

Oglethorpe Lane Building
Historical Interpretive Marker

Project Description:

The Oglethorpe Lane Building Interpretive Marker will discuss the building site history of the Otis S. Johnson, Ph.D. Cultural Arts Center, including a brief history of the Wetter House, the Savannah Female Asylum and Orphanage, additional site uses, and Elbert Ward.

Marker Location:

Public Right-of-Way near the intersection of Oglethorpe Lane and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, Savannah, GA.

The marker will be located in the public right-of-way in the western corner of the Oglethorpe Lane Building near Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. The marker will be located in the flower bed between the walking paths. The City of Savannah Cultural Resources Department, with consultation from the Municipal Archives, has reviewed and approved the installation at this location. An 811 request will be submitted to ensure the location is clear of all utilities before installation. The marker will be free-standing and installed in-ground.

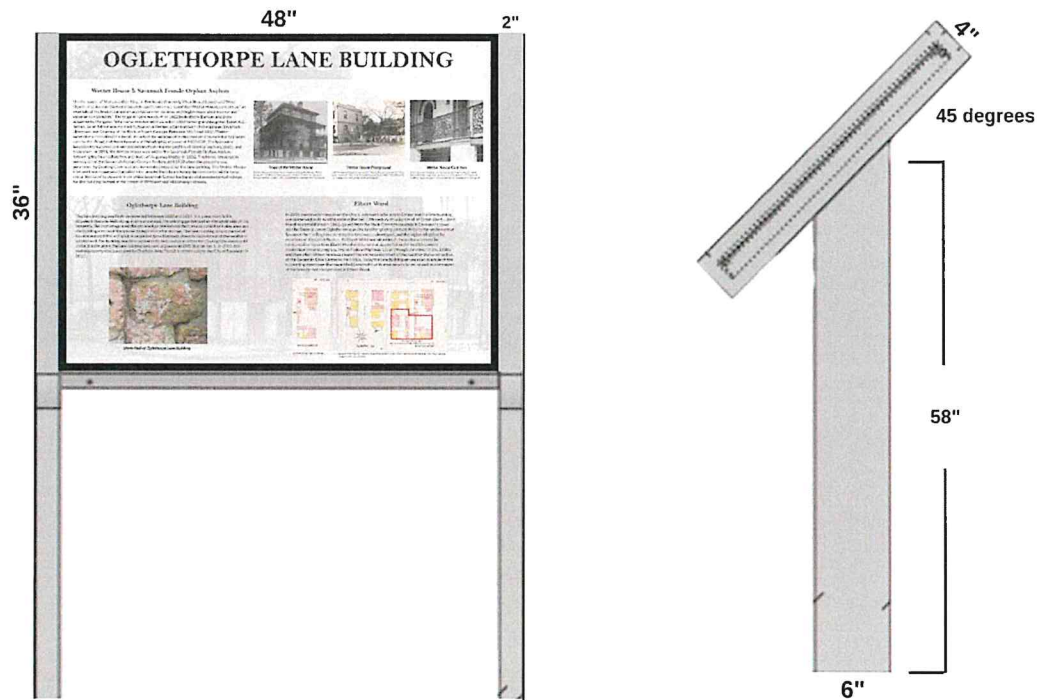


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Design Proposed:



36”H x 48”W

NPS Style Double Traditional Pedestal – Black Powder Coated Aluminum

Aluminum Composite Graphic

The marker is free-standing and will be installed in-ground.

Proposed Text:

Title: Oglethorpe Lane Building

Wetter House & Savannah Female Orphan Asylum

On the corner of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard (formerly West Broad Street) and West Oglethorpe Avenue (formerly South Broad Street) once stood the Wetter House, considered an example of the best in Savannah architecture for its time, with highly decorated interior and exterior components. The original home was built in 1822 by Anthony Barclay and then acquired by Margaret Telfair, who transferred it via will in 1859 to her granddaughter, Sarah A.C. Telfair. Sarah Telfair was married to Augustus Wetter, a German-born civil engineer, Savannah alderman, and Director of the Bank of South Georgia. Between 1853 and 1861, Wetter extensively remodeled the home, including the

Oglethorpe Lane Building Historical Interpretive Marker

addition of elaborate cast-iron exterior balconies cast by the Wood and Perot Foundry of Philadelphia at a cost of \$100,000. The balconies' balustrades featured cast iron medallions featuring the profiles of classical authors, poets, and statesmen. In 1891, the Wetter House was sold to the Savannah Female Orphan Asylum following the financial decline and death of Augustus Wetter in 1882. The home remained in possession of the Savannah Female Orphan Asylum until 1950, when the property was purchased by Dearing Chevrolet and demolished except for the lane building. The Wetter House iron work was repurposed at other sites around the city, including the fence around the terra cotta Red Lion fountain in front of the Savannah Cotton Exchange and as ornamental railings for the building located at the corner of Whitaker and McDonough streets.

