

**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 Downtown Waycross Historic District  
other names/site number n/a

**2. Location**

street & number Roughly bounded by the railroad corridor on the east and south, Albany and Isabella Streets on the north, and Remshart and Nicholls Streets on the west.  
city, town Waycross (n/a) vicinity of  
county Ware code GA 299  
state Georgia code GA zip code 31501

(n/a) not for publication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	47	15
sites	2	0
structures	2	2
objects	3	1
total	54	18

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 5

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

1/28/92  
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

Carol D. Shell 3-20-92

determined eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_\_\_

determined not eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_\_\_

removed from the National Register

\_\_\_\_\_

other, explain:

\_\_\_\_\_

see continuation sheet

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature, Keeper of the National Register

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## **6. Function or Use**

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### **Historic Functions:**

COMMERCE; business, professional, financial institution, specialty store, warehouse  
TRANSPORTATION; rail-related, road-related  
GOVERNMENT; city hall, post office  
DOMESTIC; hotel  
RELIGION; religious structure  
RECREATION AND CULTURE; theater, monument/marker  
SOCIAL; civic, meeting hall  
LANDSCAPE; park

### **Current Functions:**

COMMERCE; business, professional, specialty store, warehouse  
TRANSPORTATION; rail-related, road-related  
GOVERNMENT; city hall  
DOMESTIC; multiple dwelling  
RELIGION; religious structure  
RECREATION AND CULTURE; theater, monument/marker  
LANDSCAPE; park

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## **7. Description**

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### **Architectural Classification:**

LATE VICTORIAN; Italianate  
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS; Classical Revival, Late Gothic Revival, Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival, Italian Renaissance  
MODERN MOVEMENT; Moderne, Art Deco

### **Materials:**

<b>foundation</b>	brick
<b>walls</b>	brick, stucco
<b>roof</b>	asphalt
<b>other</b>	stone, metal

### **Description of present and historic physical appearance:**

The Downtown Waycross Historic District encompasses the intact commercial, governmental, institutional, and transportation-related resources that make up the historic downtown area of Waycross. The district includes approximately 15 blocks concentrated along two railroad corridors. The main railroad corridor included in the district runs in a northeast-southwest direction and forms the district's eastern boundary. Another line runs northwest to southeast, crossing the main line and forming the district's southern boundary. The city's plan is laid out in a grid pattern that abuts the railroad corridor at an angle so that triangular city blocks occur along the rail line. A nonhistoric raised overpass crosses over the southern end of the commercial area, but the district continues under

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the overpass due to both the physical and visual continuity of the rail line and the street.

The majority of buildings in the district are attached, one- to three-story, masonry commercial buildings. Most of these buildings are constructed of brick load-bearing walls and have a brick exterior, while some have a stuccoed exterior finish. In general, these buildings are typical commercial buildings found in a small city, with a first-floor transparent storefront and upper-floor rows of windows. Building details include large storefront windows and entrances, cast-iron storefront columns, pressed metal bracketed cornices, corbeled brick cornices, brick and stone window lintels and sills, terra cotta ornament, and clay tile pent roofs. One building's front facade is covered with a classically detailed pressed metal facade that includes bracketed cornice and attached columns. The building next to it has an unusual facade of stone aggregate. Typical storefront changes have been made that include replacement of wood-framed storefront elements with modern aluminum-framed elements. Many of these commercial buildings represent Italianate or Neoclassical Revival stylistic influences, while some have little stylistic influence at all.

The district includes a large number of community landmark buildings and buildings of special note. One of the most impressive of these landmark buildings is the former U.S. Post Office and Courthouse. This building was originally constructed in 1911 as a one-story building designed by James Knox Taylor, architect of the U.S. Treasury Department. In 1936 the building was expanded to two stories with side wings. This addition was designed by G. W. Stone. The building is a fine example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style constructed in brick with marble details. It has been restored and is now used as retail and office space.

The Bunn Building is a five-story, brick building constructed in 1912 and considered the city's first skyscraper. It served as an office building and as home for the local Masonic Lodge. The building was among the first reinforced concrete buildings in the state.

The large Phoenix Hotel, which covers an entire city block, was originally constructed in 1892 as a two-story brick building with corner turret and two-level wooden porch. In 1913 the building was expanded to the three-story, stuccoed, Spanish Colonial Revival style building present today. The Phoenix's smooth stuccoed walls, Mission-shaped dormers, rusticated window surrounds, and large hipped roof make it a very prominent building in downtown Waycross. The former hotel is undergoing renovation and will provide retail space as well as housing. The Phoenix Hotel is one of many buildings in downtown Waycross influenced by the Spanish Colonial Revival style. This style

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is more prominent in Waycross than in most other Georgia cities due to Waycross's close proximity to Florida where the style is very popular.

