

**Ainsley Hall Decision****Preservation Drive Voted for Mansion**

By MONT MORTON

Staff Writer for The State

Members of the Historic Columbia Foundation have voted to launch an all-out campaign for more than \$400,000 in public pledges and contributions to preserve Ainsley Hall Mansion.

At a decisive meeting Thursday members heard speeches ranging from irrepressible optimism to cautious conservatism on plans for possible restoration of the structure designed by Robert Mills in 1823.

Optimism won, by a vote of 55 to two. Details for the movement, which may well be the grandest single-purpose campaign of its nature in Columbia's history, will be announced soon by a Foundation committee.

The only structure in Columbia recognized as nationally significant by the Department of the Interior, Ainsley Hall House was described as "Robert Mills' finest work of domestic architecture" by Charles E. Lee, director of the State Archives Department.

Lee was among a host of members appealing to the group to preserve the structure. Members voted on whether to abandon the project or conduct a systematic public campaign for funds.

Today the structure stands boarded and fenced on the north side of the 1700 block of Taylor Street. Until recently it was surrounded by other buildings of the Columbia Bible College. Since the college has moved to its new campus on Monticello Road, the structure and entire block is up for sale.

Columbia Bible College officials have offered the historic Columbia Foundation a 90-day option on the property, at a price of \$425,000. It is estimated that an additional \$25,000 would be needed to begin restoration of the house.

A difference of opinions among Foundation trustees prompted Thursday's vote. Several trustees had cautioned that \$200,000 plus another \$250,000 in pledges would have to be raised, a feat they viewed as "impossible."

"Every great movement has a certain amount of impracticality about it," argued one proponent of the campaign.

Support came spiritedly from several sources. Encouragement came from City Planning Director Philip A. Stedfast, who urged "a

realistic, energetic subscription campaign . . . this is a challenge. . ."

City Councilman and mayor pro-tem Hyman Rubin, a Foundation in some degree honor and respect the past."

The central location of the structure enhances the opportunity of beautifying the entire block, he

pointed out, and further possibility of a site for a state museum.

After any reasonable down payment on the property and acquisition of a substantial number of tinued, the five-year pledges, Rubin continued, the project could be assured of success. "A number of persons are intensely devoted and interested in this project. They should be allowed the opportunity to conduct this campaign."

Lee was the only speaker to refer to the structure as the "Robert Mills House." In his eloquently erudite appeal, the State Archives director pointed to South Carolina's pride in Colonial leadership and devotion to things cultural, but added that "Columbia has never grown up to the fact that it's the state capital," noting the irrevocable loss and destruction here of several other historically significant homes in recent years.

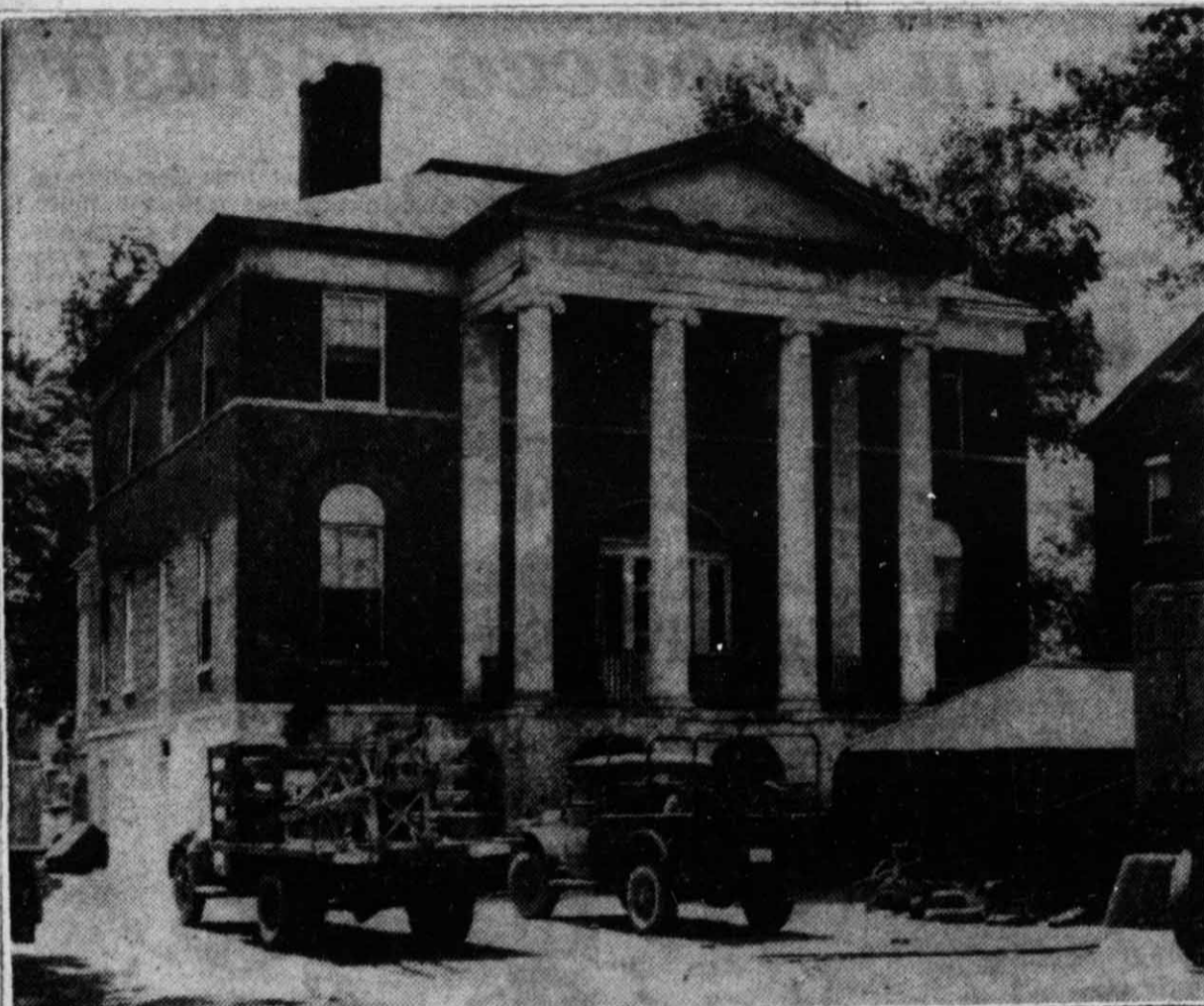
Joining him was Mrs. Bedford Moore, who said resolutely "We preserve the historic landmark.

Various efforts during the past can do it. . . I feel the Foundation must make an effort."

abandoned. Robert Mills was born in Charleston and was America's studied with Thomas Jefferson.

Mills made the original design for the Washington Monument, and in Washington was also architect for buildings now housing the United States Treasury, the Patent Office and the old Post Office Building.

The mansion here was built by Ainsley Hall, an early and wealthy Columbia merchant and cotton broker. Not long before Hall asked Mills to design his new home, the architect had spent a year beside Thomas Jefferson, helping with plans for Monticello. The mansion, now the object of one of the most ambitious projects in Columbia's history, shows the Jeffersonian influence.

**Ainsley Hall****Today and After Proposed Restoration**

THE STATE—Columbia, S. C., Friday, June 8, 1962