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THE CORNER



Summer Wedding Edition

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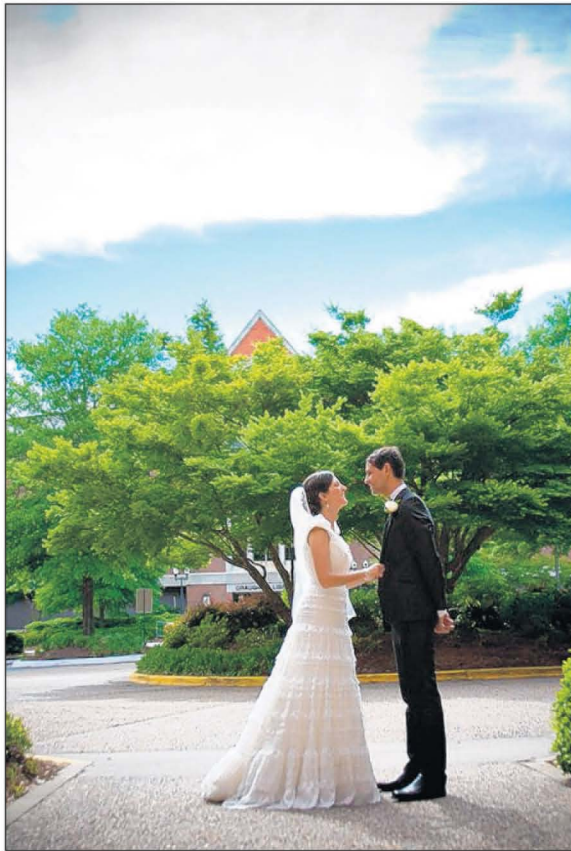


PHOTO BY TRISTAN CAIRNS

Wedding season is upon us and with so many options available in the Auburn area, many brides and grooms are opting to say "I do" in the Loveliest Village on the Plains. From simple to lavish weddings and receptions, the area offers a wide range of choices for the big day.

The bride and groom also don't have to look too far to find the perfect dress, tuxedo, bridesmaid dresses or other customizable options, as the area also offers a substantial alternative to driving to surrounding cities to find the perfect look.

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Venues



Fountainview Mansion

Fountainview Mansion, located at 3291 Mill Creek Road, offers state-of-the-art amenities in the fashion of a 15th-century English manor house, set atop a hill on a 100-acre estate.

With plenty of indoor and outdoor space for weddings, rehearsal dinners and other events, the mansion is lavishly decorated and the grounds are closely manicured.

The mansion has six fully furnished guest rooms like the Balmoral, Windsor and Buckingham, complete with high-speed Internet, DVD players and a stocked refrigerator.

A unique aspect of Fountainview is the full-service option, offering to help with every step of the wedding process.

"We're really a full-service, one-stop wedding planning facility," said manager Gary Klarenbeek. "We help the brides in a multitude of different ways: everything from full event coordination to flowers, linens, wedding coordination, music selection services, photography referrals — pretty much anything with regards to the wedding except for picking the gown and the groom."

The Fountainview Mansion opened for business in May 2007, furnished with antiques and modern conveniences alike.

"I think one of our biggest advantages is classic Southern elegance," Klarenbeek said. "It's kind of like a fairy tale dream setting for our brides — it just has an elegant, old world feel. I think we're very competitively priced in the marketplace, you get a lot for the money here."

Every year, the mansion averages 40 to 45 weddings, so booking early is important, and most dates are booked between 12 and 18 months before the event.

"Sometimes when you rent venues, you're still burdened with having to do all the setup and clean-up and tear-down yourself, and your family works and works," Klarenbeek said. "But here they absolutely have no responsibilities whatsoever, it's all done for them from start to finish, up to loading gifts in the car at the end."

For more about Fountainview Mansion, visit fountainviewmansion.com or call 334.466.2120.



The Reserve at Oak Bowery

The Reserve at Oak Bowery sits on 88 acres just outside Auburn in Lafayette, Ala., and has since 1845.

The five-bedroom, four and a half bathroom plantation house is accompanied by three barns, a pecan grove, arbor and an old chimney used as an altar.

"It used to be a working plantation, and all the barns — there's three within view of the plantation area — and the altar is a remaining chimney from the burned out master slave cabin," said Courtney Patton, who manages the grounds with her husband Logan. "So as far as our setup and the authenticity of the spot, you can't beat that."

Once a major plantation in the area, the Reserve has previously been known as the McCurdy Plantation and was a 4,000-acre cotton farm. The house has a wedding-inspired history, built as a gift from Edmund Harris to his daughter and her husband for their wedding.

With the capacity to accommodate hundreds of people, the Reserve at Oak Bowery supplies nearly everything a wedding planner would need, including almost 250 chairs and 24 tables, complete with linens.

"The place is happiest with lots of people out there just having a good time," Patton said. "It's a laid back atmosphere all day."

Most wedding ceremonies are held outside at the chimney, but receptions can be held anywhere on the grounds, the barns, the plantation house or a combination of these.

With 30 to 40 weddings a year, brides-to-be should try to plan quickly, especially if they have a specific date in mind.