Oglethorpe Lane Building

The lane building was likely constructed between 1888 and 1889. It is a one-story brick structure that was built along and incorporated the existing garden wall on the south side of the property. The orphanage used the enclosed garden behind the home as a children's play area, and the building was most likely used during this era for storage. The lane building is constructed of Savannah grey brick and what is suspected to be Bermuda stone in the remnant of the southern garden wall. The building was later added on to and used as an office for Dearing Chevrolet until 1986. In later years, the lane building was used as Savannah EMS Station No. 1. In 2001, the entire property was purchased by Chatham Area Transit and then sold to the City of Savannah in 2011.

Elbert Ward

In 2018, construction began on the Otis S. Johnson, Ph.D. Cultural Arts Center, and the Lane Building was preserved in its existing state as the last 19th-century structure in all of Elbert Ward. Elbert Ward was established in 1801, carved from the Town Common set aside in Savannah's town plan by General James Oglethorpe as public land for grazing animals. Prior to the settlement of Savannah by the English colonists, this land was undeveloped, and the region was inhabited by members of the Creek Nation. As Elbert Ward was developed, it was characterized by residential construction. Elbert Ward and its central square fell victim to 20th-century modernization and progress, first as Federal Highway 17 cut through the center in the 1930s and then when Urban Renewal cleared the entire eastern half of the ward for the construction of the Savannah Civic Center in the 1960s. Today, the lane building serves as an example of the supporting structures that once filled Savannah's utilitarian service lanes, as well as a reminder of the history that has been lost in Elbert Ward.

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Front of the Wetter House

This is the location of the Wetter House on the corner of West Broad Street and West Oglethorpe Avenue, Savannah, Georgia. The location is marked on the map.



Wetter House Playground

This is the location of the Wetter House playground on the corner of West Broad Street and West Oglethorpe Avenue, Savannah, Georgia. The location is marked on the map.



Wetter House Cast Iron

This is the location of the Wetter House cast iron railing on the corner of West Broad Street and West Oglethorpe Avenue, Savannah, Georgia. The location is marked on the map.

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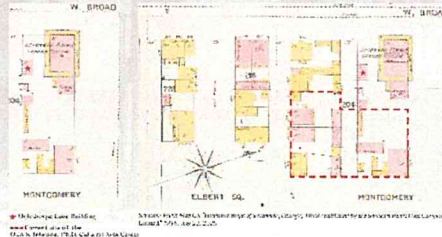
The lane building was likely constructed between 1888 and 1889. It is a one-story brick structure that was built along, and incorporated, the existing garden wall on the south side of the property. The orphanage used the enclosed garden behind the home as a children's play area and the building was most likely used during this era for storage. The lane building is constructed of Savannah grey brick and what is suspected to be Bermuda stone in the remnant of the southern garden wall. The building was later added on to and used as an office for Dearing Chevrolet until 1986. In later years, the lane building was used as Savannah EMS Station No. 1. In 2001, the entire property was purchased by Chatham Area Transit and then sold to the City of Savannah in 2011.