The tallest building in downtown Waycross, the seven-story Ware Hotel, was constructed in 1928 in the Neoclassical Revival style. The brick building has a first-floor base with lobby and storefront space, while the upper hotel floors are set back from the base in a T-shaped plan. The top floor is set off by round-arched window and door openings and a bracketed wooden cornice under a clay tile roof. This building is also being renovated for housing.

The other hotel building remaining in the district was constructed c.1915 as the Murson Hotel. It is a two-story, stuccoed building with bracketed cornice. The building is now vacant, and its windows are covered.

The former YMCA building was designed by Jacksonville, Florida, architect Henry Klutho and constructed in 1911. It is a three-story brick building with stone details that give an exaggerated "quoin" effect around the openings and along the corners of the front facade. A bracketed pent roof covered with clay tile tops the building at the cornice level, and another pent roof surrounds the one-story front porch. The building was recently renovated to become City Hall.

Two railroad depots remain in downtown Waycross. The passenger depot was constructed in 1902 and is a two-story brick building with stone details and large hipped roof with widely overhanging eaves. The freight depot was built around 1915 and is a one-story brick building. The stylistic influence of the Spanish Colonial Revival is seen in the Mission-shaped parapets of the freight depot. A third railroad-related building, the signal building, also remains next to the rail line.

A group of wholesale company buildings and warehouses is located in the southern part of the district on Francis Street in proximity to the rail lines. These buildings, constructed around 1910, housed wholesale grocers and provided warehouse space for products received and shipped by rail. One of these buildings was used at one time as the U.S. Post Office. Also on Francis Street is the old Coca-Cola Bottling Company building constructed about 1910. It is built with stuccoed walls and hipped clay tile roof.

Several automobile-related buildings remain in the district. An old car dealership and garage remains at Tebeau and Jane Streets, and a garage remains on Francis Street. Two gas stations are still standing in the district, one on Francis Street built c.1937, and the other on Plant Avenue at the north end of the district built c.1930. The 1939 Moderne style bus station still serves its original purpose.

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The district contains two historic church buildings, both of which continue to be used as religious facilities. Both buildings are stuccoed. One reflects the Late Gothic Revival style, while the other is Spanish Colonial Revival.

Two historic landscaped parks, Doughboy Park and Phoenix Park, remain in the district. They are located on two of the triangular-shaped blocks formed by the angled juxtaposition of the city plan to the railroad. Doughboy Park, located at Plant Avenue and Lott and Mary Streets, contains a 1935 statue of a World War I doughboy, along with a nonhistoric gazebo, Vietnam War monument, and pumphouse. Phoenix Park is located at Plant Avenue and Pendleton and Elizabeth Streets in front of the Phoenix Hotel. This park contains a historic Confederate monument and a Civil War cannon. Both parks are landscaped with grass and small trees and shrubs.

The main railroad line paralleling Plant Avenue and forming the eastern edge of the district is itself a historic "landscape" corridor. The open space with tracks that forms the railroad corridor has always been an important feature of the city's environment. It has served as a development corridor for the city, with both commercial and residential development oriented to the rail line.

Many of Waycross's historic brick streets remain intact under modern paving and can be seen here and there where the pavement has worn thin. One street where the brick paving has not been covered is Jane Street between Plant Avenue and Remshart Street.

Noncontributing properties within the district include historic buildings that have lost integrity due to alterations or being obscured by false facades, nonhistoric commercial buildings, several nonhistoric objects within the parks, and the modern overpass. Outside of the district boundaries is historic residential development to the east and southeast (N.R. listed "Waycross Historic District"), nonhistoric commercial development to the north and south, and historic residential development to the west.

**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  
 Transportation

**Period of Significance:**

1870-1942

**Significant Dates:**

1870  
 1874  
 1881  
 1902

**Significant Person(s):**

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation:**

n/a

**Architect(s)/Builder(s):**

Klutho, Henry J.  
 Taylor, James Knox, U.S. Treasury Department  
 Stone, G. W.  
 Parker, V. C.

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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 Downtown Waycross Historic District is significant as the historic central business district of the southeast Georgia city of Waycross. It is significant in the areas of architecture, commerce, community planning and development, and transportation. These areas of significance support National Register eligibility under Criteria A and C.