"I have good dates left this year, so I can't say that it's impossible, but like I say to everybody, with any venue, if there's a specific date you want, you've got to book it way ahead," Patton said.

While planning ahead is always a good idea, the procrastinating couple may be able to find a date to tie the knot at Oak Bowery this year.

For more information about The Reserve at Oak Bowery, visit oakboweryreserve.com.



Greystone Mansion

The Greystone Mansion has a rich history in Auburn, built in 1894 by A.L. Dillard as part of the Scott plantation, it was the first house in the city to have indoor plumbing and electricity and Sigma Pi fraternity was chartered there in 1927.

It gets its name from the unique stone used on the exterior of the building, a secret formula authored by Dillard himself that gives the bricks a unique moisture-proof quality.

The building is registered as a historic landmark and is open for viewing Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The mansion, located at 1655 Creekwood Trail, offers a unique set of amenities, with available trolley service and a player Baby Grand piano in the conservatory.

Another aspect of the venue is its policy of scheduling only one event per day, meaning that the entire building and grounds are of exclusive use to the renter during the event.

"We try to provide everything except what people are actually going to eat and drink — the consumables — and we don't have any limitations at all, which is a great savings," said Mari Ann Styles, of East Alabama Properties. "A lot of places require that you spend so much, you know, but if you rent with us, you have the whole building and grounds all day and all night."

Greystone is constantly busy, with events scheduled most weekends and competitive pricing. Scheduling should be done early, since the house hosts sorority and fraternity events as well as weddings, rehearsal dinners and other gatherings.

"Almost every single weekend we have a wedding, a reception, a rehearsal dinner, family reunion," Styles said. "We stay pretty busy."

The history of the building is evident, with glass windows that have become distorted over their 106 years and the Draughton Dining Room, named after Auburn University President Ralph Draughton, who made the house his home in 1931, after marrying his wife Caroline.

Visit thegreystonemansionofauburn.com for more details and booking information.

Venues



Crenshaw Guest House

The Crenshaw Guest House is an ideal location for couples planning a low key wedding. The Victorian-style house, located at 371 N. College St., was built by Auburn University Professor Bolling Hall Crenshaw in 1890 and features art that includes the first Auburn University football team and past student hangouts such as The Freeze and The Bottle.

The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is decorated with antique furniture. It is available for rentals from one night to extended stays and has accommodations for up to 25 adults. Behind the main house is The Carriage House which houses three guest rooms, each with private entrances and kitchenettes.

George and Lynn Postell, who met while attending Auburn in the 1970s, bought the Crenshaw Guest House in 2008. The Postells moved to Auburn from Maryland after retiring and bought the house to run as a small business.

"I just retired from my federal career and I wanted to live in Auburn and wanted to have a little business, so it made sense," George said.

There is an open area at the rear of the property to host weddings. George said that the house cannot accommodate large weddings and receptions, but is perfect for smaller. There is room for around 40 guests, but since the house is located in a residential area, loud music is not allowed.

The entire house is available for rent and guests are allowed to bring their own food or caterers.

"I'm primarily a lodging place, however the strength of using my house in a wedding industry is to rent the whole house, and I'll rent it for as low as \$600 which includes six rooms," George said. "The best part about that is you have exclusive use. There is an acre of grounds with various sitting areas outside, so it's a real good place for out of town guests to kind of commune. The property can actually be a wedding headquarters of sorts for out-of-town guests."

Visit crenshawguesthouse.com for more information.



Event Center Downtown

Located in Historic Downtown Opelika, the 33,000-square-foot Event Center serves as a venue that is capable of handling a variety of events. Originally a Coca-Cola bottling warehouse, the space has been renovated with state-of-the-art additions while keeping the unique feel of the historic building. Located less than 10 miles from Auburn University's campus, the Event Center Downtown is a venue versatile enough to handle functions from six to 1500.

Lisa and Chris Beck opened the venue in April 2010. The first floor is made up of a 7,712-square-foot ballroom that can be divided in two separate ballrooms, a bar area, a meeting room and a 9,289-square-foot courtyard. The second floor is currently being renovated into a second meeting space, lounge, bridal suite, green room and a roof top terrace that overlooks downtown Opelika.

The Event Center has hosted around 20 weddings since opening.

"The modern amenities combined with the historic features make it a really cool, different venue," Lisa Beck said.

One package many couples take advantage of is holding the ceremony in the courtyard and the reception in one of the ballrooms. The venue provides beverages and also provides the couple with a preferred list of caterers. Rentals also include tables, chairs, linens, glassware and catering kitchens. Typical rentals are six hours. Several different packages are available.

"Overall it's very cost effective. It's very affordable and the flexibility of working with one of our preferred caterers is really nice and we can help with all of that, too. If the bride feels overwhelmed we're able to help and guide them and we can help them in ways to save money and so forth, but our brides are very happy."

For more information, visit eventcenterdowntown.com.



The Hotel at Auburn University

Located just minutes from Auburn University and surrounding downtown attractions, the Hotel at Auburn University offers a wide variety of venue options from formal ballroom affairs to casual rehearsal dinners. The hotel offers a range of spaces from the main ballroom, which accommodates up to 400 attendees, to intimate function areas capable of accommodating up to 60 guests.

