HISTORY

Before Paula Deen and Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil, Savannah’s primary claim to fame was its historical significance. Georgia’s first city and the first planned city in America, Savannah is steeped in history, from its cobblestone streets to the towering steeples of its many churches. Here is a quick guide to Savannah’s richest historical sites—but keep your eyes peeled as you explore the city; you might just stumble across an undiscovered relic.

GENERAL

CITY MARKET. THE CENTER OF SAVANNAH’S COMMERCIAL AND SOCIAL LIFE IN THE 1700S AND 1800S, CITY MARKET—THE AREA BETWEEN BRYAN AND CONGRESS STREETS TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH AND BARNARD AND MONTGOMERY STREETS TO THE EAST AND WEST—DATES BACK TO 1755, AND NOW HOUSES RESTAURANTS, ART GALLERIES AND SHOPS. 912.234.2327, SAVANNAHCITYMARKET.COM

FACTORS WALK. THIS SERIES OF STEEP STAIRCASES, PATHWAYS AND PEDESTRIAN BRIDGES ON THE BLUFF OF THE SAVANNAH RIVER WAS THE SITE OF THE CITY’S BUSTLING COTTON EXCHANGE. MOST OF THE ORIGINAL BUILDINGS REMAIN INTACT, AND NOW HOUSE SHOPS, RESTAURANTS AND HOTELS. BETWEEN BAY AND RIVER STREETS FROM JEFFERSON TO EAST BROAD STREET. RIVERSTREETSAVANNAH.COM

PIRATES’ HOUSE. NOW A RESTAURANT, THE PIRATES’ HOUSE IS ONE OF THE OLDEST STRUCTURES IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA, AND IS HOST TO ITS FAIR SHARE OF HISTORICAL LORE; ONCE AN INN, IT WAS THE GATHERING PLACE FOR MANY A SEA‐WEARY PIRATE AND SAILOR, AND IT’S SAID A TUNNEL LOCATED BENEATH THE BUILDING WAS USED TO SHANGHAI DRUNKEN OR DRUGGED SEAMAN.

CITY HALL. SAVANNAH’S STATELY, GOLD‐LEAF DOMED CITY HALL IS LOCATED ON THE APPROXIMATE SITE WHERE SAVANNAH FOUNDER GENERAL JAMES OGLETHORPE LANDED IN 1733. 2 E. BAY ST.

COLONIAL PARK CEMETERY. ESTABLISHED IN 1750, THIS CEMETERY WAS THE FINAL RESTING PLACE FOR NEARLY ALL OF SAVANNAH’S CITIZENS UNTIL 1853, WHEN IT WAS CLOSED. IT IS NOW OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. 8 AM–8 PM DAILY. 201 E. OGLETHORPE AVE., 912.651.6843

MASSIE SCHOOL. OPENED IN 1856, MASSIE SCHOOL WAS SAVANNAH’S FIRST PUBLIC SCHOOL, AND IN 1865 WAS DESIGNATED AS A SCHOOL FOR AFRICAN‐AMERICAN CHILDREN. DURING THE CIVIL WAR, THE SCHOOL WAS USED AS A UNION HOSPITAL. IT IS NOW AN EDUCATIONAL MUSEUM. MONDAY—FRIDAY 9 AM–4 PM. 207 E. GORDON ST., 912.201.5070, MASSIESCHOOL.COM

FORSYTH PARK FOUNTAIN. INFLUENCED BY THE FOUNTAIN OF THE PLACE DE LA CONCORDE IN PARIS, THIS TWO‐TIERED CAST‐IRON FOUNTAIN WAS ERECTED IN 1858 TO SERVE AS THE FOCAL POINT OF FORSYTH PARK.
ONE BLOCK SOUTH OF GASTON STREET BETWEEN DRAYTON AND WHITAKER STREETS.

CONFEDERATE MONUMENT. THIS FORSYTH PARK MONUMENT WAS ERECTED IN 1879 TO HONOR CONFEDERATE VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR.

FORSYTH PARK AT GWINNETT STREET

BONAVENTURE CEMETERY. THIS SCENIC CEMETERY ON THE BLUFF OF THE WILMINGTON RIVER WAS FEATURED PROMINENTLY ON THE COVER OF THE NOVEL MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF GOOD AND EVIL. THE HUNDREDS OF BEAUTIFUL AND EVOCATIVE STONE MONUMENTS (ANGELS, OBELISKS, AND MORE) ARE BREATHTAKING. FAMOUS SAVANNAH RESIDENTS CONRAD AIKEN AND JOHNNY MERCER ARE BURIED HERE.

