

# Lafayette's Historic Properties & Grounds

*By Mrs. Denise R. Lanclos—Azalea Trail Chairperson*

*[Editor's Note: This article is the second one in a series of preview pieces for the Azalea Society of America's Annual Meeting in March 2022.]*

Azaleas have been a prominent part of Lafayette, Louisiana's landscaping for historic homes, churches, schools, and businesses since the early 1900s. Several influential families that owned plantations or farms used the south's favorite evergreen azalea, 'Formosum', to beautify their grounds. The most prevalent variety planted was the Southern Indica 'Lavender Formosa'. It was propagated by locals and spread throughout the azalea trail and was christened by the city's mayor in February 1938 as "The General Lafayette" in honor of the Marquis de Lafayette. (See <https://www.facebook.com/MarquisLafayette>.)

Several of Lafayette, Louisiana's early prominent families were the Mouton, Girard, Heymann, and Whittington families. The Girard family donated the land for the University of Louisiana at Lafayette & Girard Park. The Girard and Heymann families both had landscape nurseries, where they sold and propagated azaleas and camellias. The Moutons had a beautiful plantation on the Vermilion River called "Les Jardin de

Mouton," Mouton Gardens that has a "Grand Mall Boulevard," a showcase of Lafayette's city flower.

The Azalea Trail Committee has revitalized several of the historic grounds along the trail to preserve the beauty of old Lafayette. In the Elmhurst Historic Garden District, you will see the Saucier-Bares House, American Foursquare, circa 1917, that has historic camellia and azaleas gardens among live oaks (*pictured on page 47 at top*); the Soulier House, Queen Anne Style, circa 1916, beautified with 'Pride of Mobile' azaleas (*pictured on page 47 at bottom-left*); and, the Crow-Girard House, Queen Anne Style, circa 1900, surrounded by beautiful mature coral azaleas (*pictured below*). The azaleas at this property were neglected for awhile and after meeting with the owner to restore these bushes, they are now looking beautiful again. This property was one of the winners of this spring's trail prizes for preserving these beautiful azaleas. If you can identify them for us, we would like to know what variety they are.

In the University District, the La Maison Francaise, The French House, Classic Revival, circa 1920, was beautified with 'Red Formosum' azaleas (*pictured on page 47 at bottom-right*). The Whittington-Guerinere House, Greek Revival







Style, circa 1915, was beautified with ‘Pride of Mobile’, ‘George Lindley Taber’, ‘Mrs. G. G. Gerbing’, and ‘Lavender Formosu,’ azaleas.

Throughout the University District, there are more than 250 live oaks. At the turn of the 20th century, Dr. Edwin Stephens, the university’s first president, planted 18 live oaks that became known as the “Century Oaks.” Historic live oaks encircle the university campus. The historic campus buildings have all been restored over the last several years and over 320 new azaleas have been planted on the campus.

Part of the Azalea Trail Committee’s work is to advocate for preservation and restoration of older established azaleas. Lafayette Historic Azalea Trail is now partnering with Preservation Alliance of Lafayette (PAL) <https://preservinglafayette.org/> PAL promotes strong historic preservation values, serves as an advocate for the preservation of local historic properties, promotes the culture and history of Acadiana (the French Louisiana region), and

serves as a resource center for historic preservation.

Lafayette, Louisiana, is a floral Mardi Gras from fall throughout the winter into spring, with camellias, magnolias, azaleas, roses, and crape myrtles providing seasonal beauty to homes and businesses. Preservation Alliance and Lafayette Azalea Trail members hope to bring back the spring tours during azalea bloom season in 2022. The Historical Trolley Tours held the last two years were a great success. Lafayette Azalea Trail recently launched their Facebook page to feature this beauty year-round to folks near and far. Recent videos and pictures of all these featured properties can be viewed on the page at <https://www.facebook.com/AzaleaTrailLafayetteLAUSA>.

### About the Author:

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