
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Fitzgerald Commercial Historic District
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by Ocmulgee, Thomas, Magnolia, and
 Lee Streets
city, town Fitzgerald (n/a) **vicinity of**
county Ben Hill **code** GA 017
state Georgia **code** GA **zip code** 31750

not for publication

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:

- private**
- public-local**
- public-state**
- public-federal**

Category of Property

- building(s)**
- district**
- site**
- structure**
- object**

Number of Resources within Property:

	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
buildings	79	45
sites	1	0
structures	1	0
objects	1	0
total	82	45

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 3

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Elizabeth A. Lyon
Signature of certifying official

3/3/92
Date

Elizabeth A. Lyon
State Historic Preservation Officer,
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

In my opinion, the property () meets () does not meet the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other, explain:

see continuation sheet

**Entered in the
National Register**

Alvons Byers 4/28/92

Signature, Keeper of the National Register Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

COMMERCE:business, professional, financial institution, warehouse
EDUCATION:library
GOVERNMENT:courthouse, correctional facility, post office
RECREATION AND CULTURE:theater, monument
LANDSCAPE:park

Current Functions:

COMMERCE:business, professional, warehouse
RECREATION AND CULTURE:auditorium, monument
LANDSCAPE:park
GOVERNMENT:courthouse, correctional facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

LATE VICTORIAN:Romanesque
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:Classical Revival, Colonial Revival
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS:Commercial Style
MODERN MOVEMENT:Art Deco

Materials:

foundation granitoid, brick
walls brick, granitoid
roof asphalt
other

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The Fitzgerald Commercial Historic District is the historic downtown business district of Fitzgerald, a small south Georgia city located in Ben Hill County. The district includes a commercial core of buildings, mostly one- and two-story brick structures, many of which have elaborate brick, stone, granitoid (a locally produced rusticated, hollow-core, concrete block), pressed-metal, and cast-iron details. Landmark buildings include the former Carnegie Library, the former U. S. Post Office, the five-story Garbutt-Donovan building, and the Grand Theater. A service station, a church, several large one-story brick warehouses, and other free-standing commercial buildings are also located in the district, as are the previously listed county courthouse, jail, and the Holtzendorf Apartments (photographs 12, 15, 30). Established in 1895, the downtown grid-iron pattern of streets and alleys corresponds identically with the land subdivision found throughout the remainder of the city.

The majority of buildings within the district are the attached commercial building type typically built in small cities from the late 19th to the early 20th century. The concentration of attached commercial structures forms the district core, while the other types of structures are found around the district edges and tend to be free

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standing. The commercial buildings are of brick or granitoid construction, one to five stories in height, set flush with the sidewalk, with common front facade features such as a decorative cornice, upper double-hung windows, storefronts with transom windows, large display windows, recessed entrances, cast-iron columns, and segmentally-arched windows (photographs 17, 21, 24, 25, 27, 28). As is typical for this type of commercial structure, storefront modernizations have been made on many of the commercial buildings, yet a majority retain the architectural details that define their upper facades, and some original storefronts remain. The 19th-century Victorian commercial stylistic influences and the 20th-century Neoclassical Revival, Stripped Classical, and Art Deco influences are all found in the commercial area.

Several "landmark" commercial buildings stand out because of their notable stylistic features. A former hotel located at 202-204 E. Central Avenue is one of the earliest buildings in the district. Constructed in 1897, the building is an example of Victorian-era commercial architecture with an ornamental cornice, and segmentally arched windows (photograph 5). Another late 19th-century commercial building is a frame, two-story structure with a full-front porch formerly used as a boarding house (photograph 14). The J. H. Goodman Block is a two-story masonry building constructed in 1902. Its front facade is made of granitoid, and features stained-glass windows (photograph 22). The 1915 Carnegie Library is Stripped Classical style, two-story, brick building designed by architect C. E. Choate (photograph 3). The 1936 Grand Theater is a prominent brick structure with Art Deco details (photograph 29).

