

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received AUG 5 1985

date entered

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

DEC 3 1985

1. Name

historic

and/or common Homer Historic District

2. Location

street & number along Main St. (U.S. 441) and Silver Shoals Road N/A not for publication

city, town Homer N/A vicinity of

state Georgia code 013 county Banks code 011

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"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple owners(more than 50)

street & number

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Superior Court

street & number Banks County Courthouse

city, town Homer state Georgia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Historic Structures Field Survey:

title Banks County, Georgia has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1976  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resource

city, town Atlanta state Georgia

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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

The Homer Historic District is located in the center of the small county-seat town. The district contains a collection of mid-to late 19th-century and early 20th-century structures. The three main areas of the district are the town center (courthouse square, Veterans' Park, and commercial district), the residential neighborhood south of the town center, and the structures along Main Street.

The district is situated on a plateau which is fairly level throughout. The district has an irregular grid pattern. The original grid plan is still intact at the center of the town. Streets in the district which lead outside the district take on curvilinear forms, reflective of the topography. The overall division of land is irregular-sized, rectangular tracts: the narrow commercial tracts on Main Street and the more squared and larger residential tracts. The county has a large tract of land in the center of the district which contains the courthouse, commissioner's office, the WPA office building, and historic jail.

Buildings are situated primarily in the center of their lots. The commercial structures are sited along Main Street. The historic bank building and the contemporary city hall structure are the only attached commercial buildings. The remaining commercial structures are sited close together, but are detached. There is a spacious feeling at the center of the community due to the open space, provided by the courthouse square and Veterans' Park. The district offers an extremely varied collection of architectural styles. Structures within the district include styles from Plantation Plain, Greek Revival, Gothic, Victorian-eclectic, Georgian Revival, and Craftsman.

Plantation Plain structures in the district are constructed of wood with simple detailing. Residential structures of this style include the Bowden House and the Candler House. The Bowden House is situated on a hill overlooking Main and Maysville Streets. This structure is a two-story frame dwelling with a two-story portico extending across the entire facade. The Candler House is an L-shaped, two-story frame structure with a recessed central entrance. According to the present owners, an original two-story porch was infilled on the front facade. Evidence of this can be found in the ghost line on the exterior and the elaborate entrance door with its sidelights and transom, placed deep into the house at the end of the recessed entrance area. This change apparently occurred early in the history of the property, since flushboard siding and paneling is used throughout the front section of the house.

Commercial structures of Plantation Plain inspiration are characterized by frame construction; a gabled roof with the gable end serving as the front facade; a recessed porch under the gable, often supported by square columns; and weatherboard siding on most of the buildings with flushboard used under the porches. These buildings include Mason's store, which has flushboard siding and a long narrow hole on the exterior illustrating its former use as a post office; J.D. Hill's store and the Banks County Journal Office. The Banks County Journal Office has been altered by the addition of a room across the front facade. The rear portion of the building remains intact and a historic printing press is located in the interior. Two other commercial buildings from the early settlement period include the office in the rear yard of the Jolly House and another similar structure located in the rear yard of J.D. Hill's store. This building supposedly served as an early saloon. The Homer Presbyterian Church is of plain-styled design as well. The most dominant structure of Greek Revival design is the Banks County Courthouse begun in 1860 and completed in 1875. The Old Banks County Jail is reminiscent of Gothic design. Victorian-eclectic design is reflected primarily in the residences. Common details include frame construction; weatherboard siding; front porches supported by bracketed, chamfered, or plain-styled and squared

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posts; and decorative balustrades and attic vents. The J.D. Hill House and the Mason House are the most elaborate examples of this style. The Homer Baptist Church and the remaining section of the Banks County School are both of Victorian-eclectic design. The Banks County Bank is a commercial example with its brick corbeling, stepped brick cornice, and arched doorways and windows. Georgian Revival architecture is reflected in the Turnbull House.

The Jolly House is of Craftsman design. The complex of buildings and the Garrison House, constructed by Oscar Garrison in the 1930s, also are of Craftsman inspiration.

The Town of Homer contains a number of open spaces. These include the historic public square, with its courthouse, well house, and landscape of large oak trees and grassed lawn; the Veterans' Park, which contains a central fountain, the Sunday School Celebration pavilion from the 1930s, and a landscape of grass, large trees, and crepe myrtles; and several cemeteries. The cemeteries include the present day Presbyterian Church cemetery, located on a hillside in the extreme northwest section of the district; a small cemetery, adjacent to the Homer Baptist Church; and the original town cemetery. The town cemetery is located to the south of Main Street. Its configuration is set at an angle to the otherwise gridiron plan of the town. The cemetery has always been associated with the Presbyterian Church. The cemetery contains the grave of such illustrious citizens as William Turk, the man who donated the land for the town. Today the cemetery suffers from neglect. Vegetation has overtaken many of the graves. It is parcel 64 on the Tax Map.