8 AM–5 PM 7 DAYS A WEEK.
330 BONAVENTURE RD., 912.651.6843

MOON RIVER. COMPOSER JOHNNY MERCER WROTE “MOON RIVER,” WHICH WAS MADE FAMOUS BY THE FILM BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY’S, WHILE GAZING AT SAVANNAH’S BACK RIVER—LATER CHRISTENED MOON RIVER IN HIS HONOR. VISIT MOON RIVER BY TAKING THE TRUMAN PARKWAY SOUTH UNTIL IT ENDS; HANG A LEFT ONTO WHITFIELD AVENUE AND FOLLOW THE DIAMOND CAUSEWAY UNTIL YOU COME TO THE RIVER.

VICTORY DRIVE. THIS NEARLY 20-MILE THOROUGHFARE WAS THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE FIRST AMERICAN GRAND PRIX, IN 1908. VICTORY DRIVE IS FAMOUS FOR ITS ROWS OF PALMETTO TREES, WHICH WERE PLANTED TO MEMORIALIZE CHATHAM COUNTY VETERANS WHO LOST THEIR LIFE IN WORLD WAR I. VICTORY DRIVE BETWEEN BULL STREET AND BEE RD., ROUGHLY

GRAYSON STADIUM. BUILT IN 1927, THIS HOME OF THE SAVANNAH SAND GNATS MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL TEAM IS THE OLDEST WORKING MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PARK IN THE U.S. SOME OF THE FAMOUS SLUGGERS TO GRACE THE DIAMOND INCLUDE BABE RUTH, LOU GEHRIG, JACKIE ROBINSON AND MICKEY MANTLE. CHECK THE SAND GNATS WEBSITE FOR GAME SCHEDULE AND TICKET INFORMATION.

1401 E. VICTORY DR., 912.351.9150, SANDGNATS.COM

WORMSLOE HISTORIC SITE. THOUGH THIS SOUTHSIDE SITE IS HOME TO THE TABBY RUINS OF A PLANTATION HOME THAT WAS OWNED BY ONE OF SAVANNAH’S ORIGINAL COLONISTS, THE MAIN ATTRACTION IS THE SWEEPING, LIVE OAK-LINED AVENUE.

CLOSED MONDAY; TUESDAY–SATURDAY 9 AM–5 PM; SUNDAY 2–5:30 PM. 7601 SKIDAWAY RD. (APPROXIMATELY 10 MILES SOUTH OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT), 800.864.7275, GASTATEPARKS.ORG/INFO/WORMSLOE

TYBEE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE. ORDERED BY GEN. JAMES OGLETHORPE IN 1732, THE TYBEE ISLAND LIGHT STATION—NOW IN ITS FOURTH INCARNATION—IS NOW A PUBLIC MUSEUM. OPEN EVERY DAY EXCEPT TUESDAY FROM 9 AM–5 PM. 30 MEDDIN AVE., TYBEE ISLAND, 912.786.5801, TYBEELIGHTHOUSE.ORG

RELIGIOUS

CHRIST CHURCH. INFLUENTIAL 18TH-CENTURY CHRISTIAN LEADER JOHN WESLEY WAS SUMMONED TO GEORGIA BY GEN. JAMES OGLETHORPE, AND WAS RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH FROM 1735 TO 1738.

18 ABERCORN ST., 912.232.9591, CHRISTCHURCHSAVANNAH.ORG
**FIRST AFRICAN BAPTIST CHURCH.** This historic church holds the claim as the first black Baptist congregation in the U.S. It was also a stop on the underground railroad, and disguised air holes, which provided ventilation for hiding slaves, can still be seen in its floors. 23 Montgomery St., 912.233.6597, theoldestblackchurch.org

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST “JINGLE BELLS” CHURCH.** Located on Troup Square, this little church is said to have been where James Pierpont, who was music directory in the mid-1800s, penned the holiday ditty “Jingle Bells.” 313 E. Harris St., 912.234.0980, jinglebellschurch.org