The district is significant in the area of architecture for the historic commercial, institutional, governmental, and transportation-related buildings that together make up the historic commercial center of Waycross. These buildings were constructed from the 1870s to the 1940s and represent the types and styles of buildings constructed during this late-19th- and early 20th-century period in small Georgia cities. The majority of buildings are attached commercial buildings with typical facades of first-floor storefronts and upper-floor rows of windows topped with a cornice. Included in these commercial buildings are theaters, auto garages, wholesale warehouses, gas stations, and a bus station. A number of large and impressive community landmark buildings are within the district as well and represent the most elaborate and stylistic buildings in downtown Waycross. These include a former U. S. post office and courthouse, five-story office building, seven-story hotel, two other hotels, former YMCA building, two railroad depots, and two church buildings. A wide variety of materials often found in downtown buildings was used, including brick, stucco, terra cotta, cast iron, pressed metal, stone, and clay tile.

The district is significant in the area of commerce as the historic commercial center of Waycross that served the commercial needs of the city and its surrounding area. This is represented by the numerous commercial and transportation-related buildings that make up the majority of the district. Commercial activity in Waycross focused largely on the railroad, and this is represented by the location of downtown commercial interests directly adjacent to the major rail lines.

The district is significant in the area of community planning and development as the historic commercial section of the city plan laid out in the early 1870s as the center of the developing community of Waycross. The city plan was laid out in an unusual grid pattern, traditionally said to be in the form of a Maltese cross, set at an angle to the already existing rail lines. This angled plan formed triangular blocks directly adjacent to the railroad, two of which have



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historically been utilized as city parks. These features identify Waycross's historic city plan as an example of a "railroad center" community type, as defined in the "Georgia Community Development and Morphology of Community Types" historic context. Distinguishing characteristics of this sub-type of railroad communities include two or more rail lines, grid patterns broken by the rail lines, resulting odd-shaped blocks and lots, the presence of multiple depots and other railroad-related buildings, and orientation of the downtown to one or more of the rail lines. Waycross is an outstanding example of this community type. The district is also significant in this area for its representation of the development and growth of the central business district from its beginnings in the 1870s through the 1940s.

The district is significant in the area of transportation for the key role of transportation, and particularly the railroad, in the city's existence and development. Waycross was laid out in the early 1870s at the junction of two major railroad lines. This access to the critical mode of rail transportation in the late 19th century provided great opportunity for commercial activity and growth. In 1881 a third rail line was added, and Waycross became an important regional transportation hub. The railroad's importance in the district's historic development is clearly represented by the railroad corridors themselves, passenger depot, freight depot, and signal building, and a number of warehouses. Road transportation also had a significant impact on the development of the district. This is represented by remaining historic gas stations, automobile garages, and a bus station. Historic brick pavers remain visible on some of the streets within the district.

**National Register Criteria**

The Downtown Waycross Historic District is eligible under Criterion A for its development as the central business district of Waycross. The district is eligible under Criterion C for its intact concentration of historic commercial, governmental, institutional, and transportation-related resources, and for its historic city plan.

**Criteria Considerations (if applicable)**

n/a

**Period of significance (justification)**

The period of significance for the district is 1870 to 1942. The development of Waycross's commercial center began around 1870 at the

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junction of two rail lines. The commercial area has continued to develop up to the present, so that the 50-year cut-off date of 1942 is the end of the period of significance.

**Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)**

Contributing resources are those contiguous intact historic resources that have historically been part of the central business district. Also included as contributing resources are the historic city plan and the historic railroad corridor. Noncontributing resources within the district are those buildings and structures that are either nonhistoric or have lost integrity.

**Developmental history/historic context (if applicable)**

The region that encompassed Waycross and the proposed Waycross Commercial Historic District originally was inhabited by numerous tribes of Indians. The first were an ancient tribe, about which little is known. They did, however, build many of the mounds that can still be seen in remote areas. They were followed by the Muskogean who incorporated the culture of the "mound builders" into their own. Later the Muskogean split up into various other groups: the Creeks, the Chickasaw, the Choctaw, and the Seminoles. The Creeks later divided into two sub-groups known as the Upper and Lower Creeks. The Lower Creeks and the Seminoles came to be the dominant tribes in Southeast Georgia.

