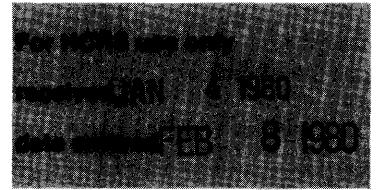


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections



1. Name

historic Front Circle, Tift College

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number Tift College Drive not for publication

city, town Forsyth vicinity of congressional district 3rd- Jack Brinkley

state Georgia code 013 county Monroe code 207

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Dr. James N. Griffith, President, Georgia Baptist Convention, Beech Haven Baptist Ch.

street & number P.O. Box 5737

city, town Athens vicinity of state Georgia 30601

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Superior Court

street & number Monroe County Courthouse

city, town Forsyth state Georgia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Front Circle, Tift College

The Front Circle at Tift College comprises the historic core of this college campus. It consists of three major brick buildings grouped in a semi-hexagonal fashion, a small wood-framed house, and an entrance gate, all arranged around a landscaped yard with a circular drive and central fountain. The Front Circle dates from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Buildings, Structures and Landscaping

The oldest and the most centrally situated building on the Front Circle is Ponder Hall. Ponder Hall consists of an original central section and two added flanking wings. The central section, dating from 1883 and originally called Wiggs Hall, is rectangular in plan and two stories high with a low hipped roof. It is constructed of loadbearing brickmasonry throughout, on a fieldstone foundation remaining from a previous building. Significant exterior features include tall, narrow, round-headed windows with inscribed keystones (paired in the central bay), a corbelled brick cornice, a one-story wooden front porch, and a recessed front entry with eclectic Victorian detailing. The building once featured a wood-framed tower above the projecting front central bay. The interior of Ponder Hall originally was divided into classrooms and an auditorium; with the exception of a single fully restored ground-floor room, the interior has been drastically altered in a series of remodelings. The southeast wing, added in 1895 and named Ponder Annex in 1899, is in keeping with the design of the older central section. Lower than the central section, it is nonetheless two stories high with a hip roof, built of brick, and features a corbelled brick cornice and a one-story wooden front porch. The windows are not as tall or narrow, and they are capped with segmental brick arches. As in the central section, the interior has been remodeled. The northwest wing, added in 1920, is a more utilitarian, three-story brick addition with simple brick beltcourses, segmental arched windows, and a pitched roof behind parapet walls. The interior of this wing has also been remodeled.

The second major historic building on Front Circle is Upshaw Hall, built in 1904. Located adjacent to and south of Ponder Hall, Upshaw Hall is a four-story, hip-roofed brick dormitory. The mass of this large building is broken up by a projecting pedimented central bay and projecting end bays. Detailing is limited to round-headed windows connected by brick beltcourses at the springing level on the fourth floors of the projecting bays, brick quoins on the ground-floor corners, and an oculus in the central pediment.

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A two-story wooden verandah on brick piers once stretched across the front of the building, but this has been reduced to a one-story porch on piers in front of the central bay. The interior of Upshaw Hall, mostly corridors and dormitory rooms, is largely intact with one major exception -- an original four-story rotunda in the central section of the building has been obliterated by extending the various floor levels across this once-open space to augment the dormitory accommodations.

Ponder and Upshaw halls are joined by a porch-like passageway. Part of this passageway, still attached to Ponder Hall, resembles in free-standing form the verandah of Upshaw Hall and, in fact, dates from that period. Another part, attached to Upshaw Hall, consists of a modern, two-story, brick-enclosed fire escape which obliterated a section of the original passageway.

The third major building on Front Circle is the new Administration Building. The Administration Building was built in 1974-75 on the site of Bessie Tift Hall; Tift Hall was the result of the 1905 enlargement of the original 1900 college dormitory known for a short time as Gibson Hall. The Administration Building is a long, narrow, three-story, brick-veneer building; its Neoclassical design features a central pedimented portico. Although clearly a contemporary building, its siting, orientation, mass, material, and to some extent its detailing are analogous to those of its historic predecessor.

The fourth and final building on Front Circle is Banks Stephens Hall. Banks Stephens Hall is a weatherboarded, wood-frame building consisting of a two-story high, three-bay wide front (west) section under a hip roof with gablets, a simple one-story, pedimented front porch on a stoop, and an original two-story ell to the rear (east) augmented by a one-and-a-half-story, parallel-gable-roofed addition. This building has no significant exterior detailing, although it once featured a full-width, one-story, wooden front porch with chamfered columns, lattice balustrade, and gingerbread eaves, topped by a second-story, center-bay balcony similarly detailed. The interior of the building has been drastically altered through a succession of

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remodelings; the house was originally a residence, then the college infirmary, then faculty residences, and then the domestic-sciences building, and is now the college music building. The building has also been moved: before becoming a part of Tift College, the house was located a short distance to the east. In 1903, it was purchased by the college and outfitted as the school infirmary. Some time between 1913 and 1919, it was moved to its present location on the Front Circle.

