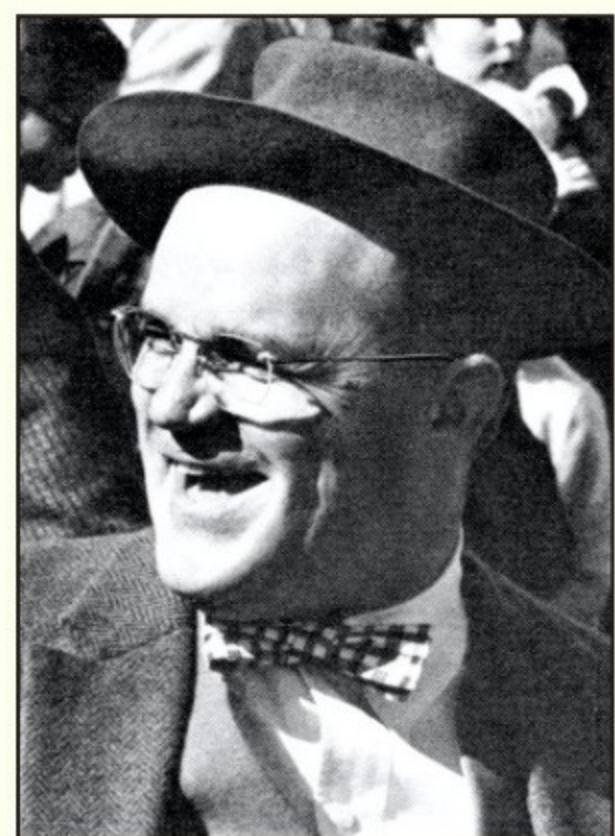


THE LANE FAMILY RESTORATIONS

— Columbia, Warren and Washington Wards —

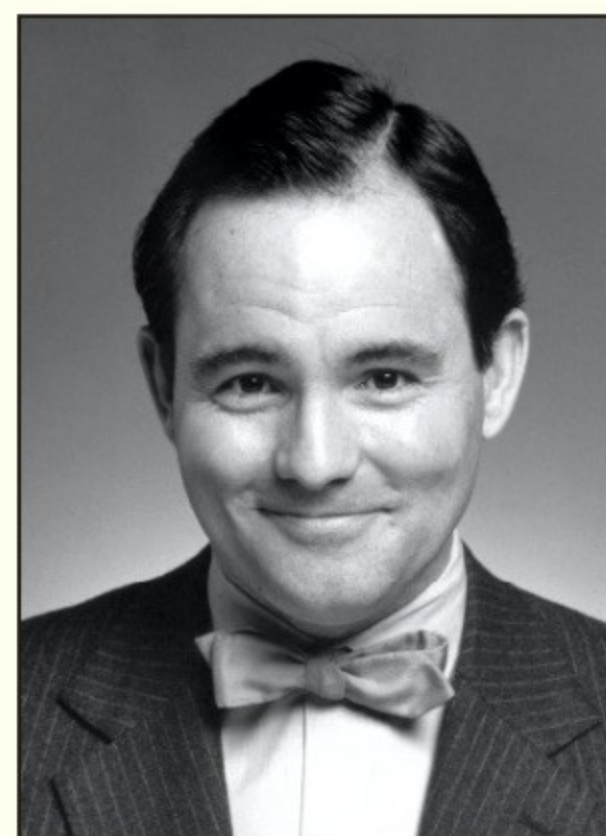
WHO WERE THE LANES?



Mills B. Lane Jr.



