

(County Jails of Ben Hill, Bertie, Brooks, and Turner Counties TR)

COUNTY: Ben Hill (code 017)

GEORGIA ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC PROPERTIES SURVEY-INVENTORY FORM

NO. 1



I. IDENTIFICATION

PROPERTY NAME: Ben Hill County Jail HISTORIC NAME: Ben Hill County Jail ✓
 STREET ADDRESS: Pine Street ✓ CITY: Fitzgerald, Georgia ✓
 PRESENT OWNER: Ben Hill County Commission MAILING ADDRESS: Ben Hill County Courthouse
 Chairman Lawrence Adkinson
 CITY: Fitzgerald STATE: Georgia ZIP CODE: 31750
 CURRENT USE: county jail ACREAGE: less than 1 acre
 U.S.G.S. QUADRANGLE Fitzgerald East, GA U.T.M. REFERENCE: Z17/E286790/N3510720
 V.B.D. OR TAX MAP NUMBER: Southwest corner of block as shown on attached map. This is all the land that is associated with the jail.

II. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND PRESENT CONDITION: Early twentieth century Romanesque style jail; T-shaped in plan, two stories high on raised basement, front (south) facade with center projecting stepped gable over palladian window and a central one story gabled portico entrance with square wood posts; double hung windows, 1/1 lights, plain stone lintels and lug sills; constructed of stretcher bond red brick, hipped roof; battered first story walls on southwest corner, which old photographs reveal to have extended into an elaborately corbeled battlemented tower with round arched windows and pyramidal roof. Truncation of tower occurred between 1920 and 1935; roofline now (CONTD)

III. HISTORY

ORIGINAL OWNER: Ben Hill County ORIGINAL USE: county jail
 ARCHITECT/BUILDER: J.Reginald MacEachron, HISTORIC ACREAGE: less than 1 acre
 Architect Atlanta, GA; Manly & Lamon Const. Co., Dalton, GA.
 DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1909 DATE(S) OF ALTERATIONS: ca. 1925 (tower re-removed); 1937 (porch); 1981 (interior renovated)
 HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (FROM ORIGINS TO PRESENT): The Ben Hill County Jail was built in 1909 as the first jail for the county, which was created 1906. Fourteen architects submitted proposals for the courthouse and jail to the county commission on December 10, 1908: Chamberlain, C.E. Chest, H.K. Chapman, M.F. Morris, T.F. Lockwood of Columbus, F.P. Milburn, W.K. Dunn, W.B. Camp, Edwards & Walters of Atlanta, H.H. Huggins, J.R. MacEachron, Bruce & Everett of Atlanta, P.E. Dennis of Macon, and C.R. Ellis of Macon. Ultimately, H.H. Huggins of Roanoke, Va. was chosen as architect for the courthouse and J.R. MacEachron of Atlanta for the jail. On February 11, 1909, a low bid of (CONTD)

IV. SIGNIFICANCE

N.R. AREA(S) OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, law, politics/govt. LEVEL: Local
 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL): The Ben Hill County jail is architecturally significant as Fitzgerald's prime Romanesque style structure. Although its architecture was compromised by the removal of its battlemented tower and original portico, it still retains architectural features such as Tudor arches and battered walls that are unique in the area. It is also significant for its fire proof construction. The jail is significant in terms of politics and government as one of the first two structures created by the newly formed Ben Hill County government. It is significant in terms of law as the county's only jail since 1909. In addition, such features (CONTD)

V. SOURCES

FORM PREPARED BY: Haley Blanchard ORGANIZATION: South Georgia Area Planning and Development Commission
 ADDRESS: 327 W. Savannah Avenue TELEPHONE NUMBER: 912 247-3494
 Valdosta, GA 31601
 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS: Historic Structures Field Survey: Ben Hill County, Georgia
 SOURCES OF INFORMATION: Interview with Ruth Pryor (Sheriff Griner's widow), Minutes, County Purposes, Vol. I, Ben Hill County; Remembered Places, Leftover Pieces.



II. Description ... continued

shows slight demarcation where tower was removed. Old photograph shows original front porch (replaced in 1937) as a flat roofed portico with square modillions topped with a surrounding balustrade. The front (south) and west (recessed portico) entrances feature Tudor arches. An arcaded corbel table encircles all but the front left corner of the cornice; a string course encircles the entire structure at the second story window sill level. The south entrance leads to the two story original sheriff's living quarters (paneled and remodeled over the years), while the west entrance leads to the cell portion of the jail and spiral metal stairway leading to the second story gallows and cells. The prison portion of the jail has concrete floors, riveted strap steel cells, plaster over brick walls, and a flat corrugated metal ceiling with concrete encased metal beams. The building is now undergoing interior renovation in order to meet code requirements.

The Ben Hill County Jail, facing one of Fitzgerald's original brick streets, is located on the same city block as the courthouse (now separated back-to-back by an alleyway). The lot also contains a non-historic small brick garage building built in 1951 as a replacement for a wooden garage shed.

III. History... continued

\$12,426 was let to the Manly and Lamon Construction Co. of Dalton, Georgia (competing bidders were the Pauly Jail Co., Stewart Jail Co., F.M. Dodson Co. and Little and Phillips.) On September 2, 1909, roughly seven months later, the county commissioners approved the completed work.

Sheriffs and their families lived in the front living quarters of the jail from 1909 until the 1950's, according to Mrs. Ruth Pryor, widow of Sheriff Griner, who was killed in office. The Griner family lived in the jail from 1937 to 1952.

The Ben Hill County jail has served continuously as the county prison until recently, when prisoners were temporarily moved so the jail could be renovated to meet state code requirements.

IV. Significance....continued

as the sheriff's living quarters, hanging platform, trapdoor, and death cell represent changes in the local and state systems of criminal justice.

BEN HILL COUNTY JAIL
Fitzgerald, Ben Hill County, Georgia

Scale: unknown

Source: Ben Hill County Tax Assessors Office

Date: c. 1981

Key: The nominated property is outlined
in a heavy black line.

North: ↑