Government buildings in the district are represented by the post office, the county courthouse, and jail. The former post office is located at the west end of the district along Central Avenue. The 1918 building is a brick and granite structure with a Neoclassical Revival style portico and cornice (photograph 32). It was designed using plans from the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect, James A. Wetmore. The building is now owned by the county and used for offices. The 1909 courthouse located at the east end of the district was designed by H. H. Huggins and is also an example of the Neoclassical Revival style. The county jail, located on Sheridan Street was designed by J. Reginald MacEachron. The 1909 Romanesque Revival style brick, two-story building continues to serve as the county jail.

The Central United Methodist Church constructed in the early 20th-century with Colonial Revival influences is located along Central Avenue at the west end of the district (photograph 1). The two-story, brick, 1915 Dixie Peanut Company and several historic warehouses are all located in the north end of the district (photograph 13). The

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warehouses are typical rectangular brick and stucco structures with parapet front facades, segmentally arched windows, and corbelled brick cornices (photograph 6, 9, 11). A 1930s Coca-Cola Bottling Company and a Ford Car Dealership are located in the south end of the district (photograph 23).

A dominant landscape element in the district is the landscaped median which runs the length of Main Street and along Central Avenue. Granite curbing and some brick street pavers remain. Street trees are planted in various locations along the sidewalks and in the median. A historic drinking foundation, dedicated to "Mother Enterprise" in 1908 is also located in the median along Central Avenue (photograph 3).

Noncontributing buildings within the district boundaries include a few nonhistoric buildings constructed after the period of significance and historic buildings that have been extremely altered. Vacant lots are also located throughout the district.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

Architecture
Commerce
Community Planning and Development
Landscape Architecture

Period of Significance:

1895-1942

Significant Dates:

1895

Significant Person(s):

n/a

Cultural Affiliation:

n/a

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

C. E. Choate - Carnegie Library
James A. Wetmore - U.S. Post Office
George C. Thompson - Garbutt-Donovan Building
H.H. Huggins - Ben Hill County Courthouse
J. Reginald MacEachron - Ben Hill County Jail

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Significance of property, justification of criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above:

Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)

The Fitzgerald Commercial Historic District is significant as the historic commercial center of the small south Georgia city of Fitzgerald.

The district is significant in architecture for its concentration of attached commercial buildings, freestanding governmental and religious buildings, and industrial and warehouse structures that together make up the city's historic downtown business district. The attached, one-to five-story, brick, and granitoid commercial buildings form the core of the district, and are concentrated along the major streets of Central, Pine, Sherman, Main, and Grant. These commercial buildings represent the evolution of small-town commercial architecture from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. The design of these buildings follows the pattern of the small-town, commercial building type with a first floor storefront, and upper-floor office or storage space. The upper facade is generally emphasized by stylistic features that range from simple to elaborate cornice, window, and storefront details. Stylistic influences represented include Victorian Commercial of the late-19th century, to the Stripped Classical, Neoclassical Revival, Colonial Revival, and Art Deco of the early 20th century. Prominent buildings within the district include the five-story Garbutt-Donovan Building, the Grand Theater, and the Ford Dealership which represent important commercial and civic enterprises found in the downtown business district. The district also contains examples of an unusual building material, granitoid, produced locally by the Fitzgerald Granitoid Company.

The Neoclassical Revival post office, the courthouse, and the Romanesque Revival style jail are good examples of governmental buildings in small Georgia cities inspired by early 20th century architectural trends. Several warehouses, the Dixie Peanut Company, and the Coca-Cola Bottling Company are excellent examples of the straightforward, brick, utilitarian structures with large openings, and simple architectural details.

The early 20th century, two-story, brick Central United Methodist Church is an example of the Colonial Revival style. Architectural elements include a large centered gabled portico, a bell tower, arched windows with keystones, and quoins.