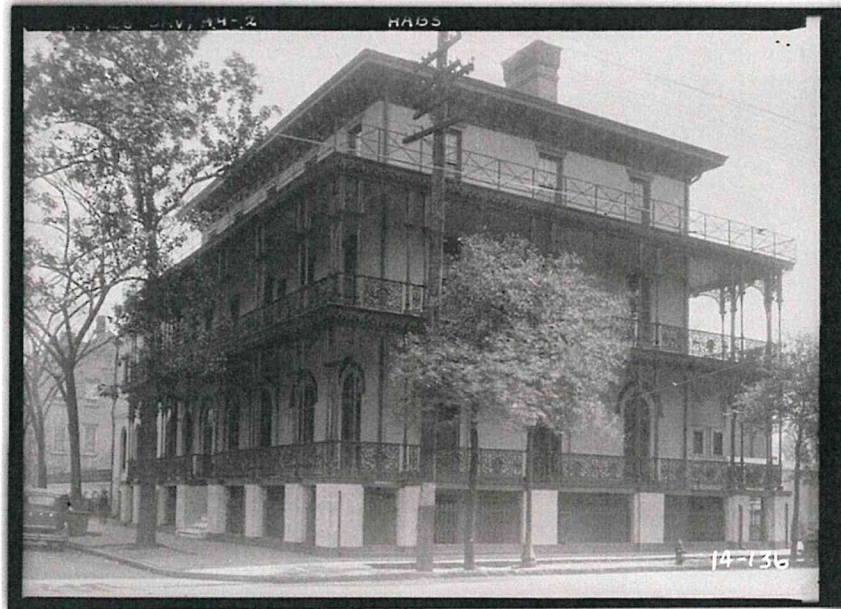
Stone Wall of Oglethorpe Lane Building

Elbert Ward

In 2018, construction began on the Otis S. Johnson, Ph.D. Cultural Arts Center and the lane building was preserved in its existing state as the last 19th century structure in all of Elbert Ward. Elbert Ward was established in 1801, carved from the Town Common set aside in Savannah's town plan by General James Oglethorpe as public land for grazing animals. Prior to the settlement of Savannah by the English colonists, this land was undeveloped, and the region inhabited by members of the Creek Nation. As Elbert Ward was developed, it was characterized by residential construction. Elbert Ward and its central square fell victim to 20th century modernization and progress, first as Federal Highway 17 cut through the center in the 1930s and then when Urban Renewal cleared the entire eastern half of the ward for the construction of the Savannah Civic Center in the 1960s. Today the lane building serves as an example of the supporting structures that once filled Savannah's utilitarian service lanes, as well as a reminder of the history that has been lost in Elbert Ward.

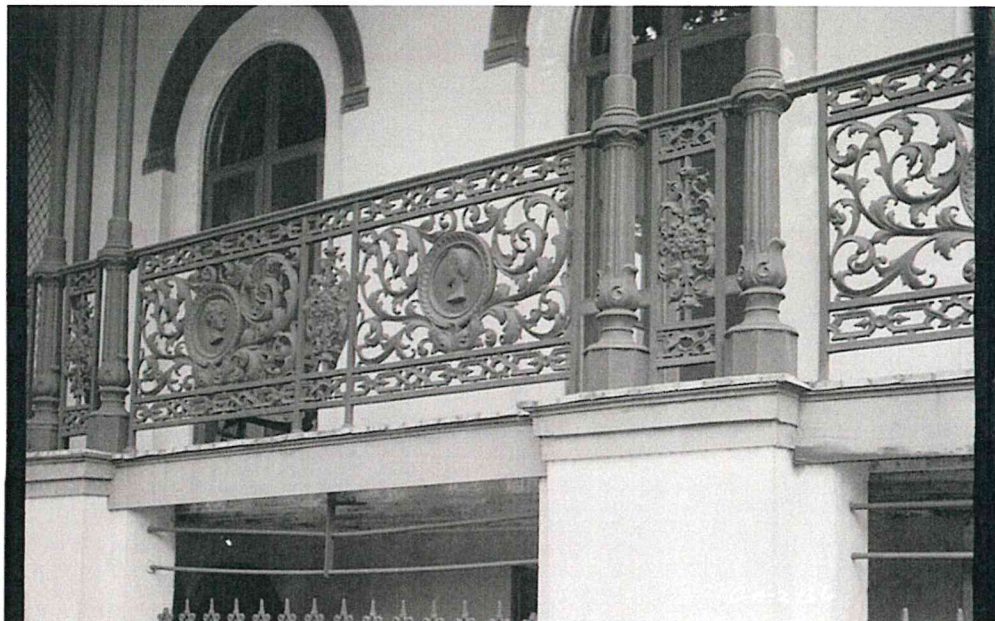


Oglethorpe Lane Building
Historical Interpretive Marker



Front of the Wetter House

Historic American Buildings Survey, Creator, and Augustus Wedder. Wetter House, 425 Oglethorpe Street, Savannah, Chatham County, GA. Savannah Georgia Chatham County, 1933. Documentation Compiled After. Photograph.



Wetter House Cast Iron

Historic American Buildings Survey, Creator, and Augustus Wedder. Wetter House, 425 Oglethorpe Street, Savannah, Chatham County, GA. Savannah Chatham County Georgia, 1933. Documentation Compiled After. Photograph.

