

Inspiring

Women of Augusta

Project Life
changes lives

Vintage glam
always in style

Paddling along
the Serene 18

Grandmother achieves
college dreams

Dancer's career
breaks barriers

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Miss
Audrey Monroe
LIVING
THE
Glamorous
LIFE

By Charmain Brackett





The sleek, curled blonde bob coupled with the glamorous dresses Rosemary Clooney wore in the musical numbers of the 1954 film “White Christmas” mesmerized a young Audrey Monroe.

She and her mother often watched Turner Classic Movies, and there, she saw actresses and fashion icons such as Grace Kelly and Audrey Hepburn on the screen, but it was Clooney in “White Christmas” a film Monroe first saw when she was six, that made the biggest impact.

“To me, her body and her vibe, her energy and the way she looked was the epitome of glamour and beauty,” said Monroe, a vintage model and influencer who moved to Columbia County several years ago when her husband was assigned to Fort Eisenhower.

Monroe’s grandmother fanned her love of vintage by opening up her own closet.

“She was a huge source of inspiration for me. She gave me crinolines, her jewelry and her platform shoes when I was eight years old. I could play dress up in 1950s’ clothing when I was 8, so that also was another reason that I was already attuned to the fashions because I was given them to play with,” said Monroe.

At 11, she asked her mother to give her Betty’s glam bob.

“She put my hair in sponge rollers. I slept with them overnight, and the next morning, I had the exact hair. My mom did the whole thing. I loved it. I loved it. I loved it. I felt so beautiful and then I realized — I can’t go to school like this. I will be laughed at,” she said.

She brushed the curls out and went to school. She left the dressing-up to days such as Halloween, but those moments stuck with her. As a teen, she gave nods to her love of vintage by incorporating polka dots or red lipstick into her look.

It wasn’t until about five years ago, however, that she fully embraced the look she loved even though it wasn’t in step with what others are wearing. Not only did she transform her exterior, but she had to do some mental transformation as well.

The outward change may have been the easier one.

Transforming into Miss Audrey Monroe

It was in 2018 that Monroe decided to put her old look aside. She spent 2019 researching not only clothing but hair styles and makeup trends for multiple decades in the early part of the 20th century.

And in 2020 and 2021 despite the pandemic, Monroe worked to create a niche for herself and became a model for several vintage reproduction clothing companies.

Caren “Ooollee” Bricker, who owned Vintage Ooollee on Broad Street, was one of Monroe’s biggest supporters in her early quest. Monroe said she’s learned a lot about vintage and vintage reproduction clothing through Bricker, who retired in 2023 and sold her business.

Monroe’s platinum blonde locks, her deep red lips, winged eyeliner and false eyelashes have become part of her signature style.

Many of her photo shoots have taken place in downtown Augusta. Buildings such as the Marion Hatcher Center, the Gertrude Herbert Institute of



Art, the Miller Theater and the Imperial Theatre have shown up in her social media posts. The middle of Broad Street is a great place to shoot photographs especially on a Sunday morning, she said.

Monroe’s main social media platform is Instagram, where she’s amassed about 200,000 followers.

On her Instagram page, she often posts her own tutorials about hair and makeup. It’s right up her alley since she’s worked as an esthetician.

While she has a soft spot for true vintage clothing, she’s spent a lot of time learning about reproduction pieces because true vintage clothing runs small and tends to be expensive.

Women of all body types have come to embrace a vintage feel over the past several years. Many find that it flatters their bodies, and Monroe has worked to help them find their own look.

“The 1950s as a decade exemplified women’s curves,” she said. “Christian Dior’s new look placed an emphasis on waist, hips and bust.”

That hourglass look depends heavily upon good undergarments and shapewear, which she’s become an expert in.

Developing mental fortitude

While changing the outside took work, Monroe also had to change on the inside and develop a mental fortitude.

The 11-year-old who couldn't wear her hair like Betty for "White Christmas" at school grew into a woman who had to make the decision not to care what other people thought.

"My message is to uplift women and instill confidence and empowerment," she said.

The first person to push her out of her own comfort zone was her grandmother.