As white settlers moved into the region, the Indians, threatened with the loss of their way of life, began to raid and harass settlements in the area. In 1838 a band of Seminoles attacked the Maximilian Wildes homestead killing nine people in what was the last Indian massacre in Georgia. After this incident General Charles Floyd was charged with the task of driving the Indians out of their hiding grounds in the Okefenokee Swamp. He and his men trudged through the swamp for weeks searching for the Indians. They finally found the remnants of a village, but no sign of the Seminoles. The tribe had fled the Okefenokee into Florida to seek refuge in the Everglades. They were the last band to be driven out of the Southeast Georgia region.

Ware County, originally a part of Appling County, was created by an act of the Legislature in 1824. It was named for Nicholas Ware, a prominent Georgia statesman from Augusta who had died that same year. Abundant forests, fertile land, and plentiful game drew settlers into the area. Most were subsistence farmers who found that this region provided a good life. Others turned to turpentine distilling and lumbering in order to make a living. Turpentine stills and saw mills

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sprang up around the countryside. Even today these two industries remain an important part of the local economy.

The first settlement in what is now Waycross developed at a small station on the Savannah and Albany Railroad. It originally was called "Number 9" since it was the ninth stop out from Savannah. Major Phillip Coleman Pendleton was the first to man the station and decided to call it "Tebeauville" in honor of his father-in-law, Capt. F.E. Tebeau. It was incorporated as a town in 1866.

Approximately one and one-half miles northeast, the Savannah and Albany Railroad crossed the Brunswick and Florida Railroad. A local doctor, Daniel B. Lott, recognized the development potential of this junction and bought up the land just north of it. He offered a free lot to anyone who would build a nice frame house with glass windows. People from Waresboro, the county seat, and the surrounding countryside began to take advantage of Dr. Lott's offer. By 1870, the developing town contained "...a railroad crossing, warehouse, saw mill, a few cottages, and not over fifty inhabitants."

Other prominent men from the region began to build their houses around the junction. "Hilltop", Dr. Lott's home, was started in 1871. Soon afterwards came Dr. B.F. Williams (1872), Rev. W.H. Thomas, Dr. William B. Folks (1873), Judge George B. Williams (1874), Capt. Cuyler W. Hilliard (1874), and William Bailey. All of these men became leading citizens and Lott, Bailey Benjamin Williams, and Hilliard are credited with being the "Founding Fathers" of the town. It was Dr. Lott and Rev. Thomas who laid out many of the streets between 1872 and 1875. The east-west streets were named after the first names of wives and daughters, while the north-south streets were named after the surnames of the men.

By 1872, the people of the new town began to think that it, as a rail center, should be the county seat. Naturally the people of Waresboro objected. A bitter dispute erupted that was only settled by an election referendum. Waycross won, the county seat was moved, and a new courthouse was built near the railroad junction. The historic courthouse no longer remains, and the current nonhistoric courthouse is located north of the proposed district.

In 1874 Waycross was incorporated by an act of the General Assembly. The bill called for the city limits to extend one and one-half miles from the courthouse in all directions. Reportedly, Henry B. Plant, an influential railroad man whose railroad ran through the junction, suggested laying out the town in the shape of a Maltese Cross, which was part of the coat-of-arms of the Plant System Railroads. This irregular design created several triangular lots on the periphery of the town, many of which still exist. Today in the downtown district,

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Doughboy Park and Phoenix Park are located in two of these triangular lots.

Several different versions and stories are told as to how Waycross got its name. Some credit one of the railroad men, some a local young lady, and some a group of men in a newspaper office with coming up with the name. The general consensus, however, is that since the town was a "crossing of the ways", "Waycross" would be an ideal name.

The railroads played the most important role in the development of the town. As previously mentioned, the two initial railroads were the Savannah and Albany and the Brunswick and Florida. The B & F began construction in 1855 and reached as far as Waresboro by 1861. Construction stopped when the Civil War broke out. The state seized the railroad in October of 1861 and renamed it the Brunswick and Albany. It continued to run until 1863 when the rails were taken up for use elsewhere. After the war, in 1868, a new company was formed to revive the old B & A. Construction was completed to Albany in 1871 but the company went bankrupt soon thereafter.

The Savannah and Albany began construction in 1853. Sometime later the name was changed to the Savannah, Albany, and Gulf, then sometime in 1863 it was absorbed by the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad. Henry B. Plant acquired this railroad in 1879 and reorganized it as the Savannah, Florida, and Western. It was the first line of the Plant System, which was eventually to cover south Georgia and northeast Florida. The S.F. & W. extended 350 miles from Savannah to the Flint River where passengers could catch steamboats to carry them to the Gulf.

In 1881, S.F. & W., built a line from Waycross to Jacksonville known as the Waycross Short Line. With its completion, Waycross became a transportation hub with railroads extending out in five different directions.

