



# ONCE UPON AN ENCHANTED SOUTHERN EVENING

*By Amy H. Carter*

*Photos by Nancy J. Reynolds*

Laura Cross is known for many things – her charm, her grace, her philanthropy and her financial savvy. What she isn't known for – and she'll readily admit this – is planning and executing parties. So when it came time to design the reception celebrating her marriage Oct. 17, 2008, to Lewis McKinley, Cross sought professional help.

"She came in and said, 'I just need you to take care of it,' and she was pretty much ready to get back in the car," says Stacy Bass, the leader of the creative team that came to Cross' aid.

Cross knew she wanted an Old World Theme. As for translating that into flowers, food and decor, she had no clue what to do.

"I'm a numbers person," laughs Cross, who is president and CEO of Oglethorpe Bank.

To that Bass and his team at Straton Hall – Jay Anderson and Crickett Brown – would say: We are the party people.

With just 30 days to plan and execute their vision for Laura's wedding, Straton Hall pulled together a sumptuous event they refer to as "An Enchanted Southern Evening."

"It was exactly what I wanted although I didn't know how to articulate it," Cross says.

"Old world charm meets downtown elegance," is how Bass articulated it.

Straton Hall handled everything but the dress, Cross says, and that came from The Lady in White, a bridal shop in downtown Brunswick.

Bass says Straton Hall envisioned the Cross-McKinley wedding and reception as a celebration of the revival of downtown, epitomized by the renovation and restoration of Old City Hall, and the establishment of new businesses like The Lady in White. McKinley himself is a long-time downtown business owner. He married Cross at the First United Methodist Church on Norwich Street, a congregation organized in 1838. Ironically, the congregation met in the old Glynn Academy Building that recently moved back to the Glynn Academy campus across the street from the church. The Cross-McKinley marriage was celebrated with the reception at historic Old City Hall, which has stood for more than a century at the foot of Newcastle Street.