"My grandmother taught me something when I was in my early 20s," she said. "She lived according to her own rules, and she thrived. I asked her 'how do I become like you?' She said 'never look back and say that you wish you would've. If you're going to regret not doing it, do it.'"

The next person to make a profound impact was Dita Von Teese who she met in Atlanta in 2018.

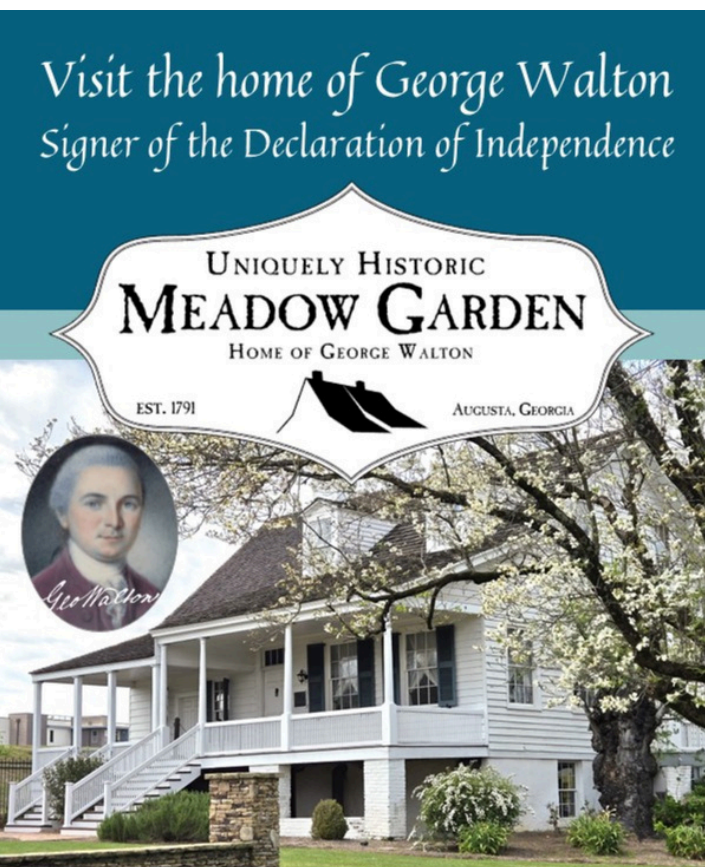
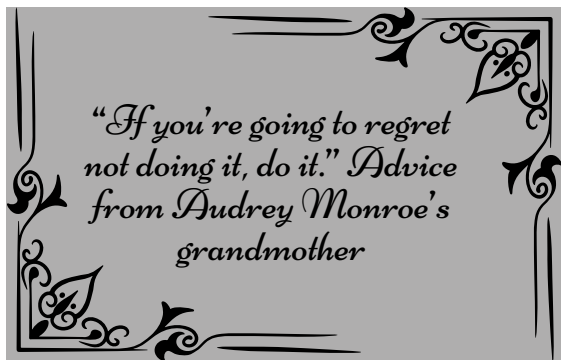
"I'd already read her book. I'd been studying her for five years before meeting her. She's cultivated and honed her image and brand. She was a major source of inspiration for me," she said.

Von Teese's determination to become her own woman, embracing her own style, forced Monroe to examine her image and how she wanted to portray herself.

"There was a moment of 'Here's your line in the sand. Step over it,'" she said

Those philosophies have pushed her through. At times, though, it hasn't been easy. Keyboard warriors have made rude comments on social media calling her a grandma or other names for her vintage look. Often in public people stare and some have even asked her why she wears what she does.

"Those opinions of other people don't matter," she said. "It does hurt, but you have to get to the point where it pings off of you."



Meadow Garden has always been a place for inspiring women ...

Founding Mother Dorothy Walton and the enslaved woman, Cloe, were captured at sea by the British during the Revolution. Dorothy negotiated the release of Cloe's infant son Charlie from the British

George Walton's granddaughter, Octavia Walton LeVert, was a member of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association and wrote *Souvenirs of Travel*.

The Georgia Daughters saved Meadow Garden from demolition and founded one of the earliest house museums.

Women have always played an important role in the history of Meadow Garden. Come for a tour to hear their stories.



On the Augusta Canal at Walton Way and 13th Street
www.historicmeadowgarden.org