The Plant System continued to expand and by 1899 had more than 2,200 miles of track. In 1902 Plant merged with Atlantic Coast Line, one of the leading rail companies in the nation.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of the railroads to Waycross was the construction of the Atlantic Coast Line Mammoth Shops in 1907. These shops, which employed around 1,500 men, were for the repair of all the rolling stock owned by the railroad. "Repairs (could) be sent north, east, south and west, anywhere on the line, with the utmost dispatch." This enterprise proved to be a tremendous boost to the economy and development of the region.

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When Waycross was chartered the city boundaries extended one and one-half miles from the courthouse in all directions. The town grew rapidly and needed to extend these boundaries in 1876. As the Savannah, Florida, and Western railroad grew, and especially with the construction of the Waycross Short Line to Jacksonville, the city had to grow to accommodate the railroad. In 1878-1879 the city limits were enlarged again. Henry B. Plant and the S.F. & W. began to build a railyard, village, school, hospital, and hotels to accommodate the influx of railroad business. The continued growth of the railroad and the surrounding city created the need for an increase in land, therefore the boundaries were changed again in 1884-1885.

In 1924 it became necessary to change the boundaries once again. The Atlantic Coastline Railroad shops, the Hebard Cypress Mill and the resulting growth of the timber industry in the Okefenokee Swamp, the Ruskin commonwealth community, the Waycross Air Line Railroad and its depot, and extensive downtown development all contributed to the need for an increase in boundaries. These industrial developments brought about an increase in the population and expanding neighborhoods which also needed to be incorporated into the city limits.

The final boundary change took place in 1929. The subdivisions of Cherokee Heights and Williams Heights were developed in the early 1920's, in a pear orchard that had belonged to Dr. Daniel Lott. Cherokee Heights in particular was known for its outstanding residential architecture of that period.

Shipping and transportation declined somewhat by this point because of the rise and development of the port at Brunswick. As a result, the population growth slowed accordingly, and the boundaries of Waycross were set.

The settlers of Waycross were a devout people and soon after its incorporation, the people wanted a church of their own. On March 27, 1882 the Baptists of the area organized Union Church. It was located near the present site of Trinity Methodist Church. Several other Baptist churches followed soon afterwards. However, none of them were located in the proposed district.

In 1884, Mrs. H.B. Plant deeded a city block of Waycross to Bishop Gross of Savannah to be used as the site of a Catholic church. It was bounded by Mary, Parker, Elizabeth, and Tebeau Streets. A building was constructed in 1888 on the southern half of the block, facing Parker Street. It was destroyed by a hurricane in 1896. A smaller church was built to replace it in 1898. Yet another hurricane struck in October of that year, damaging the church and blowing it from its foundation. It was soon repaired, and its dedication took place on July 30, 1899. The Spanish Colonial Revival building had beautiful

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stained glass windows and a red tiled roof. It stood on the southwest corner of the block and faced Elizabeth. In 1920 the church sold half of this block. This made it necessary to move the building to the southeast corner of Mary and Tebeau Streets. About this same time, the exterior was stuccoed, the interior remodeled, and an addition added to the rear. This building served the needs of the congregation until the late 1970's when it became too small. A new building was constructed outside the proposed district in 1981. The old downtown church was used by the Lutherans until very recently. A dwindling congregation and lack of support forced the church to close. The future of the building itself is uncertain. It will probably soon be sold, though for what purpose is yet unknown.

Grace Episcopal Church was first established as a mission by Rev. A.G.P. Dodge of St. Simon's Island, Georgia, in 1881. With Rev. Dodge's financial help, the first building was erected in 1884. It was situated on the same corner as the present church but faced Mary Street instead of Pendleton. By 1905 the congregation needed more room, so a larger structure was built parallel to Mary and facing Pendleton. This change in orientation allowed the larger structure to be built on the same lot. It was a white Spanish Colonial Revival style building that is still in use today. Plans are proposed to expand the facilities of this church into the old Southern Bell building which stands next door and is now vacant. The building would be renovated to house Sunday School rooms and a choir room.

The downtown continued to grow and prosper despite certain setbacks and tragedies. In 1883 a mail train of the Plant System crashed into the baggage car of a passenger train knocking it into the depot. The wooden building quickly caught fire and soon burned to the ground. For a city that depended on the railroad for its livelihood to be without a depot was disastrous. Several smaller buildings were used to accommodate the railroads until the A.C.L. depot was built in 1902.