A fifth important structure on the Front Circle is the entry arch. Located on the southwest edge of the Circle, the entry arch consists of two brick piers spanned by an exposed-steel arched truss bearing the college name on a solid background. The entry arch was built in 1929 and originally featured the name of the college spelled out in electric lights. The 1929 entry arch is the successor in a series of at least three earlier entranceways.

Front Circle itself, contained within the sweep of the historic campus buildings and the entry arch, is a landscaped ground with a broad lawn, clumps of large trees, plantings of shrubbery, walks, a fountain, and a circular main driveway. The style of landscaping is informal. A special landscape feature of Front Circle is an avenue of trees and grass extending between the entry arch to the southwest and Ponder Hall to the northeast.

Boundaries

The Front Circle at Tift College constitutes the historic core of this college campus, set on a slight rise of ground to the east of downtown Forsyth. Boundaries have been drawn to include historically significant buildings, structures and landscaping. Surrounding the Front Circle on three sides, and generally at a lower elevation, is the rest of the contemporary college campus, most of which dates from the last three decades. To the south of Front Circle, across the railroad tracks and a major highway, is the city of Forsyth.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1883, 1904, **Builder/Architect** Parkins & Bruce; Alexander Blair, etc.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Front Circle of Tift College is significant in Georgia's educational, architectural, and landscape architectural history,

Educational Significance

In educational history, it is significant as the oldest continuously operating women's college at its original location in Georgia.

The movement for women's education at the college level had early roots in Georgia, with the first call for a state-supported women's college in 1825 culminating a decade later with the establishment of the Georgia Female College in 1836 (later changed to Wesleyan when it was sold to the Methodists). Tift represents a major part of this movement due to its continuous operation and that the only older continuously operated Georgia female college, Wesleyan, has moved from its original campus, making Tift the oldest Georgia women's college at its original location.

Tift College, as Georgia's second-oldest continuously operating women's college, is among the ten oldest in the nation. Other colleges were established in Georgia between Wesleyan (the undisputed oldest, established in 1836 with its first classes held in 1839 and first class graduating in 1840) and Tift (chartered in 1849), but they have long since died out.

The earliest documentation of the call for a college at Forsyth can be found in the August 12, 1848, issue of the Forsyth newspaper, The Bee. The editor, James W. Gaulding, a Presbyterian, under the heading, "Female Institute At Forsyth," stated:

A project is on foot, with every possibility of success, to buy the Botanic College building in this place, and present it to the Synod of Georgia, for the purpose of establishing a Female College ... under the management and direction of the Presbyterian denomination ... [it was hoped that it would] eclipse any other institution of a similar character in the State.

[continued]

6

9. Major Bibliographical References

Forsyth-Monroe County, Georgia Sesquicentennial, 1823-1973.

Bessie Tift College catalogs, various dates.

[continued]

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property app. 10 acres

Quadrangle name Forsyth, Ga.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	7	2	2	5	9	9	5	3	6	5	8	7	9	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

B

1	7	2	2	5	9	9	5	3	6	5	8	9	6	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

C

1	7	2	2	6	2	0	0	3	6	5	8	9	9	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

D

1	7	2	2	6	2	2	0	3	6	5	8	7	8	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

E

Zone		Easting						Northing						

F

Zone		Easting						Northing						

G

Zone		Easting						Northing						

H

Zone		Easting						Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

All that property within the heavy black line as marked on the accompanying Monroe County, Georgia, Tax Map F-35.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., historian; Richard R. Cloues, architectural historian

organization Historic Preservation Sec., Ga. D.N.R. date December 1, 1979

street & number 270 Washington Street, S.W. telephone (404) 656-2840

city or town Atlanta state Georgia

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Elizabeth A. Lyon
Elizabeth A. Lyon

title Acting State Historic Preservation Officer

date 12/18/79

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Sally J. Olden

date 2/18/80

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Wm A. Dubie

date 2/5/80

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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Part of the incentive for starting a college in Forsyth was, according to the editor, "Our village is on the decline, its star is waning fast," and if the proposed college project failed, "the result will prove disastrous to Forsyth." He felt the college would produce a building boom in the town, as well as the entire county. He envisioned wealthy people moving to the city (as was the case in Athens, Ga., site of the University of Georgia) for the sake of their child's education. He felt a female college would be closely followed by a male one. With all these economic incentives, the editor hoped to pull together local support for the project in which he evidently succeeded.

