

AZALEA TRAIL HISTORY

In 1928, Sam Lackland, a Mobile horticulturist, after returning from a trip to Charleston, South Carolina, addressed the Mobile Jaycees about ways to display Mobile's azaleas. In November of that year, the Jaycees embarked upon a beautification project to plant azaleas on the major streets, in every park and subdivision and the properties of churches and schools throughout the City. They also encouraged Mobile's homeowners to plant azaleas around their homes.

The first trail opened in 1930. It began at Bienville Square and ran approximately 15 miles through Mobile's historic district.

As an added tourist attraction, the Jaycees decided to establish an Azalea Trail Court. A panel of prominent judges selected fifty court members from the city's outstanding high school seniors. These fifty Azalea Trail Maids served as official hostesses for the City of Mobile and also competed for college scholarships.

In their antebellum costumes of pastel colors, the Azalea Trail Maids are the epitome of graciousness and beauty associated with the Old South. Each girl is well-informed of the many attractions of Mobile. They act as permanent representatives of good will for the city. They add a special charm to the many occasions in which the city extends hospitality to visitors.

Interest in the Azalea Trail program grew until entrants for the Azalea Trail came from several surrounding states. In 1958 it was decided to limit contestants for the Azalea Trail Court to Mobile County high schools and create a separate contest for girls from across the nation. Thus began the Junior Miss Program, now known as Distinguished Young Women, held in Mobile each year.

The Azalea Trail route itself has undergone many changes. At one time the Jaycees painted a continuous pink line on the city streets. The 37 mile long "Follow the Pink Line" was recognized as a guide to Mobile's loveliest springtime scenes.

Just as the trail itself has evolved into something larger than expected at its inception, so the activities of the Court have expanded. Today, the girls travel over the nation to spread the word of Mobile's many attractions.

AZALEA TRAIL MAID INFORMATION

Following a school-level selection process, THS has the opportunity to send candidates to the next level of judging for city interviews. The number we can send depends on the total number of home-educated junior girls in the area. Fifty senior girls are chosen to represent Mobile as Azalea Trail Maids.

INTERVIEWS: Interviews will be held in October. Each interview is approximately 5 minutes in length. Upon entering the room, the candidate is introduced to the judges to do her presentation. After she completes the presentation, she will sit down to start the interview. Categories for judging are: appearance, delivery and presentation, local history and attractions, general awareness/current events, and scholastics.

Appearance: Dress for the interview is Sunday dress, suit, or pantsuit. The outfit should be comfortable and modest. Girls do not need to buy something new for this level interview unless they do not already have something appropriate.

Delivery & Presentation: Practice interviewing with as many people as possible. Have someone ask you random questions from time to time to help you think “on your feet.” Know the history of Azalea Trail (copy attached). Practice your presentation in front of your parents, friends, and anyone else who will listen. Also, practice in front of a mirror – sitting, standing, and doing your presentation.

Local History & Attractions: Collect information about local tourist attractions and use these in your presentation. Choose one that is your favorite in case the judges ask. An overall knowledge of Mobile history is worthwhile, but don't spend your time memorizing countless details, dates, etc.

General awareness/current events: Begin now to be aware of any current events in the news that might be discussed. Again, great details are unnecessary, but the judges will want to know if you are knowledgeable about current events and whether or not you have an opinion. If there are current controversial subjects, determine what your opinion is and be able to express yourself accordingly. The judges are not looking for “right” answers as much as they want to see how well you handle yourself. Also, be prepared with an answer if you have no clue about what they are asking you!!!

Scholastics – out of your control at this point! This is based on your high school transcript.

Presentation: As a part of the interview, each girl will prepare a 2-3 minute presentation or tour thru the city of Mobile, including tourist attractions and favorite things to do in the city. The judges will be your “audience” so you may pretend to be any character or speaker you choose, i.e. a cruise director, a tour guide guiding a group thru the city, a teacher with her class, etc. Please do not use any props. Be creative and let your personality show through this presentation. Each girl's presentation should be her own work and will be different from everyone else's. Prepare thoroughly and then enjoy the time with the judges!! Try to be as natural and comfortable as possible.

Financial and Time Responsibility:

There is a substantial financial obligation involved in Azalea Trail. Please discuss this with your parents before you plan to try out. The cost for the dress alone is approximately \$3,000-4,000. There are also additional costs during the year. Azalea Trail Maids are also responsible for making all scheduled appearances or finding a suitable replacement.

If there are any questions or anything we can do to help please contact Kayla Christie at kchristie@mcps.com