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In the area of commerce, the district is significant as the historic downtown business center that served Fitzgerald and Ben Hill County. Fitzgerald was first surveyed and laid out in 1895, and has always been the largest city in the county. Commercial development in the district included retail, banking, service, warehousing, and industrial enterprises. Retail and banking establishments were located along the main thoroughfares of the city and are represented today by the attached commercial buildings that line Pine, Sherman, Main, and Grant Streets. The presence of the automobile and its 20th-century impact on the downtown area is represented by the Ford Dealership on Grant St. and the gas station at the southwest corner of South Sheridan and East Central. The industrial interests of the town are represented by the remaining warehouse and industrial structures along Central Avenue and the Coca-Cola Bottling Company on the northeast corner of East Magnolia and South Grant.

In terms of community planning and development, the district is significant as the commercial portion of a unique planned community laid out in a grid pattern with a four-square town plan. The developer, P. H. Fitzgerald, had organized this town as a settlement for Civil War veterans from across the country. Development of the commercial core began in 1895, following the completion of the city's survey. Central Avenue, bisecting the city on an east-west course, and Main Street, which runs north-south, intersect in the center of the city, dividing Fitzgerald's 1000 acres into four wards of equal size. Each individual ward was divided into four blocks, with each block subsequently subdivided into 16 squares. 36 squares, of 28 lots each, at the city's center were reserved for commercial development. Most of the historic commercial district is located within the city's third ward. The north-south streets inside this district were named after Union and Confederate generals, and the east-west avenues after native southern trees. The idea for a planned Civil War community is unique; however, the grid pattern used typifies town development in many of Georgia's smaller cities and towns. The divided street pattern is also an unusual features not found in the majority of gridiron planned communities.

In terms of landscape architecture, the district is significant for its important streetscape elements. The intact street medians on Central Avenue and Main Street, dating from the 1890s, are a planning and landscape feature that gives these streets a dramatic appearance. The medians provide a park-like setting in downtown with large trees and shrubs. A historic monument dedicated to "Mother Enterprise" is located along the Central Avenue median. Other important landscape features include the granite curbing, hexagonal sidewalk pavers, and the remaining brick-paved streets.

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National Register Criteria

The Fitzgerald Commercial Historic District meets Criteria A for its associations with the founding and commercial development of the city's central business district. The commercial section is a part of a planned community and reflects the panorama of American life. The commercial buildings, warehouses, industrial buildings, and a church show the economic vitality of a growing community from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. These historic buildings, all arranged according to a grid street plan are representative of a vital community that contributed to the successful establishment and development of Fitzgerald.

The district meets National Register Criteria C for its relatively intact concentration of late 19th- and early 20th-century buildings representing particular styles, plans, and construction methods commonly used during this time period. The district contains examples of local interpretations of architectural styles--Victorian Commercial, Stripped Classical, Colonial Revival, and Neoclassical Revival--which were commonly used in small Georgia towns during this timeperiod. The district also contains examples granitoid, a concrete block building material, used for foundations as well as entire building facades. The district includes a range of significant historic landscape features such as granite curbing, brick street pavers, hexagonal sidewalk pavers, park-like medians, a granite monument, and the intact grid pattern of the original city plan which all contribute to the sense of historic environment.

Period of significance (justification)

1895 - establishment of the town, the town plan; beginning of
Fitzgerald's commercial development
1942 - 50 year cut-off

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

Contributing

79 contributing buildings
1 contributing site (public landscaping)
1 contributing structure (street plan)
1 contributing object (drinking fountain/monument)

Noncontributing

45 noncontributing buildings

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Developmental history/historic context (if applicable)

Fitzgerald, Georgia, was founded in the summer of 1895 when settlers from across the United States began moving into what was then the north central portion of Irwin County. One hundred thousand acres of South Georgia's timberland had been purchased by the American Tribune Soldier's Colony Stock Company, a stock company organized by Philander H. Fitzgerald, editor of the Indianapolis, Indiana, American Tribune.