The district is also characterized by large shade trees, foundation shrubbery planting at the residential structures, and grass. There are a few rock walls scattered throughout the district. Of special importance is a rock wall located in front of the Jolly House. It seems possible that this wall could have been a retaining wall along the Federal Road. The office in the rear yard of the Jolly House was once situated beyond this wall; today two elm trees line the former walkway that led to the office. In the yard of the Jolly House there are number of large pine trees which were planted by the Jolly family at the time of construction (1918).

The well house in the front lawn of the courthouse is an important outbuilding in the district. It is unusual for such public outbuildings to have survived. This structure contains four square posts which support a pyramidal roof. The posts are hand hewn, reflecting its age, and the roof is shingled with what appears to be new wood. The pump over the well, which was a later addition to the early bucket and rope, has the inscription "The F.E. Myers and Brothers Company, Ashland, Ohio, USA. Pat. January 16, 1912. malleable."

Non-contributing properties in the district consist of small modern commercial buildings in the center of town and non-historic residences. The district is surrounded by non-historic development or undeveloped land.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) local history
<b>Specific dates</b>	1859 - 1935	<b>Builder/Architect</b>	various	

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Homer Historic District is significant in architecture due to the variety of architectural styles represented within, including the unusual commercial row of Plantation Plain style buildings, the Greek Revival Banks County Courthouse, the Gothic Revival jail, and others in Victorian-eclectic, Georgian Revival and Craftsman styles. It is significant in community planning since the community developed after 1859, in a formerly nearly uninhabited rural area, along an imposed gridiron pattern on a high plateau. In landscape architecture, the district is significant for its many historic open spaces and the informal landscape elements that tie the area together. The courthouse square is a historic open space around which the town is centered, while the outlying cemeteries are also open, semi-public spaces. It is significant in politics and government due to being established, from the beginning, as the county seat and for containing the county courthouse and jail. In transportation, it is significant for its relationship with the federal road building program of the 1920s which provided a stimulus for growth in the community. The routing of a national highway through Homer made up for the absence of a railroad. In local history, the district is significant since the surviving historic structures relate to people important in the growth and development of the community. Besides local people, two Georgia governors also lived here for a short time. These areas of significance support the district's eligibility under National Register criteria A, B, and C.

Historical Narrative

(See continuation sheet)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Jaeger, Dale. "Town of Homer Historic District." Historic District Information Form, Sept. 1, 1984. On file at the Historic Preservation Section, Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 57 acres

Quadrangle name Homer, GA and Maysville, GA

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	7
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2	7	0	8	4	0
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3	8	0	1	9	8	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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2	7	0	2	7	0
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3	8	0	1	3	4	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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2	6	9	6	1	0
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3	8	0	1	5	0	0
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D 

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2	7	0	0	4	0
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3	8	0	2	0	4	0
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E 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundaries reflect the concentration of historic resource within the town of Homer. Most of the area outside the district is undeveloped. Non-historic commercial development exists along U.S. 441 to the east and west of the district. The boundaries are marked on the enclosed map.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., Historian  
Historic Preservation Section

organization Georgia Department of Natural Resources

date July 2, 1985

street & number 270 Washington Street

telephone (404)656-2840

city or town Atlanta,

state Georgia 30334

## 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Elizabeth A. Lyon*  
Elizabeth A. Lyon

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date 7/11/85

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

*Wm. S. Lacy*

date 12/3/85

Keeper of the National Register

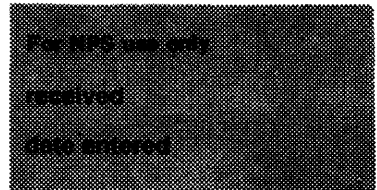
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The Town of Homer was incorporated on December 19, 1859 by an Act of the Georgia General Assembly and was established as the county seat from the beginning. The new county of Banks had been created a year earlier, in December, 1858, from land taken from Franklin and Habersham Counties. The site of Homer originally consisted of thirty-five acres donated by William Turk. These acres included land for a courthouse, jail, school, and three churches: Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist. The town limits were to be a circle with a radius of one mile from the courthouse. A post office was established there in 1860. The town was situated on the Federal Road that ran from Carnesville (county seat of Franklin County) to Gainesville (county seat of Hall County).