As the city grew and developed, various public services were begun to provide for the public safety and welfare. A police force was established in 1884 to protect the downtown and the rest of the city from criminals. In 1889 the old, obsolete oil lamps were replaced by electric street lights. Miles Albertson was the proprietor of the electric light compound and contributed greatly to the progress of the city. The growing city needed an adequate water supply, so bonds were issued in 1892 in order to construct a water works plant. An artesian well was dug in what is now Doughboy Park and a 120-foot stand pipe was constructed. All was completed by 1897, and that same year a volunteer fire department was organized to protect the citizens. By 1907 the population had outgrown the water system, so the City invested \$50,000 to enlarge it. A new pumping station was built near the intersection of Alice and Isabella Streets and is still in use

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today. The City Council also voted to spend \$100,000 for street paving. The business streets were to be paved with vitrified brick, while the residential streets were to be paved with gravel.

The entire city block bounded by Mary, Pendleton, Lott, and Isabella was set aside for the construction of a public school. The first building was completed by 1885. Eventually it was replaced by a three-story block building surrounded by a ten-foot high wooden fence. This building was torn down in 1949, and the school moved to Ava Street in the Cherokee Heights neighborhood. This too was demolished in 1980 to make way for the Central Baptist Church.

The railroads continued to play a dramatic role in the development of Waycross. They brought both people and dollars into the town. By 1889 Waycross was identified as a major economic and social district for the whole area. Originally, most businesses and retail establishments were founded along one of the two railroads, along either Plant or Albany Avenue, or around the courthouse square. Within the proposed district, limited commercial activity began on Jane, Pendleton, and Plant Avenue facing the railroad. The Grand Central Hotel, on the corner of Plant and Pendleton, and the Commercial Hotel on Tebeau and Jane provided lodging for the many travellers passing through Waycross.

The growth and prosperity of downtown was evident in 1892 as the population grew to over 3900 people. The commercial center began to move away from the courthouse area and to focus on the current downtown district. The area along Albany Avenue become more and more industrialized. In downtown, development and progress continued. Bonds were issued to pay for the city water works. The public school moved to the corner of Mary and Lott but still retained the whole block for its use. The triangular block bordered by Isabella, Plant, and Brunswick (now Alice) was busy with commercial activity. A fruit store, barber shop, bank, insurance office, dentist, tailor, ice cream parlor, and post office were all located within this booming retail center. A new hotel, called the Phoenix, was built to replace the Grand Central Hotel which burned around 1889. The Strickland House also served the lodging needs of those travelling to Waycross.

By 1897, the population of Waycross had decreased somewhat, nevertheless the downtown area continued to grow. Businesses continued to expand along Plant Avenue in both directions. By this time a new high school building was constructed in the center of the school block. It was a three-story building surrounded by a ten-foot high wooden fence. Four hotels were operating in the downtown area, the Central Hotel on Pendleton, the Southern on Elizabeth, the Phoenix on Pendleton, and the Glenwood on Jane. Each had a multitude of small shops on the first floor with the rooms on the second. Much of the

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downtown region was still given over to residential neighborhoods. Large houses were interspersed among the commercial establishments.

The dawning of the twentieth century brought explosive growth to Waycross and in particular to downtown. A significant transaction which eventually was responsible for strengthening the economic base of the whole region occurred on July 1, 1902, when Henry B. Plant merged his mammoth Plant System railways with the Atlantic Coastline Railroad. A new A.C.L. depot was built along Plant Avenue facing the Phoenix Hotel and is still standing today. Commercial shops expanded to Mary and Jane Streets and continued to thrive on Plant Avenue and on the first floors of the various hotels.

1907 was a significant year in Waycross' development. The construction of the A.C.L. Railroad Shops resulted in growth in several other areas. At the time, it was estimated that between 500 to 1000 homes were needed to house the new railroad employees. An electric streetcar line was planned for operation on all the principal business streets. A new hotel, designed by Henry J. Klutho, was planned for the triangular lot bordered by Plant, Tebeau, and Jane Streets. Klutho, a native of New York, lived and worked in Jacksonville, Florida. He was primarily responsible for rebuilding the city of Jacksonville after a 1901 fire destroyed 148 blocks. He was a disciple of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. In addition, Klutho agreed to design a new building for the Young Men's Christian Association. Construction began June 21, 1907 but was not completed until 1911. It served as the headquarters for the YMCA for a number of years and later was used as the municipal building. Today the YMCA building has been extensively renovated and serves as the City Hall for Waycross.