Anne Waring Lane



Mills Lane IV

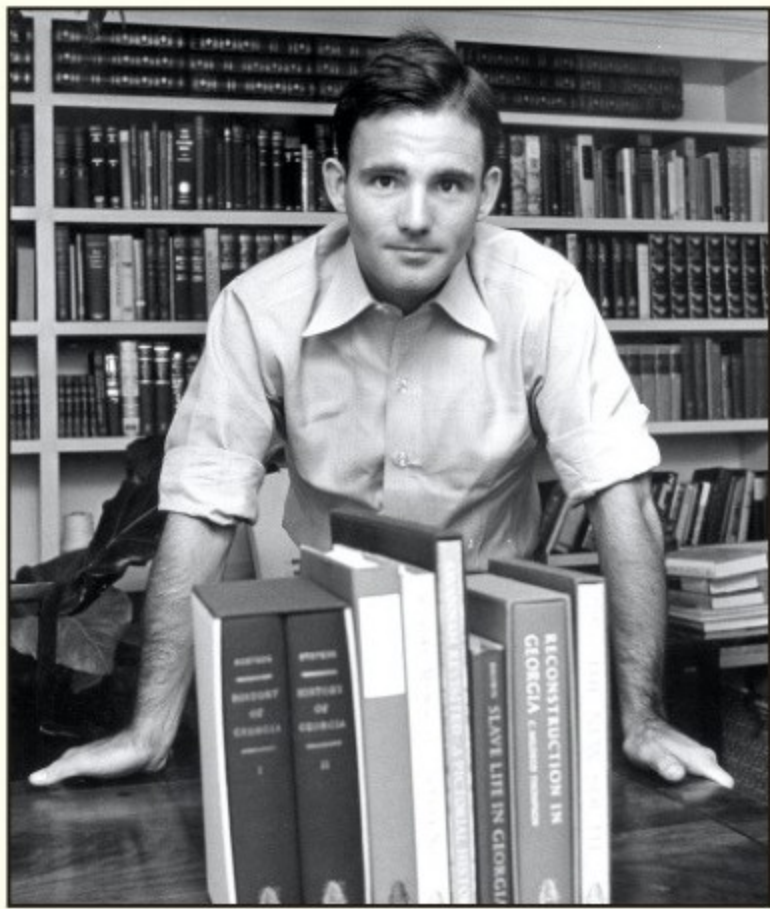
Two generations of one family have played prominent roles in the restoration of Savannah's National Historic Landmark District. Many of their restorations, renovations and new constructions lie within the northeast quadrant of the district—Columbia, Warren and Washington wards. Anne and Mills B. Lane Jr. were active during the 1960s. Except for the restoration of his own house in 1972, Mills Lane IV's projects

were completed during the 1990s. The Lane family restored more than 75 houses and seven public squares within Savannah's National Historic Landmark District.

Due to the different time periods for the two phases of Lane restorations, the thrust of each was somewhat different. Anne and Mills B. Lane Jr. began their restorations shortly after the saving of the Davenport House in 1955, which marked the beginning of Savannah's historic preservation movement and the founding of Historic Savannah Foundation. Mills B. Lane Jr. was the son of the founder of Citizens & Southern Bank, now Bank of America, and moved from Savannah to Atlanta to run the family bank. During the 1960s he and his wife, Anne Waring Lane, also a native Savannahian, decided to contribute to their hometown's restoration movement, with Anne Lane at the helm. Their preservation thrust was to create clusters of attractive houses to entice people to return to downtown living. It included elements of preservation, restoration and renovation, and also reconstructions of houses they deemed at the time too far gone to restore. Anne and Mills B. Lane Jr. saved several of the houses on the west side of town scheduled for demolition by the city to make way for Savannah's new civic center. Those houses were moved by flat-bed truck across town and relocated to fill in "missing teeth" where lots were available within the northeast quadrant. Houses from other areas were also moved, some architecturally altered, and often porches were added to the rears or sides—changes not all of which would be acceptable by today's preservation standards. However, the seeds of restoration and renovation planted in the northeast



quadrant by Anne and Mills B. Lane Jr. played an enormous role in the growth of Savannah's early preservation movement, and today the Warren/Washington square area remains one of the most attractive and sought after neighborhoods within which to live.



Mills Lane IV, their son, always interested in his parents' projects and restoring his own house in 1972, continued the family passion through the 1990s, sometimes solo and sometimes with his mother who was still living. After founding The Beehive Press in 1970, Mills Lane IV spent twenty years studying and researching the history of the building arts in the southern states and produced his award-winning 10-volume series, *Architecture of the Old South*. Knowledge gleaned from that effort imbued his approach to his own restorations. To summarize the difference in approach between the parents and the son, Mills Lane IV is quoted in an article by John Bentley Mays appearing in the *Weekend Post* of the *National Post*, Toronto, in 1998.

"My interest in architecture came in the early 1960s, when my parents started restoring houses in Savannah. They loved Savannah—it was kind of a ruin at that point, and they wanted it to look better. My parents restored as many as 60 houses and maybe seven squares. If they had a principle of restoration, it was to make the house look better."

