National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received APR 1 6 1984 date entered

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

Type all entries—complete applicab	le sections		
1. Name			
	_	•	
historic Fort Gaines Historic	District		
and/or common			
2. Location Romald	bounded by CI	hattahoocher	River GA 37
2. Location Rough	on Sheet.	A 39, Cullege,	N/A not for publication
city, town Fort Gaines	N/A_ vicinity of		
state Georgia c	code 013 county	Clay	code 059
3. Classification			
Category _X district public buildIng(s) structure site object being considered	Status _X_ occupied unoccupied work in progress Accessible _X_ yes: restricted yes: unrestricted no	Present Use agricultureX_ commercial educational entertainmentX_ government industrial military	museum parkX private residence _X religious scientific transportation other:
4. Owner of Prop	ertv		
name Multiple (more than 50))	A MANAGEMENT OF THE STATE OF TH	
street & number			
city, town	vicinity of	state	
5. Location of Le	gal Description)n	
courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Sup	erior Court		
street & number Clay County Cou	rthouse		
city, town Fort Gaines		state	Georgia 31751
6. Representation	n in Existina S	Surveys	
Historic Structures Field			
title Clay County (See also Cor	tinuation has this prop Sheet.)	perty been determined el	igible? yes _X no
date 1976		federalX sta	te county local
depository for survey records Histor	ric Preservation Secti	on, Georgia Dept.	of Natural Resources
city.town Atlanta			Georgia

7. Description

excellent deteriorated X good _X ruins X fair unexposed	unaltered X_ altered	_X_ original sit	te date
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Fort Gaines Historic District encompasses the contiguous historic residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial areas in the City of Fort Gaines. Fort Gaines and the district are located on a bluff overlooking the Chattahoochee River and extend westward to the river to include a portion of the river plain historically a part of the town. The core of the district is laid out with a gridiron street pattern which belies the rugged topography of the river bluff. The remainder of the district extends out along the historic transportation routes that lead from the town.

The commercial area of the district is centrally located in the blocks bounded by Jefferson Street, Washington Street, Troupe Street and Hartford Road. In this area, predominantly one- and two-story brick buildings, many with party walls, are set back uniformly along sidewalks with no landscaping. These commercial buildings date primarily from the 1880s to the early 1900s and display typical Victorian and early-twentieth-century commercial design features. Brick corbeling and spandrel panels, window openings with segmental and/or rounded arches, and cast-iron columns and pressed-metal fronts are among the most prominent exterior details. On the east side of Washington Street, at the edge of the commercial area, are located a ca.-1850 wood-frame lawyer's office, the wood-frame Dill House (individually listed in the National Register), which after its 1890s remodeling served as Fort Gaines' hotel, and the 1871-72 Clay County Courthouse (listed in the National Register as part of the County Courthouses in Georgia thematic nomination).

Spreading out in all directions from the central commercial-government area are historic residential areas associated with Fort Gaines' white and black citizens. Houses and a number of churches are located on varying sized lots and are set back fairly consistently from the streets. The majority of the houses are wood frame with wood detailing, but a significant number are constructed of locally manufactured brick. They vary in size from large two-story structures to small cottages. Greek Revival structures from the mid-nineteenth century remain, in addition to a number that were "updated" in the late-nineteenth century. Most houses date from the Victorian, turn-of-the-century and early-twentieth-century Typical detailing includes porches with turned and sawnwork brackets and balustrades, gables decorated with cut shingles, and bay windows. Examples of Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Victorian Eclectic, Queen Anne and Neoclassical style residences are in evidence in addition to many vernacular cottages of varying dates. Landscaping in the residential areas consists of informally planted yards, street trees, several avenues with central landscaped dividers, and a number of brick retaining walls and cast-iron fences. A historic city cemetery heavily landscaped with trees and shrubs is located in the district to the south of Carroll Street.

Near the western edge of the district, along the Chattahoochee River, are, on the bluffs, several reconstructed fort buildings located on the site of the original Fort Gaines and two Civil War gun emplacements. Located on the river plain are the site of the town wharf and the deteriorated remains of an 1890s cottonseed-oil mill and early-twentieth-century town waterworks.