The years 1911 and 1912 saw the completion of two of the downtown district's most important buildings. The original portion of the old Post Office, designed by James Knox Taylor, was completed in 1911. The Italian Renaissance Revival style building was built on Elizabeth Street across from what would later be the Hotel Ware. In 1935 the building was enlarged and remodeled to provide room for the district federal court. Two wings were added, a second floor, and a new front facade designed in the Renaissance Revival Style. Vacated by the Post Office in 1976, the building sat empty for a number of years. It was restored in 1981 and listed on the National Register. Now known as the Bowen Building, the structure is used for retail and office space.

Also in 1912 the Bunn Building was completed. This five-story building was known as Waycross' first skyscraper. Built by the Park-Morrand Company, concrete engineers and contractors, it was one of the first buildings in the state to be built of reinforced concrete with



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brick veneered walls. It provided commercial office space for the downtown area, as well as a home for the local Masonic Lodge.

By 1913 the downtown district was a diverse economic and social area. Businesses were expanded along Plant Avenue, on Pendleton Avenue, and in much of the rest of the district. The Grand Theatre (today the Ritz Theatre) was built on the southwest corner of Mary and Pendleton. A telephone office was established on Pendleton next to Grace Episcopal Church. The Elks Lodge (now a restaurant) was built on the northeast corner on Tebeau and Mary. The two newspapers of the day, The Morning Herald and The Journal had offices on Jane Street and Plant Avenue respectively. The merger of these two would later result in today's Waycross Journal-Herald. Kress' 5, 10, & 25 cent store was operating on Mary Street. To accommodate the new and growing use of the automobile, a single garage existed within the district.

The 1917-1918 edition of the Waycross City Directory reported: "Waycross, Queen of the Wiregrass, population 19,869. Waycross has a first class electric lighting system, 52 passenger trains a day, and a monthly payroll of \$130,000 from the Atlantic Coast Line."

The phenomenal growth of the use of automobiles was evident in 1922. There were two auto dealers, five filling stations, and seven garages for auto repairs. Cars had not completely replaced the horse and buggy, however. Two harness and carriage shops, a blacksmith shop, and a mule shed still existed downtown.

In 1925 the Lyric Theatre opened its doors for the first time. The first talking picture in Waycross was shown at the Lyric in 1929. It gained renown over the years as the site of seven movie world premiers, several of which were filmed in the Okefenokee Swamp. Several movie, television, and radio stars made appearances on the stage of the Lyric over the years. During World War II, thousands of dollars worth of war bonds were sold there.

In 1928 the Hotel Ware was built on the northwest corner of Tebeau and Elizabeth, across from the Post Office. The seven-story building was (and still is) the tallest building in Waycross. It functioned as a hotel for a number of years, until it was donated to the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church in the mid-1960's for use as a retirement home. In 1969 the YMCA acquired the building and used it for various activities. On September 1, 1989, the Westin Financial Group bought the building with plans to renovate it for elderly apartments. Construction has already started on Phase I of this project.

According to the 1930 Sanborn map there were eight filling stations, six auto repair garages, two dealerships, one used car dealer, and two

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auto rental shops in the downtown area alone. The automobile was fast becoming the dominant factor that would shape American culture for years to come. The growing population meant more school-age children so Central High School was expanded by adding a wing to the rear. The racial attitude of the day was evidenced by the separate white and colored waiting rooms of Union Station.

That same year (1930), James E. Hart, Sr. opened a jewelry store in downtown. The store burned in 1941 but was rebuilt that same year. Several other buildings were built during the 1940's in various locations throughout the district.

In 1950 construction began on what is known as the Monroe Block, a group of stores along the 400 block of Mary Street. This entire square block was originally the home of Central High School, the first public school in Waycross. It had been torn down only the year before.

The 1950's and 1960's saw Waycross following the lead of so many of America's cities. Shopping centers began to syphon the retail market away from the central business district. In an effort to keep up with the "modern" times, many stores were remodeled. Aluminum storefronts, Dryvit, and concrete stucco were all used to try to help bring the area back to life. It had little effect, however. The downtown continued to decline.

In the 1970's an effort began that would try to revitalize the area. In 1975 the Downtown Development Authority was established by an amendment to the state constitution. The purpose of the DDA was to attract new business to the downtown area.

In 1980, Waycross was selected as one of the five pilot towns in Georgia to become part of the National Main Street Program. An executive director was hired to administer both the Main Street program and the Downtown Development Authority. Progress has been slow but steady, and the attitudes of the merchants and property owners are becoming more and more progressive. Five of the major buildings have been renovated with state-wide acclaim.

