

Inside a Savannah Mansion

On New Year's Eve, we were invited into the home of an old-school Savannahian. Our soft-spoken host, Alvin, was a true southern gentleman, as gracious as possible, and both his character and his house seemed to be straight from the pages of some Victorian Gothic novel.



Alvin's brick mansion was built in 1887, and since it was in our neighborhood, we had often admired it. So when we were invited inside, we jumped at the chance. Since purchasing the mansion decades ago, Alvin has worked to restore its original elements, decorating it with artwork and period furniture. Jürgen made an appreciative comment about much all this original artwork must have cost, which caused Alvin to laugh. "This is all stuff I get for free!" He pointed to a painting of a dancing jester. "The girl who painted this gave it to me in exchange for a month's rent."

The mansion's architect, William G. Preston, had also been responsible for the late, lamented DeSoto Hotel. Alvin reminisced about that building, which was torn down to make space for the Hilton, a much-derided eyesore on [Madison Square](#). He brought out a book of old images from Savannah, back in the days when the live oaks which now tower over the city's squares were just saplings. Alvin was a