taking historical home tours when other kids my age were getting their driver’s licenses!”

Tammy Jo hails from Chicago, but her gracious hospitality and oh-so-Southern double name give her away as a Southern belle. Born and raised in Kentucky, she says that she may live in Chicago, but she “will always be a Kentucky girl.” Even though she has traveled around the world and has enjoyed opulent architectural grandeur in exotic locales, she says her heart was captured a little closer to home. “Savannah is a beautiful Southern town, but it has a very European feel to it because of the lovely squares and outdoor cafés.”

Tammy Jo owns nine renovated historic vacation properties in Savannah and five properties on Tybee Island, but her entry into the hospitality industry happened quite by accident. “I renovated my first historic property in Savannah as a





second home, and eventually it was to be a retirement home,” she explains, “but during that process, I became obsessed with saving the crumbling old homes of Savannah. I also became obsessed with Savannah,” she says. “Both can get in your blood and take hold of you.”

Tammy Jo’s personal hobby has transformed into a thriving business, and she has become adept at turning her collection of potential-filled homes into luxury retreats. “As soon as my renovation crews finished swinging hammers at one house, I had another one lined up to start saving,” she says.

One of Tammy Jo’s great joys is watching a house’s metamorphosis from neglected shell to carefully executed historic splendor. “Before I bought my Washington Square House (circa 1790), it had been vacant for decades, had been condemned, and had the demolition permit taped to the front door,” she says. “The wrecking ball was scheduled to take it down.” With some help from the Historic Savannah Foundation, Tammy Jo was able to purchase the house and save it from destruction. Now this four-bedroom home has been restored to its former glory days, complete with much of the original hardware, millwork, and plaster detailing.

DETAILED PRESERVATION

Not only does Tammy Jo renovate with an eye toward the comfort and enjoyment of her guests, she also strives to maintain the historic accuracy and stylistic integrity of her properties. Several of her renovations have been awarded certificates for following the strict preservation guidelines set by the U.S. Department of Natural Resources.

Even with the thrill of renovations, Tammy Jo most enjoys introducing people to the city that holds her heart. “I love giving travelers the opportunity to stay in a piece of history—to give them a sneak peek into how life was in Savannah in the 1800s, even if it’s just for a weekend.” ❖

For information, contact Luxury Living Savannah at 866-886-0809, or visit luxurylivingsavannah.com and luxurylivingtybee.com.