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Location

Fort Gaines Historic District is located in Fort Gaines, Clay County, Georgia. It encompasses an area bounded approximately by Habersham, Eufaula, and Church streets on the north; College, Jefferson, Commerce, and Wilson streets on the east; Hartford Road and South Washington Street on the south, and the Chattahoochee River on the west.

Representation in Existing Surveys

Two properties in the Fort Gaines Historic District are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Dill House, located at 102 South Washington Street, was listed on May 6, 1975. The Clay County Courthouse was listed on September 18, 1980, as part of the Courthouses of Georgia Thematic Nomination.

8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400-1499 1500-1599 1600-1699 1700-1799 1800-1899 1900-	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric agriculture architecture art commerce communications	X community plann conservation economics education engineering		re religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater _X_ transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1816/1830-1930s	Builder/Architect	 Multiple	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Fort Gaines is a good intact example of a frontier Georgia town planned and developed in the nineteenth century for a combination of military, political, and commercial purposes. It is historically significant in the areas of exploration and settlement, military history, community planning and development, architecture, landscape architecture, commerce, industry, transportation, politics and government, and historic archaeology. These areas of significance support property eligibility under National Register criteria A, B, C, and D.

Exploration and Settlement, Community Planning and Development, and Military History

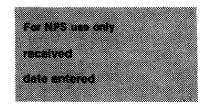
In 1816, Fort Gaines was established as a military post on a bluff overlooking the Chattahoochee River. The fort, a wooden palisade, was constructed by the state militia to defend territory newly acquired from the Creek Indians in the 1814 Treaty of Fort Jackson. By 1819, a village was developing in the vicinity of the fort. By 1827, the town had been laid out with its present gridiron pattern, and lots were being sold. In 1830, Fort Gaines was incorporated. The community began to prosper in the 1830s as a result of the 1827 opening for settlement of the region directly to its north and the 1828 establishment of a river port upstream at Columbus. With the appearance of extensive riverboat traffic on the Chattahoochee in the years before the Civil War, Fort Gaines grew into an important cotton-shipping center. In 1854, the community was designated the county seat of newly created Clay County. During the Civil War, in 1863, in order to protect the town from the possibility of a federal drive upriver to the Columbus Navy Yard, a military installation was constructed on the bluff overlooking the Chattahoochee.

Fort Gaines Historic District is significant in terms of exploration and settlement as one of the very earliest settlements in the western part of the state. A few early houses remain in the Fort Gaines Historic District to document this early period. In terms of community planning and development, the district is significant as a good example of a Georgia town planned and developed in the nineteenth century for military, political and commercial purposes. In terms of military history, the district is significant as an example of a town that grew up in conjunction with a fort located on the frontier to protect early settlers from the Indians. The location within the district of the remains of a Civil War military installation provides additional military significance.

9. Major Bibliographical References				
District," Ma ment of Natur	rch, 1983; on file at H	istoric Presen (This Nationa	on Form: Fort Gaines Historic evation Section, Georgia Departal Register nomination is based ment.)	
10. Geogra	phical Data			
Acreage of nominated pro Quadrangle name Fort UTM References	perty <u>Approximately 300</u> Gaines, AlaGa.	acres	Quadrangle scale 1:24,000	
Zone Easting C 1 ₁₆ 68 ₁ 39 ₁ 5 ₁ E 1 ₁₆ 68 ₁ 53 ₁ 5 ₁		Zone E D 1 16 6	3 4 9 17 3 12 10 10 10 10 10 10 10	
Verbal boundary description and justification The district boundaries, outlined on the enclosed tax maps with heavy black lines, have been drawn to include the intact historic area of Fort Gaines.				
List all states and cou	nties for properties overlapp	ing state or cou	nty boundaries	
state N/A	code	county	code	
state	code	county	code	
11. Form P	repared By			
organization Historic Georgia	rooks, National Register Preservation Section Dept. of Natural Resources	ces date	January 20, 1984	
	abilington beleet, start	•	2	
12 State H	listoric Preser	state vation O	fficer Certification	
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	of this property within the state		micer dertification	
665), I hereby nominate thi		ational Register an	Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89– d certify that it has been evaluated	
State Historic Preservation	Officer signature Elizabeth Preservation Officer	A. Lyon	date 4/2/84	
For NPS use only	his property is included in the Na	itered in an	distal	
Keeper of the National Attest:	Register	tional Regist	date	