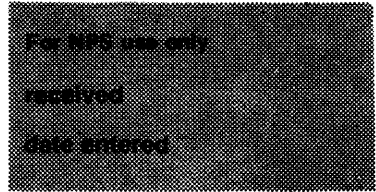
The town soon developed with the addition of commercial and residential structures. Some of the earliest buildings included the Bowden House located on the old Federal Road; the Candler House and commercial structures. The Presbyterian Church was the first religious structure in the town and the first school was located in the rear yard of that church. An early tradition in the county was to hold annual interdenominational church gatherings, known as the Sunday School Convention, beginning in 1877. The name was changed to the Sunday School Celebration in 1882. The Celebration was held at various locations in the county from 1882 to 1889. After 1889 the celebration was moved to Homer permanently, where it continues to be held each year on the last Saturday in July. Homer was bypassed by the railroad construction of the late 1880s. The relentless cry that a railroad was needed was repeated in the local media beginning with the earliest surviving news papers from 1891. Homer and Carnesville, a community located directly east, were two county seats that were by-passed by the railroad. Homer's many attempts to secure a railroad are reminiscent of the same type of approaches used by the citizens of Carnesville. One plea in 1893 stated that "Last Monday morning when every thing was so dark and calm you could hear the whistle of the locomotive at Maysville, seven or eight miles away. It sounded as if it were blowing for Homer." An article, titled "What We Need" in 1892, provides a good description of the town:

"Homer needs a school, a railroad, two or three large supply stores, a couple or more good firms to buy cotton, a new Methodist Church, the Baptist Church to be finished, good smooth sidewalks, some repairs on the jail, a good schoolhouse, electric lights, and street railroads, then the water works."

Homer was to get some but not all of these things during the next few decades. A new charter was enacted in 1897 and the town limits reduced to three-fourths of a mile from the courthouse. The population, which was 140 in 1880, had grown to 221 by 1900. In contrast to the bustling growth experienced at Maysville, which was smaller than Homer in 1880 and had grown to a community of approximately 450 by 1900, Homer's main role appears to have been as the seat of government, rather than as a center for commerce and transportation. Local businesses in 1899 included buggies and wagons, a doctor, a lawyer, and a hotel (surviving as the Bowden House), where the drummers or traveling salesmen stayed. That same year telephones were brought to Homer, with the local doctor being the first to have one. In 1903, a pavilion was erected on the public square to be used for "public occasions, Confederate reunions, Sunday School celebrations, public speakers, etc." By 1910, Homer's population was still only 221 with its rival, Maysville, being 800. Still denied a railroad, Homer did manage to secure a Federal highway by 1923-34. The influx of travelers and the rise of the automobile in general brought the appearance of a service station and a garage, both of which

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survive.

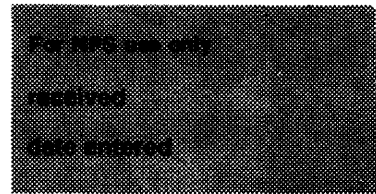
In the early 1930s Oscar Garrison moved to the community. He operated a lumber business and several cotton gins. Mr. Garrison added a service station and post office to the town center and built a residence for his family on Main Street in the mid 1930s. In 1932 a new pavilion for the annual Sunday School Celebration was built, and the WPA added a brick office building to the rear of the courthouse in the late 1930s.

Garrison helped bring small industries into the city in the 1940s and 1950s and privately built a water system for the town as an enticement. Garrison also built a number of dwellings in the community for his workforce. All these structures are non-historic.

Highway access appears to have spurred growth in the community. By 1940 the population had climbed to 283 residents and by 1950 there were 340 citizens. In contrast, Maysville experienced a loss of citizens between 1930 and 1940, so it appears that the county seat gained in importance. Homer today has approximately 800 residents. A new comprehensive county school has been built to replace the former Homer school. A portion of the old school was lost in a fire and today the remaining portion is used as a duplex. A Veterans' Park was added to the town center in the late 1960s on a former residential lot. A house was moved to clear the lot and today many of the former landscape elements have been incorporated into the park. A Labor Day Festival was initiated in the early 1970s by the Banks County Chamber of Commerce and is a popular festival, bringing thousands of people into the town center. Old traditions are continued, as evidenced by the outline of a cake walk board in the road adjacent to the Veterans' Park.

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Date: September 18, 1980 for Banks County Courthouse; July 26, 1982 for Banks County Jail.

Federal

Depository: Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.