Fitzgerald conceived the idea of a colony in the south for Union veterans and their families as an escape from cold winters, economic depression, and drought ruined farmlands. He wrote of this concept in his newsletter, a publication which enjoyed wide circulation. Letters flooded the newspaper urging Fitzgerald to begin the colony.

In 1887, Fitzgerald expanded his business interests by purchasing a small newspaper known as the Veteran's Review. Upon purchasing the publication, Fitzgerald immediately changed the paper's name to the American Tribune. By 1891, the newspaper's circulation had increased to 26,000 and was still growing. The American Tribune would be the vehicle by which Fitzgerald would advertise his desire to establish a colony for Civil War veterans and their families. Upon publishing an article expressing his desire, Fitzgerald's office was flooded with letters urging him to begin the colony.

In 1894, Richard H. Edmonds, editor of the Boston Manufacturer's Record, wrote of the thousands of midwesterners who were struggling to survive crop failure and a two-year drought. The State of Georgia, under the leadership of former Governor William J. Northen, responded by sending twenty-one box cars filled with hay and corn to Lincoln, Nebraska. Known as "the friendship train," Georgia's humanitarian effort was brought to P. H. Fitzgerald's attention. He immediately contacted Governor Northen.

As former governor and general manager of the Georgia Immigration and Investment Bureau, Northen was privy to public records locating state and privately owned lands which were available for sale. Governor Northen responded to Fitzgerald's request by assisting Mr. Fitzgerald's recently formed American Tribune Soldier's Colony in purchasing 50,000 acres of land in Irwin County, Georgia. Later purchases doubled the acreage. According to the colony's charter, investment and allotment stocks were sold at \$10 per share and were limited to ten shares per stockholder. Should the stockholder improve or occupy his property, the parcel would then be acquired gratis.

The proposed colony was located at Swan, a small turpentine and saw-mill community situated approximately fifteen miles west of the

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Ocmulgee River. The community had been named for The Swan, the small boat which had brought the four Drew brothers and their families from Darien in 1880. The Drews subsequently purchased thousands of acres and established a post office, commissary, and naval store operation.

In the spring of 1895, David, Jesse, Ben, and Henry Drew agreed to sell Swan and the surrounding land to the American Tribune Soldier's Colony Company. Purchase of the property was consequently advertised in Philander H. Fitzgerald's The American Tribune. Although Fitzgerald cautioned that settlers should not arrive until January, 1896, colonists from as far away as Nebraska, Kansas, and Michigan began arriving in the summer of 1895.

In a matter of months, Swan's population had swelled from forty persons to 2,500. By the fall of 1895, 5,000 colonists were camped around Swan waiting for the colony's survey to be completed. Newspaper articles describing the colony's planning phase appeared in the Chicago Tribune, New York Herald, New York Times, Sioux City Journal, Baltimore Manufacturer's Record, and The Washington Post. The name "Swan" soon gave way to "Shacktown". The community was described this way:

Shacktown lined both sides of the wagon road running along the crest of a long, pineclad hill west of the Drew building and post office...

People were living in all manner of habitations... The more fortunate had tents and of these there were not a few. Many...had brought no protection against the weather, and these lived in such hastily constructed emergency lodging as their ingenuity suggested... Some of the best ones were of rough plank nailed straight up and down to pine pole frames... Some were constructed of pine slabs with the bark still on...

The colony survey began in the spring of 1895 and required the assistance of 462 men and 72 teams of horses. Determined to have a four-square city, surveyors moved the colony's central stake three times when southern property owners refused to sell acreage to the stock company. Divided into four wards, the city was intersected by Main Street (running north and south) and Central Avenue (running east and west). Each ward was subdivided into four blocks and each block into sixteen squares. Of the 256 resulting squares, four were reserved for schools, 36 for commercial purposes, 48 for factories. The remaining 168 lots were designated residential.