Stressing that he would not personally benefit from the project, the editor felt that the old medical building could be outfitted anew and finished for \$6,000 or \$7,000. He felt the site was important, since it was far enough from the business district to prevent interruption and "near enough to be convenient to all."

The editor's call for local patriotic and economic support, with his discussion of incentives for the town to support the idea, apparently worked. The Georgia legislature incorporated or chartered the new school as the Forsyth Female Collegiate Institute on December 21, 1849. The Reverend E.C.J.B. Thomas, a Baptist minister and educator, was temporarily placed in charge of the new school, but by late 1850, W.C. Wilkes was chosen as the first president. The first graduating class was in 1854.

Although much has changed since the first educational institution occupied the land now the site of the Front Circle of Tift College, the continuum of education at this location is an important feature of the site's significance. In 1840, the cornerstone of the Southern Botanical Medical College was laid here. The medical college did not thrive and moved to Macon in 1846. The uncompleted building was purchased by the Baptists of Forsyth in 1855. To this building they moved the Forsyth Female Collegiate Institute, which they had recently purchased. The school was then renamed Monroe Female University, and in 1867, Monroe Female College. In 1898, the name was changed to

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Monroe College at the time it was purchased by the Georgia Baptist Convention.

When the Baptists of Forsyth sought a better facility for their local women's college, educating women beyond an expertise in domestic arts was still a novelty. The curriculum in the first decade consisted not only of instructions in etiquette, but also of four years of English (literature and composition), Latin, mathematics, history and science, with some Christianity, mythology, philosophy, and logic.

By 1860, the enrollment had reached 100, with a faculty of ten. During the Civil War, there was an interruption of schooling. The original central building was used as a Confederate hospital in 1864 while classes met in private homes.

The original central building was destroyed by fire in 1879 and since this was the only college building, the school closed until it was replaced. The college began a rebuilding program that culminated in the completion in 1883 of the existing central building and the formal re-opening of the college. This building was designed by the Atlanta firm of Parkins and Bruce, one of the leading architectural firms in the state and the South at that time. No classes were held from July, 1881, through July, 1883.

Although in 1904 the central building was named for Mrs. Walton H. Wiggs, who had substantially contributed to the building fund, it usually was called the central building. It was used for classrooms, administration, and later as a recreation center, since it had an auditorium. Expansion of the student body, faculty and curriculum brought an addition to the central building, which was completed in 1895. It was named in 1899 for Captain J.M. Ponder, chairman of the college's board of trustees at that time. Ponder had personally donated \$2,000 to the cost of the annex. The Ponder Annex, as it was first called, was used for dormitory rooms, administrative offices, dining hall and library. By the 1930s, the entire building was known as "Ponder Hall," as it is today.

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After years of centering around one main campus building which contained all campus activities and living quarters, the college decided to build dormitories flanking the central building. The first one completed was known originally as Gibson Hall and opened in 1900. Designed by W.F. Dumas, it had thirty rooms on two floors. It was later expanded into a three-story dormitory, and when completed in 1905, was renamed Bessie Tift Hall. This building was razed in the 1970s and replaced by the present administration building.

The second dormitory that was built, and the one remaining from this period, was designed by the noted Macon architect, Alexander Blair, who had built several courthouses and other civic buildings. He also designed the enlargement of Gibson to Tift Hall. The new dormitory was dedicated on September 16, 1904, in honor of Addie H. Upshaw, the mother of W.D. Upshaw, the primary fund-raiser in the effort by the college to construct more dormitories. In the report to the trustees, the new four-story dormitory was described as having "all modern conveniences, heated by steam and lighted by electricity, as all of the buildings of the institution are, furnishing each occupant the best possible comfort and light for study."

The college was renamed officially on January 10, 1907, for Bessie (Willingham) Tift (1860-1936), wife of Henry Harding Tift (1841-1922) of Tifton. Mrs. Tift, herself an alumna of the college, and her husband had answered the plea for money for the new dorm and the renovations of the older one. They donated \$37,000 for the renovations and enlargements of Gibson Hall, which was renamed in 1905 in her honor. Later, when the entire college was named for her, the trustees reported to the Georgia Baptist Convention: "There is one person in Georgia who has been to Monroe College no less an inspiration and helpful friend than the distinguished persons whose names the above institutions bear. That person is Mrs. H.H. Tift of Tifton, Georgia." The trustees cited her financial assistance in the completion of Upshaw Hall, the enlargement of Bessie Tift Hall and protection of the college from the encroachments of the Southern Cotton Oil Company. In 1956, the name of the college was shortened to Tift College.