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## **9. Major Bibliographic References**

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Vollenweider, Reid, Nancy Campbell, Georgia Bryant. Historic Property Information Form, January 1990. On file at the Office of Historic Preservation, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia, with supplemental information.

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

- ( ) preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- (x) previously listed in the National Register \*
- (x) 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

- \* U.S. Post Office and Courthouse (2-1-80)  
Phoenix Hotel (4-17-86)  
Railroad depots and signal building (Waycross Historic District 6-29-76)
- \*\* District has been considered eligible by both the Georgia SHPO and the National Park Service in giving preliminary certifications for federal tax credit projects to the Bunn Building (7-19-88) and the Ware Hotel (7-19-90).

**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreege of Property** Approximately 50 acres.

**UTM References**

A)	Zone	Easting	Northing
A.	17	370980	3453890
B.	17	371065	3453790
C.	17	370165	3453010
D.	17	369940	3453200
E.	17	370300	3453645

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The district boundary encompasses approximately 15 blocks in Waycross's central business district and is generally drawn along the railroad corridor to the east and the south, and then along Francis, Remshart, Isabella, Pendleton, Mary, Lott, Alice, and Plant Avenue, then returning to the railroad corridor. It is drawn to scale on the attached district map.

**Boundary Justification**

The district boundary encompasses the concentration of intact historic commercial, governmental, institutional, and transportation-related development in Waycross' central business district.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**name/title** Debra A. Curtis, Architectural Historian  
**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** January 3, 1992

(HPS form version 10-29-91)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Photographs

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**Name of Property:** Downtown Waycross Historic District  
**City or Vicinity:** Waycross  
**County:** Ware  
**State:** Georgia  
**Photographer:** James R. Lockhart  
**Negative Filed:** Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**Date Photographed:** August 1990

**Description of Photograph(s):**

1 of 22: Intersection of Plant Avenue and Alice Street. Note triangular shaped block on right. Photographer facing north.

2 of 22: Intersection of Plant Avenue and Mary Street. Doughboy Park gazebo on left. Photographer facing west.

3 of 22: Doughboy Park. 1935 statue on left. Passenger depot in left background. Photographer facing southwest.

4 of 22: Intersection of Plant Avenue and Elizabeth Street. Phoenix Park and Phoenix Hotel on right. Freight depot on left. Photographer facing southwest.

5 of 22: Intersection of Plant Avenue and Elizabeth Street. Photographer facing northwest.

6 of 22: Passenger depot and main railroad corridor. Photographer facing north.

7 of 22: Freight depot and main railroad corridor. Photographer facing north.

8 of 22: Intersection of Plant Avenue and Jane Street. Nonhistoric overpass in left background. Note brick paving on Jane Street. Photographer facing southwest.

9 of 22: Francis Street. Wholesale warehouses and auto garage. Photographer facing west.

10 of 22: Intersection of Tebeau and Jane Streets. Rear of Bunn Building in right background. Ware Hotel in left background. Photographer facing north.

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**Photographs**

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11 of 22: Intersection of Elizabeth and Tebeau Streets. Front facade of Bunn Building on right. Lyric Theater on left. Photographer facing east.

12 of 22: Former U. S. Post Office and Courthouse, Elizabeth Street. Photographer facing southwest.

13 of 22: Ware Hotel, intersection of Elizabeth and Tebeau Streets. Photographer facing northwest.

14 of 22: Intersection of Mary and Tebeau Streets. Catholic church building on right. Elks Lodge building on left. Episcopal Church in left background. Photographer facing east.

15 of 22: Catholic church building, Mary Street. Photographer facing southeast.

16 of 22: Intersection of Tebeau and Isabella Streets. Bus station in center. Photographer facing southwest.

17 of 22: Former YMCA Building (now City Hall), Pendleton Street. Photographer facing southwest.

18 of 22: Intersection of Pendleton and Mary Streets. Episcopal Church in foreground, City Hall in background. Photographer facing northwest.

19 of 22: Intersection of Pendleton and Mary Streets. Ritz Theater in foreground. Photographer facing southwest.

20 of 22: Intersection of Mary and Lott Streets. Phoenix Park on right. Photographer facing east.

21 of 22: Plant Avenue between Isabella and Carswell Streets. Note pressed metal and stone aggregate facades in center of block. Photographer facing northeast.

22 of 22: Intersection of Plant and Albany Avenues. Murson Hotel in right foreground. Historic gas station just to left of hotel. Photographer facing southwest.