Both Main Street and Central Avenue measured 120 feet wide and were designed with landscaped medians. The remaining thoroughfares (28 in number), measured 60 feet in width. There were seven avenues north

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and a like number south of Central. The former were named for Georgia rivers, the latter for southern trees and plants. The streets east of Main were named for Union generals, while Confederate commanders were remembered in those streets west of Main. The city was named Fitzgerald in honor of its founder.

From the outset P. H. Fitzgerald had determined that the colony would be both self-sufficient and a place where the bitterness of the Civil War would be forgotten. To facilitate self-sufficiency, Fitzgerald ordered that tracts of land measuring five, ten and twenty acres each be established along the colony's perimeter. Once surveyed, these tracts were farmed to provide food for the colony. The colony's streets and avenues were named for Union and Southern commanders, Georgia rivers, and southern vegetation. By equally commemorating commanders from opposing forces of the Civil War, P. H. Fitzgerald illustrated his desire for founding a colony where participants of that war would live together in harmony.

By August, 1895, the colony's population reached 2,500. Jay Schrader, author of The New Canaan! Fitzgerald and The Old Soldier Colony, estimated that 60% of the colony's population was composed of midwesterners. Southerners represented 30% of the overall population. The remaining 10% was distributed evenly between far western states (5%) and other states (5%). When school began in the fall of 1895, students represented 38 states and two territories. Of the school's twelve teachers, only one had been born in the south. The majority of colonists were, or had been, farmers.

P. H. Fitzgerald's original audience had consisted of pensioned Civil War veterans who subscribed to the American Tribune. As a direct result, the colony's early population was dominated by pensioned Union veterans who were well past middle age. These were colonists who were not dependent upon wages for survival. In December, 1895, it was estimated that government pensions provided the colony with \$50,000 per month. This sum provided an annual economic base of \$600,000; a figure which helped guarantee the colony's success.

Historians of the day reported that fervent discussions of the Civil War were common. First hand accounts of Chancellorsville, Chickamauga, Gettysburg, and Kennesaw were prevalent. Generally, these conversations were not hostile. In May, 1896, 300 Fitzgerald Union and Confederate veterans traveled to Andersonville to lay flowers on the graves of the soldiers buried there. On April 27, 1897, Fitzgerald veterans of the Civil War joined together to form the Blue and Gray Battalion, Number 1. The battalion was commanded by a former Confederate commander and former Union adjutant, officers whose positions alternated every year.

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P. H. Fitzgerald proposed that the colony be a permanent settlement. With new settlers arriving from other parts of the country, Georgians who had lived within the settlement's environs moved into town to open businesses, build homes, and educate their children.

In the city's first year, ten sawmills were established. In 1896, the Fitzgerald Brick and Tile Yard was open. Also in 1896, J. D. Small began a modest novelty plant manufacturing sashes, doors, blinds, molding, scroll sawings, and turnings. His business was so successful that by 1910 he expended \$10,000 on a new plant and employed fifteen full time employees.

The Fitzgerald Novelty Works began in 1905, and became the city's largest novelty plant. Owned and operated by F. L. Bigham, this company produced mantels, brackets, columns, balusters, and window and door frames. With such buildings as the Lee-Grant Hotel and the Holtzendorf Office Building to his credit, Mr. Bigham employed eight full time workmen and shipped his products as far north as central Illinois.

The Fitzgerald Granitoid Company was established in 1905 by C. W. Hayes. Advertising themselves as "heavy contractors," Fitzgerald Granitoid manufactured concrete door and window sills, arch blocks, keystones, chimney and sidewalk tiles, sewer pipe, porch columns, ornamental brick, lattice work and coping. The plant was located on the corner of Pine and Lee Streets, and occupied 37,000 square feet. Employing fifty full time employees, Mr. Hayes boasted that his firm could and did produce anything in "concrete stone." The firm was responsible for constructing ten miles of the city's hexagonal sidewalk paving.