Although the hotel can accommodate weddings, it is usually used as a reception space.

"What we have to offer is the food and beverage and the service and the dance floor and the stage," said Sales Manager Terri Lynn Beasley. "Oftentimes people will get married somewhere nearby and will walk over for the reception."

Fifteen function rooms are available and can be customized to the couple's requests. From the menu to the linens, the staff at the hotel can help with every detail.

"Every aspect of the wedding is customized to the bride specifically to her requests and her desires," Beasley said. "So we don't do 'Package A' or 'Package B' weddings."

The hotel also offers discounted room rates for 10 or more rooms, complimentary parking and assistance with local vendors for anything else the couple needs.

"It can be as much of a one-stop shop as they'd like," Beasley said.

Beasley said one of the aspects she thinks stands out about the hotel is the location.

"I love the location in Auburn, you can't beat that; the parking downtown, the fact that guests can walk to many of the ceremony locations, that they can walk downtown before or after to the shops and restaurants and bars," she said.

For more information, visit auhcc.com.

Venues



Samford Hall

A new option is now available for couples who choose to have an Auburn-style wedding; the lawn at Samford Hall.

Terri Lynn Beasley, the sales manager at the Hotel at Auburn University and Teresa Whitman-McCall in the Office of Communications and Marketing at Auburn University, have teamed up to make this option a reality.

Beasley said guests of the hotel have asked her about this option many times, she even called the university about it when she was getting married.

"People have been wanting to get married on the lawn at Samford Hall for years and there just wasn't a good way to manage it," Beasley said. "Because the hotel is a university entity, we are owned by the university. It makes sense for us to be able to do that for them."

The lawn is available for a ceremony only,

but many options are available.

The basic package, just to rent the space, starts at \$650 and goes up from there to around \$2,500. The hotel will work with the couple and can customize the ceremony to include a beverage station, sound system, chairs, alter arrangements and more. Larger packages will offer a discount at the hotel. The maximum number of guests allowed is 300.

Some of the money spent on these weddings will go towards scholarships, maintenance and administration.

"It's an opportunity to give back to the friends and the family and the alumni at Auburn," Beasley said. "So many people hold such a special place in their hearts for Auburn. People just love Auburn and so many times the couples get introduced to each other here and end up getting married and want to carry that theme throughout their wedding. This is just a really fun way to be able to do that."

For more information, call (334) 321-3182.

Additional area venues include:

- * Auburn University Arboretum
- * The Brownfield House
- * Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art
- * Kiesel Park
- * Marriott at Grand National
- * Lexington Hotel University Convention Center
- * Saugahatchee Country Club
- * Chewacla State Park

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Apparel

Gabrielle's

Gabrielle's Bridal and Formal Wear is your local customizable wedding supplier. From gowns and tuxes to center pieces and bouquets, the staff at Gabrielle's offers ways to customize every detail of your wedding.

The store, located at 1220 Fox Run Ave. Suite C4, also sales bridesmaid dresses, accessories, flower girl baskets, mother of the bride suits, garters, linens and more.

One aspect of Gabrielle's that is unique is that, along with everything else, the store rents wedding gowns. Rentals start around \$40 and are available for a week. Gabrielle's also offers consignment options.

Brands the store carries include Christina Wu, Karelina Sposa, Dere Kiang, Bellissima Couture, Alyce and more. Dress preservation is also offered at the store and has a lifetime guarantee.

Part owner Cheryl Trainham said that the store also offers a variety of tuxedos



that are offered for as young as three months old.

"We can do everything from the five-bottom stand-up collar long coats, to white dinner coats and black pants," Trainham said. "We've got the new steel grey tuxedos, we even have camouflage, which only in Alabama would we have that. We can go as fancy or as down home as you want."

For more information, visit Gabrielle's on Facebook.

The Clothes Rack

Founded in 1972, The Clothes Rack is the oldest wedding attire store in Auburn. The store, located at 1971 East University Drive, sales wedding gowns, bridesmaid and flower girl dresses, mother of the bride suites, tuxedos, invitations and accessories.

The store offers brands that include Justin Alexander, Alfred Angelo, Mori Lee, Casablanca and more.

The store sales wedding gowns that can range anywhere between \$150 to \$1,500.

Owner Gayle Anderson said that strapless dresses are still in style as well as lace and other designs.

"A lot of our dresses are what I would consider to be ornate right now, a lot of dimensional designs on them ... a lot of flowers, beading, that kind of stuff," Anderson said.

The store also sales and rents tuxedos, ranging from \$75 to around \$160. Anderson said that colored tuxedos are in this year.

"We're doing a lot of colored tuxedos,"



she said. "Tan is popular and we also have navy, grey, charcoal and chocolate. I would say that tuxes are coming around and there are a lot more options than their used to be."

For more on The Clothes Rack, visit theclothesrackauburn.com.

Additional stores in the area include:

- * Auburn Bridal & Tux
- * Jim Massey

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laughter abound.

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all eyes
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