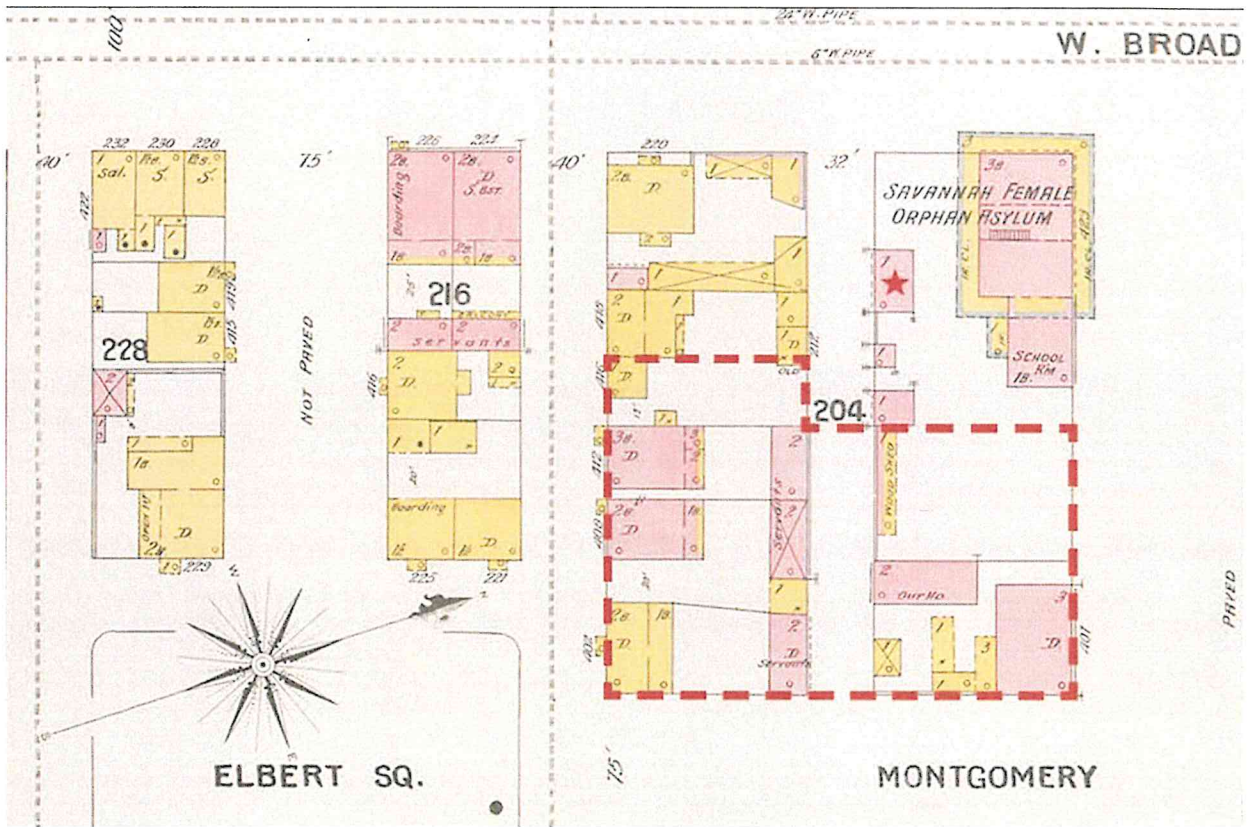
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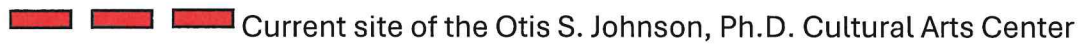
Wetter House Playground

Foltz Photography Studio (Savannah, GA). "Wetter House, Savannah, GA." Photograph. Savannah: 1948. From Georgia Historical Society: GHS 1360-PH-08-23-04, Cordray-Foltz Photography Studio photographs.

Oglethorpe Lane Building
Historical Interpretive Marker



Sanborn-Perris Map Co. "Insurance maps of Savannah, Georgia, 1898 / published by the Sanborn-Perris Map Company Limited." 1898. July 22, 2025.



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Sources:

Gunn, Meyerhoff, Shay Architects, 2014.

Historic American Buildings Survey, Creator, and Augustus Wedder. *Wetter House, 425 Oglethorpe Street, Savannah, Chatham County, GA*. Savannah Chatham County Georgia, 1933. Documentation Compiled After. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/ga0067/>.