Community leaders expressed a strong interest in increasing Fitzgerald's population and in cultivating a tourist trade. This goal was approached from two directions. In 1897, a three-story, 108-room frame hotel was constructed on Central Avenue. Known as the Lee-Grant Hotel and measuring 100'x 240', the structure was intended to house visitors during the winter months. The hotel's construction also provided badly needed work for the colony's unemployed. In the years following Fitzgerald's initial settlement, the colony experienced an economic recession. Between 1897 and 1899, property values plummeted, prompting unemployment and a decrease in the colony's population. Construction of this privately owned hotel provided work and pumped new life into the colony's sluggish economy. Completed in 1898, the Lee-Grant Hotel was painted Confederate gray. Rooms rented for \$8 per day. The colony's economy stabilized in 1901, marking a period of steady growth.

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The colony's second marketing attempt occurred in 1908 when the Traffic Department of the Atlanta, Birmingham, and Atlantic Railroad issued a brochure entitled, Fitzgerald, Georgia: The Magic City.

In 1902 the "railroad shop" (repair division) of the Atlanta, Birmingham and Atlantic (ABA) Railroad located their offices in Fitzgerald. As this division of the railroad employed approximately five hundred Fitzgerald citizens, the ABA was anxious to promote the community. Just as its predecessor New Canaan! Fitzgerald and the Old Soldier Colony in Irwin County, Georgia had experienced nationwide distribution, Fitzgerald, Georgia: The Magic City enjoyed the same privilege. This twenty-seven page booklet boasted the city contained four newspapers, a cotton factory, city-owned water works, and a railroad system which led in six directions. The community's population now reached 5,000.

Ben Hill County was created on July 31, 1906. The new county, named for Georgia Senator Benjamin Harvey Hill (1823-1882), was created when land formerly belonging to Wilcox and Irwin counties was combined to form the new county. The county courthouse and jail were both constructed in 1909. The City of Fitzgerald, easily the county's largest city, was designated county seat. The residential and commercial structures erected within the city reflected the prosperity Fitzgerald enjoyed.

In a brochure published in 1908, the City of Fitzgerald was described as the most successful colony ever established in the South. Between October 15, 1908, to July 1, 1909, the city was scheduled to expend one million dollars in public and private improvements. Projects included, but were not limited to, construction of school buildings, the installation of a sewerage system, the establishment of an electric street railway, and doubling the capacity of the cotton mill. Fitzgerald in 1908 was radically different from the Fitzgerald which had been described in 1899 as "resembling a western mining town with all the men carrying guns."

One of Fitzgerald's notable citizens was Nettie C. Hall who arrived in Fitzgerald from South Dakota in 1895. During her twelve years in the city she purchased and edited the Fitzgerald Enterprise, one of the city's leading newspapers. She was a dedicated temperance advocate and an ardent supporter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Because of her only son, a railroad employee, lost his life in a railroad accident, Nettie exhibited great compassion for men associated with the railroad. She often met the trains as they arrived in Fitzgerald, and distributed white flowers to each railroad employee. Upon her death in June, 1908, railroad workers assumed full responsibility for her funeral. The WCTU and railroad employees

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erected a drinking fountain dedicated to "Mother Enterprise" in her memory.

Fitzgerald's commercial core developed in a T-shaped corridor along the north-south course of Grant Street and the east-west course of Pine Street. In 1898, Grant Street was thickly developed with frame commercial structures. Although East Pine contained several commercial buildings, residential development became predominant as one moved eastward toward the intersection of East Pine and South Logan Streets. At this date in the city's history, the primary residential area entered in the first and second wards along Oconee, Sheridan, and Sherman streets. By 1908, the city's commercial core was centered along Central Avenue, Grant, and Pine Streets. In the ten years between 1898 and 1908, Fitzgerald had added two bottling works, a large livery stable, and an undertaker to its collection of bakeries, grocery, and furniture stores. The city's industrial growth remained in step with commercial development.