Chief of Registration

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Architecture

In terms of architecture, Fort Gaines Historic District is significant for providing examples of the types of historic buildings found in Georgia's small towns. These structures reflect prevailing national principles and practices of architecture as they were interpreted by local carpenter/builders over more than a century. Most of the structures feature typical building materials and techniques, with load-bearing brick predominating in the commercial area and wood-frame construction with exterior weatherboarding being most common in the residential areas. Buildings date from the 1830s to the 1930s and include a variety of building types such as private residences, churches, stores, hotels, a lawyer's office, a bank and municipal buildings. Among the architectural styles well represented in their local manifestations are the Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Victorian Eclectic, Queen Anne, Neoclassical and Early-twentieth-century Commercial. A number of intact examples of simple vernacular cottages of various dates are also located in the district.

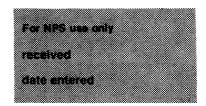
Landscape Architecture

In terms of landscape architecture, the district is significant for its latenineteenth-early-twentieth-century residential landscaping which features the informal use of trees, shrubs, grass and walks in individual lots to create a naturalistic and park-like setting which flows from one lot to the next. This type of landscaping is characteristic of that found in the residential areas of small towns and cities nationwide and represents accepted landscaping practices of the period. Street trees, several avenues with central planted dividers, and a landscaped cemetery contribute to the town's overall historic landscaping.

Transportation, Commerce, and Industry

Beginning in the mid-1830s, Fort Gaines became a Chattahoochee River steamboat stop and an important shipping center for cotton from the surrounding area in both Georgia and Alabama. In 1859, a rail line was completed between Macon, Georgia, and Eufaula, Alabama, with a spur line to a rail head at Fort Gaines. These transportation facilities helped make Fort Gaines a viable regional commercial center for both wholesale and retail activities in this sparsely populated part of the state. In the 1890s, local industries, including a cottonseed-oil mill and a brickyard were developed to take advantage of this local trade. Commercial activity in Fort Gaines remained heavily tied to cotton production into the twentieth century. The collapse of the cotton market in the years after 1920, due to the devastation caused by the boll weevil and followed by the onset of the Great Depression, resulted in the end of historic commercial development.

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Fort Gaines Historic District contains the historic commercial center of the community. The district served as the center for such day-to-day activities as wholesaling and retailing, banking, professional services, and hotel accomodations. Its commercial structures, primarily brick buildings constructed between 1880 and 1920, provide evidence of Fort Gaines' period of greatest prosperity and commercial growth. This was a time of great building activity and commercial development in many Georgia communities. Earlier frame commercial buildings were replaced by more substantial brick structures, reflecting the expanding commercial activity of the late-nineteenth century. In addition, the deteriorated remains of the 1890s cottonseed-oil mill survive to document one of Fort Gaines' historic industrial activities.

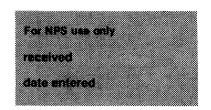
Politics and Government

The district is significant as the seat of local government for the community of Fort Gaines and of county government for Clay County. The presence of these important institutions is represented by the 1871-72 Clay County Courthouse (listed in the National Register), the Clay County Jail, and the remains of the historic city waterworks, which operated in the early years of the twentieth century.

Historic Archaeology

The identification of the site of a Civil War military installation and of the deteriorating remains of an 1890s cottonseed-oil mill and an early-twentieth-century waterworks implies a significant historic archaeological potential for the district. No formal archaeology has been done to this date, but future archaeological investigation could add valuable data to what is presently known about historic Fort Gaines. Unfortunately, the archaeological potential of the early-nine-teenth-century fortification at Fort Gaines was lost in the mid-twentieth century when the site was excavated for fill used in the construction of a nearby bridge.

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Bibliography

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- Robertson, Joan. "Fort Gaines Historic District: Draft National Register Nomination," n.d. On file at Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resources.
- Sanborn Map Company maps for Fort Gaines, 1924.
- Todd, Priscilla Neves, et al. <u>The History of Clay County</u>. Fort Gaines: Clay County Library, 1976.
- United States Census Records for Clay County, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900.