**TEMPLE MICKVE ISRAEL.** Located across from the Mercer-Williams house on Monterey Square, this temple is notable for being the third-oldest Jewish congregation in the U.S., and the country’s only Gothic-style synagogue. Tours available Monday–Friday 10 AM–12 PM and 2–4 PM. 20 E. Gordon St., 912.233.1547, mickveisrael.org

**SQUARES**

**CHIPPEWA SQUARE.** Though the bench is no longer present, Chippewa Square provided the backdrop for the famous bus stop scenes in the film Forrest Gump. Bull Street between Hull and Perry streets

**TOMOCHICHI MEMORIAL.** A large boulder in Wright Square marks the approximate burial site of Tomochichi, a leader of the Native Yamacraw indian tribe who assisted Ogilthorpe in his founding of the 13th colony. The tree above the memorial is the site of Savannah’s oldest public gallows, and was the site of the hanging of Alice Riley 1735, who still supposedly haunts the square. It is the only tree in Wright Square on which no Spanish moss will grow. Wright Square, Bull Street between York and State streets

**HOMES & MUSEUMS**

**GREEN-MELDRIM HOUSE.** This Gothic Revival-style home—now owned by the neighboring St. John’s Episcopal church—was occupied by General William Tecumseh Sherman during the Civil War after Savannah was captured by the Union. Upon capture, Sherman wrote the following Christmas letter to President Lincoln: “I beg to present to you as a Christmas gift the city of Savannah, with one hundred and fifty guns and plenty of ammunition, also about twenty-five thousand bales of cotton.” 14 W. Macon St., 912.232.1251, stjohnssav.org

**MERCER-WILLIAMS HOUSE.** This stately redbrick manse on Monterey Square was built by never occupied by Hugh Weedon Mercer, great-grandfather of songwriter Johnny Mercer, and later gained notoriety as the scene of Danny Hansford’s murder—the crime memorialized in Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil. The house is now open to the public for tours. Monday–Saturday 10:30 AM–3:40 PM; Sunday 12:30–4 PM. 429 Bull St., 912.236.6352, mercerhouse.com

**TELFAIR MUSEUM OF ART.** This Regency-style mansion is home to the South’s...
OLDEST PUBLIC ART MUSEUM, AND IS STILL OPEN TO THE PUBLIC SIX DAYS A WEEK.
SUNDAY 12–5 PM; MONDAY, WEDNESDAY–SATURDAY 10 AM–5 PM. (CLOSED TUESDAY). 121 BARNARD ST., 912.790.8800, TELFAIR.ORG

FLANNERY O’CONNOR CHILDHOOD HOME. SEE WHERE THE ECCENTRIC SOUTHERN GOTHIC WRITER GOT HER EARLY INSPIRATION.
1–4 PM EVERY DAY EXCEPT THURSDAY.
207 E. CHARLTON ST., 912.233.6014, FLANNERYOCONNORHOME.ORG

JULIETTE GORDON LOW BIRTHPLACE. STEP INSIDE THE CHILDHOOD HOME OF THE LOCALLY REVERED FOUNDER OF THE GIRL SCOUTS.
MONDAY–SATURDAY 10 AM–4 PM; SUNDAY 11 AM–4 PM (CLOSED WEDNESDAYS NOVEMBER–FEBRUARY).
10 E. OGLETHORPE AVE., 912.233.4501, JULIETTEGORDONLOWBIRTHPLACE.ORG

MILITARY

FORT PULASKI. ONCE THOUGHT TO BE IMPENETRABLE, THIS FORT QUICKLY FELL TO UNION FORCES DURING THE CIVIL WAR, DUE IN PART TO THE JAMES RIFLED CANNON, WHICH WAS FIRED HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME. THE DAMAGED WALL CAN STILL BE SEEN.
HWY. 80 E., 912.786.5787, NPS.GOV/FOPU

FORT JACKSON. ORIGINALLY AUTHORIZED BY PRESIDENT THOMAS JEFFERSON, FORT JACKSON IS THE STATE’S OLDEST STANDING FORT, AND DEFENDED SAVANNAH IN BOTH THE CIVIL WAR AND THE WAR OF 1812.

9 AM–5 PM DAILY. 1 FORT JACKSON RD. (OFF E. PRESIDENTS ST., JUST EAST OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT), 912.232.3945, CHSGEORGIA.ORG