Maud and Isidor Gelders, publishers and editors of The Fitzgerald Herald recorded that the years 1905-15 were good years for the city. They wrote that this ten year period "were years of peace and progress. All lines - civic, business, social, fraternal...city building and improvements were on the upward bend." This "era of good feeling" ended in July 1914 with the outbreak of World War I. The effects of the war were felt almost immediately in Fitzgerald.

The City of Fitzgerald had become primarily an agrarian based community. With much of its economy tied to the exporting of its cotton crop, the city was practically paralyzed when the war's onset prevented cotton exportation to Europe. On August 22, 1914, one hundred Fitzgerald farmers congregated on the courthouse lawn to discuss the cotton problem. Local leaders pledged that the crop would be gathered and held until the price climbed well above the current 7.5 cents per pound. A second meeting, conducted by the ABA employees, endorsed a measure requiring local firms to wrap shipping materials in cotton fiber rather than in jute. On October 24, 1914, a second mass meeting was conducted by local farmers on the courthouse lawn. They agreed unanimously to begin diversified farming practices and to reduce current cotton acreage. The economic crisis was felt across the community.

On November 11, 1918, the city celebrated the end of World War I by staging "a brilliant street celebration in which the mayor and a band of musicians took part. Bon fires, torches, and auto lights supplemented the city's street lights. Exercises were held around the flag pole at Main and Central...The jubilation of the crowds could not be restrained."

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The city's public library began in 1915 with the acceptance of Carnegie matching grant funds for public library development. This represents the city's commitment to developing library facilities for its community. Three years later, in 1918, the program was expanded to include county service.

By 1928, Fitzgerald's commercial and residential areas were solidly developed. The city's commercial core was based primarily on those squares bounded by Central, Pine, Main, and Grant streets. While the downtown was basically surrounded by residential development, Fitzgerald's primary residential sections occurred to the northeast and southwest of the commercial core. The residential area bordering South Main, South Lee and South Johnston streets contained most of the city's most elaborate housing and wealthiest citizens.

Fitzgerald's development had slowed with the advent of World War I and halted with the Great Depression. During the Depression, Fitzgerald, as did other American communities, participated in public works projects. In 1936, a W.P.A. project involved expansion of the Fitzgerald High School auditorium which was originally built in 1926. The building currently houses the city's junior high school.

Another W.P.A. sponsored project began on September 2, 1940. On the evening of September 2nd, the Fitzgerald City Commission resolved to appropriate \$5,000 so that a supervisor of W.P.A. workers could be hired. As the city was beginning the segmental concrete paving of many of the city's streets (South Main, South Lee and their intersecting streets were involved), a person who could supervise recruitment and certification of W.P.A. workmen was required. The city commission stipulated that a woman staff this position. In this particular instance the commission felt a woman would be much more honest than a man in recruiting and certifying workers. The project was begun before year's end and provided for paving of many of the city's streets.

By the late 1930s, Fitzgerald began recovering from the depression years. This was evidenced by the construction of the Grand Theater. Located on the northern end of South Main Street, this Art Deco style building replaced the Grant, an earlier theater, destroyed by fire on September 4, 1935. The Grand Theater was closed in 1977.

The City of Fitzgerald is unique in its history and pattern of land subdivision. It is also unique in that for several years it may have been the only community in the nation which celebrated two Memorial Days; April 26th observed Georgia's Confederate Memorial Day; May 30th commemorated the memory of the Union dead. The city was founded and later developed as a result of cooperation of people from almost every state in the Union.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Tinker, Nancy. "Fitzgerald Commercial Historic District." Historic District Information Form. 1988. On file at the Office of Historic Preservation, Atlanta, Georgia.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): (x) N/A

- () preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- () previously listed in the National Register
- () previously determined eligible by the National Register
- () designated a National Historic Landmark
- () recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- () recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- (x) State historic preservation office
- () Other State Agency
- () Federal agency
- () Local government
- () University
- () Other, Specify Repository:

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): n/a

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 34 acres

UTM References

- A) Zone 17 Easting 286130 Northing 3510970
- B) Zone 17 Easting 286130 Northing 3510560
- C) Zone 17 Easting 286980 Northing 3510970
- D) Zone 17 Easting 286980 Northing 3510560

Verbal Boundary Description

The Fitzgerald Commercial Historic District is located mostly in the third ward of the city, and is an area south of Ocmulgee Street, west of Johnston Street, east of Logan Street, and north of Magnolia Street. The district boundary is indicated by a heavy black line drawn to scale on the district sketch map.

Boundary Justification

The proposed boundary includes the intact historic development in Fitzgerald's central business district. Excluded from the district are areas of nonhistoric development, and severely altered historic buildings.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lisa Raflo, National Register Specialist
organization Office of Historic Preservation, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
street & number 205 Butler Street, S.E., Suite 1462
city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30334
telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** February 13, 1992

(HPS form version 10-29-91)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Name of Property: Fitzgerald Commercial Historic District
City or Vicinity: Fitzgerald
County: Ben Hill
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: April 1991

Description of Photograph(s):

1 of 32: Central United Methodist Church; photographer facing northwest.

2 of 32: Intersection of Central Avenue and Main Street; photographer facing northeast.

3 of 32: Main Street median, "Mother Enterprise" fountain; photographer facing north.

4 of 32: Central Avenue streetscape; photographer facing northeast.

5 of 32: Central Avenue streetscape; photographer facing northwest.

6 of 32: Central Avenue warehouse; photographer facing northeast.

7 of 32: Alleyway; photographer facing northwest.

8 of 32: Fire station; photographer facing northeast.

9 of 32: Central Avenue warehouse; photographer facing northwest.

10 of 32: Central Avenue gas station, median; photographer facing southwest.

11 of 32: Central Avenue warehouse; photographer facing north.

12 of 32: Ben Hill County Courthouse; photographer facing southwest.

13 of 32: Dixie Peanut Company; photographer facing northwest.

14 of 32: Late 19th-century boarding house; photographer facing south.

15 of 32: Ben Hill County Jail; photographer facing northwest.

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Photographs

- 16 of 32: Pine Street streetscape; photographer facing west.
- 17 of 32: Pine Street streetscape; photographer facing west.
- 18 of 32: Pine Street streetscape; photographer facing northwest.
- 19 of 32: Granitoid building and brick warehouse, Sherman Street; photographer facing northwest.
- 20 of 32: Intersection of Sherman and Pine Streets; photographer facing southwest.
- 21 of 32: Streetscape Pine Street; photographer facing northwest.
- 22 of 32: J. H. Goodman Block Building; photographer facing west.
- 23 of 32: Intersection of Magnolia and Grant, Coca-Cola Bottling Company and Ford dealership; photographer facing northeast.
- 24 of 32: Garbutt-Donovan building, intersection of Pine and Grant Streets; photographer facing northeast.
- 25 of 32: Streetscape, Grant Street; photographer facing northeast.
- 26 of 32: Streetscape Pine Street; photographer facing northwest.
- 27 of 32: First National Bank building (1900), southwest corner of Pine and Grant Streets; photographer facing south.
- 28 of 32: Third National Bank building (c. 1906), intersection of Pine Street and Main Street; photographer facing southwest.
- 29 of 32: Main Street median, Grand Theater; photographer facing north.
- 30 of 32: Holtzendorf Apartments, streetscape of Pine Street; photographer facing northeast.
- 31 of 32: Carnegie Library (in background) next to Masonic Temple (foreground); photographer facing northeast.
- 32 of 32: Former U. S. Post Office (1918); photographer facing northeast.