While quietly critical of his parents' casual "make-it-look-better" notion of restoration, and their lack of much interest in "academic, strictly historical" details of Savannah's 19th-century architectural heritage, he believes that, "in general, the effect was very good. In the last 10 years, I've tried to continue what my parents started, and I've supervised the restoration of about 12 to 15 buildings, trying to pursue a more academic standard."

However, despite his efforts, many of his restorations have had both major and minor alterations. Mays writes in his article:

It is no surprise that Lane has personally initiated...attempts to save Savannah from itself...and from tinkerers and well-meaning, but ignorant, fixer-uppers. Though he's tried to keep intact his changes to façades and edifices after re-sale, by means of legal covenants and informal promises, he wearily confesses that some people who have bought homes he has restored are not keeping the faith. ... "I see myself as Don Quixote. And the Windmills are everywhere."

Between the salutary restorations of Anne and Mills B. Lane Jr., and the academically interpreted ones of their son, Mills Lane IV, the two generations played significant though very different roles in the evolution of Savannah's restoration movement—the elder Lanes in their desire to create neighborhoods of attractive historic homes to encourage people to move downtown again, and their son's desire to return important houses to their near-original splendor and build new houses based on the Classical ideals of Savannah's past.



HIGHLIGHTS of Columbia Ward

1 FREDERICK BALL HOUSES AND COTTAGES, c.1805-10 136, 138 and 140 Habersham Street Restored by Mills Lane IV, 1990-91

This group of houses was the first restoration project and perhaps the most important by Mills Lane IV and his mother after the death of his father and after the restoration of his own house on Pulaski Square in 1972. The large corner house and the small “double house” were built by Dr. Frederick Ball for his residence and two rental houses. In-depth research was undertaken by the architect, Harvie Jones, to determine remaining original material in an effort to restore the houses as authentically as possible yet have them serve as livable residential properties. Early 19th-century carpentry and finishing techniques were used whenever and wherever practicable.

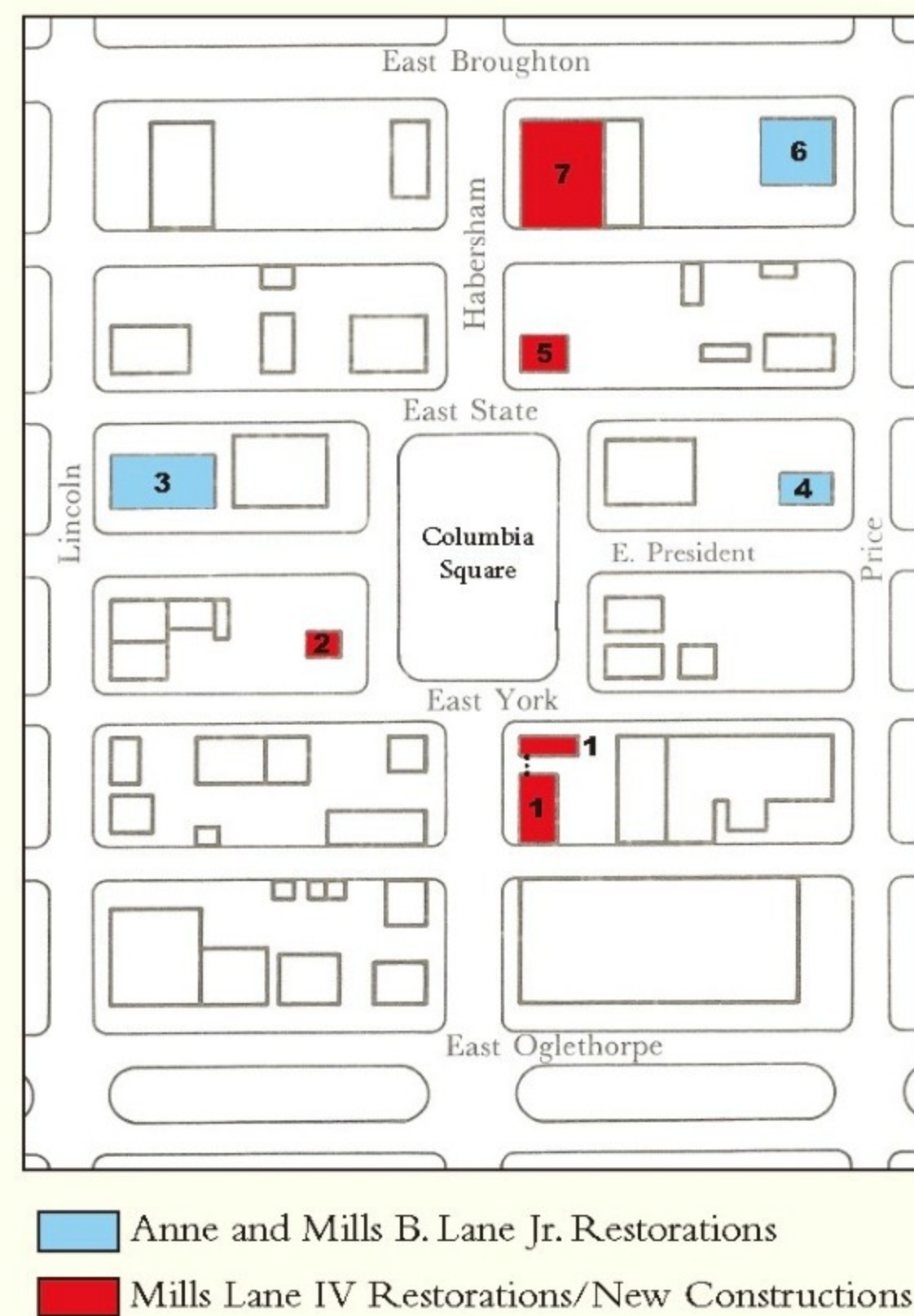
Although the houses were in extremely poor technical condition, almost all of the c.1810 historical elements remained including four Adam-style mantelpieces in the corner house.