Spracher, Luciana M. *Lost Savannah: Photographs from the Collection of the Georgia Historical Society*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Pub, 2003, 32.

Unattributed, "Historic Home Comes Down," *Savannah Morning News*, December 17, 1959.

Curl, Eric. "Cultural Arts Center Site Links Savannah's Past, Future." *Savannah Morning News*, April 12, 2014.

Municipal Archives, and Luciana Spracher, *Historical Context: Savannah Cultural Arts Center Property* § (2018).

Ledvina, Kathy, to W. Ray Luce, 2002.

Oglethorpe Lane Building
Historical Interpretive Marker

Sweet, Julie. "Yamacraw Indians." New Georgia Encyclopedia, last modified Jul 15, 2020.
<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/yamacraw-indians>

Text Size and Font:

Title: Font Bell MT, 180pt

Subheading: Font Bell MT, 50pt

Body: Font Lato, 33pt

Marker Themes:

The marker addresses the themes of architecture, the evolution, and the history of the Otis S. Johnson, Ph.D. Cultural Arts Center's building site, and the development of Elbert Ward as part of the General James Oglethorpe town plan.

Architecture: The marker discusses the architecture and evolution of the building site from the Wetter House (1822), the Savannah Female Orphan Asylum (1882), the Oglethorpe Lane Building (1888), and the Otis S. Johnson, Ph.D. Cultural Arts Center (2018). The marker indicates the construction material of the Oglethorpe Lane Building's Savannah grey brick and Bermuda Stone as part of the original wall and building construction. The marker discusses the reuse and relocation of the decorative cast iron work to other locations in Savannah.

Streets, Lanes, and Sidewalks: The marker discusses the history of Elbert Ward from the area's original Creek Nation Native Americans to Oglethorpe's town plan, to the modernization of the surrounding streets due to the automobile, and the construction of the Savannah Civic Center in the 1960s.

Local History: Anthony Barclay constructed the Wetter House in 1822, and it was acquired by Margaret Telfair in 1859, and transferred the property to her granddaughter, Sarah A.C Telfair in 1859. Sarah A.C. Telfair, married to Augustus Wetter, were the owners and primary residents of the Wetter House between 1853 and 1861.

Costs:

Marker Fabrication Cost: \$3,251.00 (Exact cost to be determined when Text is finalized)

Installation Costs: \$250.00

Funding is secured by the City of Savannah's approved FY25 Budget.

Funding is secured for the Escrow Payment by the City of Savannah.

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Historical Interpretive Marker

Secured Funding:

The funding for the interpretative marker is from the FY25 City of Savannah, Cultural Resources Department's annual budget. The budget was approved by the Mayor and Aldermen on December 19th, 2024. Agenda Item: # 47: *Adoption of the 2025 Service Program and Budget, Five-Year Capital Plan.*

The Cultural Resources Department has budgeted and secured \$3,600.00 for the construction (\$3,251.00) and installation (\$250.00) of the Oglethorpe Lane Building Historical Marker.

Escrow Payment:

The escrow payment for construction, installation, and maintenance is included in the annual Cultural Resources Department's facility maintenance budget. Funding is secured by the City of Savannah. The marker is being installed by the City of Savannah and will be the property of the City of Savannah Mayor and Aldermen, and the City of Savannah will be responsible for all future maintenance of the marker.

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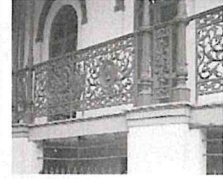
Front of the Wetter House

This photograph was taken from the corner of West Oglethorpe Avenue and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. The Wetter House was demolished in 1950. The photograph was taken in 1987. Photo by Savannah Photo Services.



Wetter House Playground

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Wetter House Cast Iron

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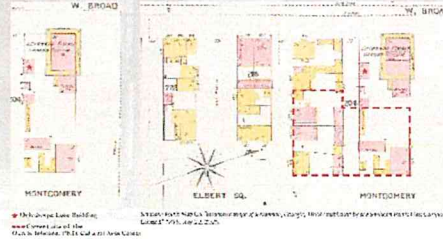
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This map shows the location of the lane building in Elbert Ward, Savannah, Georgia. The lane building is located at the corner of West Oglethorpe Avenue and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. The map was created in 1987. Photo by Savannah Photo Services.

Proposed Marker Design