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"I feel like my whole life is in makeover mode. Big changes abound for me."
—Oprah



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women
who make
beautiful
things

Right at Home

How the South's most charming city sparked a renovator's passion for the past.

Tammy Jo Long, 48
HISTORIC HOME RENOVATOR;
OWNER, LUXURY LIVING SAVANNAH



The Forsyth Park Mansion (above), built in 1871, took Long (right) 18 months to restore. The floors in the parlor (below) of her flagship property, Wedding Cake Mansion, were once hidden beneath five layers of linoleum.



➤ **Her inspiration** When Chicagoan Tammy Jo Long visited Savannah ten years ago, she was delighted by its fountain-filled parks, corner cafés—and grand architecture. Long had always been a design aficionado, but the Italianate and Victorian homes she encountered in Savannah became “an obsession,” she says. “I saw a mansion with enormous cornices and cast-iron window surrounds, and I was hooked.” So hooked, in fact, that she decided to buy a second home there, closing the deal on her next visit.

➤ **Her learning curve** Long was determined to restore her new house to its original glory. Though she'd remodeled a few kitchens and bathrooms over the years, a historically accurate renovation that did justice to the Savannah architecture she loved was daunting. But the all-nighters spent poring over floor plans and scouring eBay for doorknobs paid off: Every detail of the home—from the crown moldings to the brass finger pulls—is as it was in the 1800s. Yearning to share her handiwork, Long turned the home into a vacation rental. Soon, enchanted out-of-towners were eagerly booking their stays.

➤ **Her business model** In 2003 Long quit her job in sales and bought and restored four more homes, traveling between Savannah and Chicago (where she and her ex-husband share custody of their 9-year-old son). “Some of the properties had been vacant for 20 years,” Long says. “They had rats you could put a saddle on.” They're now certified landmarks—with 14-foot ceilings, elaborate plaster medallions, and sweeping staircases—and can be experienced firsthand through Luxury Living Savannah, Long's vacation rental company. As much as she adores re-creating these relics, Long loves sharing them even more. “People get to stay in a piece of history,” she says. “Women get to be Scarlett O'Hara for the weekend. I take great pleasure in that.” —RACHEL BERTSCHE

