





# Springtime in... COLUMBUS

BY CHELLE ELLIS / PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANA FINIMORE

COLUMBUS, MISSISSIPPI, IS HOME TO A TREASURE TROVE OF ARCHITECTURAL MARVELS. SPRING PILGRIMAGE IS THE PERFECT TIME TO VISIT SEVERAL OF THESE ANTEBELLUM BEAUTIES.

ANTEBELLUM HOMES ARE A FAIRLY COMMON SIGHT for Southerners. Honest Southerners might even admit they take them for granted.

Through ignorance, many of these architectural marvels were demolished in the name of progress. Now a new thirst for historical connection has prompted reconsideration.

Columbus is home to many of these national treasures; that community has committed to maintain the architectural integrity of these homes.

The annual Columbus Spring Pilgrimage is scheduled March 27-April 9. Daily tours of historic homes will be offered. During these tours, visit the past and be awestruck by the "Columbus Eclectic" architecture, which comprises houses designed in Greek Revival, Italianate or Gothic styles.

White Arches, built in 1857, combines the three styles in one home. A commanding presence, the front entrance provides a view of the outside world through red Venetian glass panes that welcome sunlight

through etched floral patterns.

Dick and JoAnne Leike of Memphis own White Arches and have filled its three floors with pre-war antiques that would surely delight even the original owners. One antique that came with the home was the ghost of Mary Harris, daughter of White Arches' first owner, Jephtha Vining Harris.

Shortly after the Civil War began, Harris threw a coming-out party for Mary at White Arches. That night she fell ill; she died shortly thereafter, presumably of pneumonia, at the age of 21.

While moving into White Arches, JoAnne Leike was alone one stormy night with only her dog and flashlight to help her investigate loud banging noises in Mary's old bedroom. Leike found nothing out of place but when she retired to bed once more the clatter returned even louder.

Leike moved to a downstairs sofa and, overcome with anger, she confronted the ghost she believed to be Mary, calling her by name: "My husband and I are





Photo by Kerry Ellis

(Opposite page) Rosewood Manor is built in the Greek Revival style that was so fashionable for the day. Pictured is one of her many drawing rooms.

(Top, right) Riverview recently earned prestigious designation as a National Historic Landmark.

(Below, Right) Gracie Dewitt enjoys playing the organ in the 100-year-old chapel that sits on the grounds of Rosewood.

not gonna be scared out of this house.

"We love it, we're gonna take care of it now and for the next generation that comes along. If you want to stay here it's still your home and you're welcome."

The two women must have reached a compromise – Leike says there have been no disturbances since that night.

Understanding the duty of caring for these homes is something Columbus takes very seriously. Carl and Dixie Butler were allowed to buy Temple Heights only after committing to its restoration. Originally built in 1837 by Richard T. Brownrigg, the Greek Revival exterior encases an interior of Federalist design.

Their promise won them the home in exchange for a modest down payment of \$1,000, with the balance to be paid when they finished graduate school. Throughout their 40 years there, the Butlers filled Temple Heights with Parisian porcelain and period antiques and decorative arts.

Another Columbus rose sits on more than 4 acres of landscaped lawn and gardens. Rosewood Manor was built in the Greek Revival style by planter Richard Sykes in 1835.

The home features two large Doric columns supporting a balcony over the entrance. Owners Dewitt and Grace Hicks





The elegant porch at White Arches is a wonderful spot for taking afternoon tea.

added an old plantation chapel with original stained glass windows and woodwork that is believed to be a century old.

Dewitt Hicks serves as chairman of the board of directors of Palmer Home for Children. Palmer Home is an orphanage with family houses in Columbus and Lake Cormorant.

Perhaps the best known home on the tour is Waverly, a four-story Greek Revival constructed in 1852 by George Hampton Young. The last of the Young descendants died in 1913, leaving the grand home vacant for 50 years.

The Robert Snow family bought Waverly in 1962 and spent the next 25 years restoring it to its original grandeur. Waverly is a favorite in the Columbus Pilgrimage and has been showcased on the A&E television series "American Castles."

The crown jewel of Columbus could arguably be Riverview, a home that Charles McLaran built from 1846 to 1852. Recently designated a National Historic

Landmark, the Greek Revival mansion boasts twin marble porches.

Even the exterior grandeur hardly prepares you for the beauty within. Coffered ceilings and neoclassic plasterwork tower above the four-story mahogany staircase. Riverview and its lawn cover an entire city block on a bluff overlooking the Tombigbee River.

Information about all the tour homes and others can be found at [www.historic-columbus.org](http://www.historic-columbus.org) or the Tennessee Williams Home and Columbus Welcome Center, the pilgrimage headquarters.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright was born in the house March 26, 1911, and lived there the first three years of his life.

Another notable fact of Columbus history is the city's distinction as the birthplace on April 25, 1866, of Decoration Day, which caught on nationwide and is now known as Memorial Day. \*

### COLUMBUS EVENTS

March 17-18

#### Downtown Spring Open House

10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Main Street Columbus 662.328.6305

March 27 - April 8

#### Tales from the Crypt

Costumed guides lead you on narrated candlelight tours of historic Friendship Cemetery, site of the first Memorial Day observance in April 1866. \$2 adult; \$1 students.

7-9:30 p.m.

800.327.2686

March 27 - April 8

#### Spring Pilgrimage 2006

Enjoy daily home tours with guides in period costume and historic carriage rides. 800.327.2686

April 9

#### Wings over Columbus

Performances by the Air Force Thunderbirds and Golden Knights Parachute Team; vintage war birds and other aircraft will be on display. Free to the public at Columbus Air Force Base.

May 5-6

#### Market Street Festival

A top-rated event comprising six performance stages, children's activities, car show, 5k run, 260-plus arts & crafts vendors and 24 local restaurants and caterers.

662.328.6305

September 7-10

#### Tennessee Williams Tribute and Tour of Victorian Homes

Playwright Tennessee Williams was born in the home that serves as Columbus' official Welcome Center. Times and locations TBA.



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