had an unusual number of windows, six per room on two sides, many of which had been crudely boarded up. During restoration all window openings were re-established as working windows. Rather than chop

The cottage at 140 Habersham Street had substantial original fittings including the mantels and surround marble, the wainscoting throughout, most of the woodwork, and an attractive archway leading from the front hall to a rear room (now the kitchen). It was proven during the research phase that none of the existing porches on any of the houses, front or back, were original and they were thus replaced with Federal-style portico designs appropriate for the houses and typical for Savannah.

The large corner house



■ Anne and Mills B. Lane Jr. Restorations
■ Mills Lane IV Restorations/New Constructions

up the large 19th-century bedroom spaces with modern closets, new free-standing wardrobes were built for this house, and to further avoid cutting up the major spaces, bathrooms were tucked under stairs or in stairwells where possible. A simple back porch appropriate for the period was added.

The cottages were also carefully restored with minimal modern additions. Since 140 Habersham had apparently been less tampered with, it was decided to restore it more authentically. It was determined that 138 had originally been a mirror image of 140 and therefore 138 was restored to reflect its original floor plan, but historic elements that had already been lost, such as the mantelpieces, wainscoting and hall archway were not falsely recreated. Instead, modern elements compatible with the style of the house were substituted. In both cottages, small rear rooms on each floor were devoted to service functions, and modern dividing walls in

those quadrants only were added to achieve this.

The restoration of the three houses received a 1991 Preservation Award from Historic Savannah Foundation. Since that time, the



cottage at 138 Habersham has undergone substantial changes, both interior and exterior, by several different owners to the point that, except for its front façade, it no longer resembles Mills Lane

Adam-style mantelpiece, 136 Habersham, pre-restoration.

IV's restoration of 1990-91, nor does it retain its meticulously restored 19th-century floor plan. As a result of the many changes to 138, 140 is now under protective covenants through The Beehive Foundation.

2 FREDERICK W. HEINEMAN HOUSE, 1842 125 Habersham Street Restored by Mills Lane IV, 1990-91

Interior moulds and mantels are very simple, with levels three and four having retained most of the original trim and doors. Except for an unusual interior stair arrangement, the house is utterly ordinary. The restoration received an Historic Savannah Foundation Preservation Award in 1992.

3 FRANK DOUGLAS HOUSES, 1883-1892 302-308 East President Street Restored by Anne and Mills B. Lane Jr., 1964