The last feature to complete the central college campus was the Tift

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Entry Arch, erected in 1915, replacing a simple slatted wooden gate. The original sign placed on brick pillars read, "Bessie Tift College." In 1929, the present archway was built, a gift of that year's graduates. The metal archway had the college name in electric lights to show the progressive spirit of the college. The public walkway to Ponder Hall went through the archway. The electric lights have recently been replaced with a metal strip bearing the college name.

Recent changes to the central campus have compromised some of the flavor of the early-twentieth-century women's college. Like many of her sister schools, modernization was needed. In 1961, Upshaw Hall had its sweeping verandas and its rotunda removed. In the 1970s, Bessie Tift Hall was razed (as previously mentioned), and the new administration building was erected. Although this new building occupies the same space, it cannot compare to the flavor of the earlier structure, nor to the purposes for which it was built, but does have similar massing and siting.

The only other structure included in this nomination is now called Banks Stephens Hall, which is used for a fine-arts building. It is believed to be originally the J.E. Powell House, donated to the college in 1903, which campus maps as late as 1913 show as being further to the south of its present location. A \$1,000 gift by R. Banks Stephens of Forsyth, also in 1903, converted the house into an infirmary for the college. It was moved to its present location by 1919.

Architectural and Landscape-Architectural Significance

The historic buildings at Tift College are significant in architectural history because they represent the type of college facilities built in small-college-town institutions during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Some of the state's foremost architects were employed to design them. The buildings had a dual purpose, not only as functional classroom or dormitory buildings but also as image-makers for the college through both their details and their arrangement in forming a campus.

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The circular driveway, lights, sidewalks, lawns, and trees tie all these buildings together as a campus. This centralized effect evolved in the early-twentieth century after the construction of Upshaw and Tift halls and the erection of the entrance arch and walkway. Furthermore, the arrangement of the buildings in a semi-hexagonal fashion, at the top of a low rise of ground, embracing a landscaped yard, seems to be characteristic of early-twentieth-century campus planning in Georgia; other state colleges, notably Georgia Southern in Statesboro, have similar arrangements.

The campus is located on a hill that now slopes down to the interstate highway and is immediately adjacent to a major road leading to Forsyth and the railroad depot, all of which encapsulate the atmosphere of a small-town college with easy access to town and country -- so unlike the massive, urbanized campuses of the inner-city or large state universities.

The rest of the present campus, which is not being nominated, faces east toward the interstate highway and dates from the past thirty years.

Mrs. Walton H. Wiggs, for whom the presently known "Ponder Hall" was named in 1904, was born Mary Walton Hunter in 1850 in Ellaville, Georgia. In 1877, she married Arthur T. Wiggs, a businessman in Cochran. Wiggs' business interests included a turpentine still, cotton gin, store, and farm lands. After her marriage, Mrs. Wiggs, who had taught school prior to her marriage, began local efforts to educate rural women. After her husband's death in 1891, she remained in Cochran until her children finished school, then moved to Atlanta, where she lived, managing her husband's estate until her death, in 1919. It has been said of her, "She was noted for her breadth of vision and many acts of benevolence." Besides the building at Tift, a dormitory at Ebenezer College (now Middle Georgia College) bears her name and a science hall at Mercer University, Macon. She contributed generously to other schools as well, primarily Baptist ones.

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Personal inspection, Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., and Richard Cloues, August 1, 1979.

Draft nomination and additional information supplied by Dr. Susan Conner of Tift College.

Original plans of Central Building (Wiggs, later Ponder Hall), in possession of the Tift College archives.

Hawkinsville, Ga., D.A.R. History of Pulaski and Bleckley Counties, Georgia, Vol. I (1957), and estate records, Fulton County, Ga., for data on Mrs. Walton H. Wiggs.

Woody, Thomas. A History of Women's Education in the United States (1929).

Boaz, Louise S. Women's Education Begins (1935).

International Encyclopedia of Higher Education (1977).

The Bee (Forsyth, Ga.), August 12, 1848 (on microfilm at the Georgia Archives).

Stone, Eugenia W. Yesterday at Tift (1969).