

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

For HCRS use only

received OCT 26 1983

date entered DEC 1 1983

1. Name

(Baconton Multiple Resource Area)

Historic Resources of Baconton, Mitchell Co., Georgia
historic (Partial inventory: architectural and historical resources)

and/or common --

2. Location

street & number City limits of Baconton N/A not for publication

city, town Baconton N/A vicinity of ~~congressional district~~

state Georgia code 013 county Mitchell code 205

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> multiple resources	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name multiple owners

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Superior Court

street & number Mitchell County Courthouse

city, town Camilla state Georgia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Structures Field Survey:
Baconton, Mitchell County has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1981 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Section
Department of Natural Resources

city, town Atlanta state Georgia

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent ☐ deteriorated
☒ good ☒ ruins
☒ fair ☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Description of the Multiple Resource Area

1. General character, appearance and historical development of the multiple resource area:

Baconton, Georgia is a small community of 763 people (1980 Census) situated approximately one mile from the east bank of the Flint River and about 10 miles from both Albany and Camilla, Georgia. The town is bisected by a railroad track running north and south, and contains one block of commercial row structures which is the historical center of town. Residential development exists in all directions from the commercial core. Pecans are the major industry in Baconton and orchards are planted throughout the city as well as in the surrounding rural area. Although Baconton was established in 1869, none of its earliest built environment has survived; the oldest houses date from the late 1890s. Many newer homes are dispersed throughout the town as well as being concentrated in subdivisions.

2. Natural terrain, natural landmarks, geographic features:

Baconton is relatively flat and sets at an altitude of about 170 feet above sea level. Little of its land is in its natural growth, and what is not physically developed is mostly planted in pecan orchards. No streams of any significance pass through Baconton's city limits.

3. Various parts, areas, or sections of the area:

Baconton centers on its rail line which bisects the town north and south. At the town's geographic center, the business district is adjacent to the railroad on its eastern side. The majority of the town's historic residential development occurs to the east and south of the business district, with less concentrated development to the west. Newer residential development has occurred to the north, northeast, and far west of the business district. The only industrial development is related to the pecan industry and is located in the business district. An important late nineteenth century farm is located at the eastern edge of the multiple resource area.

4. Pattern of land subdivision, including street layout, lot layout, alignment of major highways, field systems, etc.; and relationship of this pattern of land subdivision to the natural terrain:

Baconton is laid out in an irregular gridiron plan. The north - south railroad tracks sit at a slight angle through town, and the oldest part of the street layout lies parallel and perpendicular to the tracks. On the eastern side of town, however, the grid runs directly north - south and east - west. Lots in Baconton have no specific form or size. Most were carved out of much larger land holdings as development took place. The route of State Highway 3 takes on the same alignment as the railroad tracks, and is incorporated into the city street system. U. S. Highway 19 passes just east of the city limits. Because the terrain is flat, the patterns of development were not effected by the natural terrain. The course taken by the railroad tracks was determined by the straightest possible route between East Albany and Camilla.

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Description of the Multiple Resource Area (Continued)

5. Most of Baconton's architecture dates from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Commercial architecture is limited to a row of simple early twentieth century brick buildings at the center of town, an early twentieth century gas station, a two-story wood-framed hotel, and newer strip-type developments. The historic brick buildings are simply detailed with corbeling, segmental arches, parapet panels, and cast iron storefront columns. Industrial development is likewise limited to a few utilitarian brick structures including a pecan processing plant and warehouses near the center of town. Historic institutional development consists of a single large early twentieth century church and a low, early twentieth century brick school. Historic residential development includes one and two story houses dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Styles represented include late Victorian Eclectic, turn-of-the-century Neoclassical, and early twentieth century Craftsman/Bungalow and Colonial Revival. Almost all the historic houses are wood framed and weatherboarded and feature a modest amount of wood detailing; a few of the houses are brick. More recent residential development consists of ranch-style houses and tract homes.

6. Landscape Qualities

The predominant landscape feature in the multiple resource area is the pecan tree, planted in groves throughout much of the city. Otherwise landscaping is limited to the modest informal arrangement of lawn, trees, shrubbery, and flower gardens in front yards. Some historic sidewalks, curbs, and street trees also exist, as well as a few cast iron, wood, and wire fences.

Description of the Historic Resources in the Multiple Resource Area

The historic resources of Baconton consist of three historic districts and one individual property. These districts and this property together comprise approximately 117 of the 826.5 acres within the city limits. The three historic districts consist of: (1) early twentieth century brick commercial buildings, warehouses, an agricultural processing plant, and a hotel at the center of town; (2) late nineteenth and early twentieth century houses, a turn-of-the century church, and an early twentieth century school along Church and Walton Streets east of the central business district; and (3) several late nineteenth and early twentieth century houses and an early twentieth century service station along South Railroad Avenue south of downtown. The single individual property is a two-story wood-framed late Victorian farmhouse with a representative portion of its agricultural land located along the eastern edge of the multiple resource area.

Multiple Resource Area Boundary Description and Justification

The boundaries of the Baconton multiple resource area coincide with Baconton's present city limits. These city limits are in the form of a square slightly larger than one mile on each side. They were selected as the multiple resource area boundaries to facilitate comprehensive preservation planning and development activities within the city of Baconton.

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NOTE: The Bacon Family Farmstead, historically related to the founding and development of Baconton, is located outside the Baconton multiple resource area (the city limits). It is being proposed for National Register listing independently.

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 checked="" 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/
<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) local history
Specific dates	1869/1903	Builder/Architect	R. J. Bacon G. W. Jackson	(Original landowners)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary Statement of Significance

The historic resources of Baconton constitute a relatively complete and well preserved record of the history of Baconton. The founding of the town along newly-laid railroad tracks just after the Civil War, the introduction of pecan culture and pecan processing facilities, the subsequent development of a commercial center and agricultural market for the surrounding countryside, the concomitant establishment of residential neighborhoods, the organization of local institutions such as churches, schools, and city government, the introduction of the automobile and the designation of the Dixie Highway, and the Great Depression are all chronicled in Baconton's historic resources. In terms of the National Register areas of significance, the historic resources of Baconton are significant in exploration and settlement, community planning and development, architecture, landscape architecture, commerce, agriculture, transportation, and local history. They meet National Register Criteria A, B, and C. Their suggested level of significance is local.

Historical Narrative

Baconton, Georgia is known as the "World's Pecan Center" and makes claim to the birthplace of the cultivated pecan industry in Georgia. The town itself, however, was established several years before pecans became its largest industry.

By the 1850s one of the settlements of sparsely populated Baker County, Georgia was Gum Pond, located on the Florida Stage Road about thirteen miles south of Albany, not far from present-day Baconton. Several families settled there from Northeastern and Middle Georgia forming the nucleus of the population. By 1857 Gum Pond and other population centers east of the Flint River in Baker County had grown enough to necessitate the establishment of a new county. Mitchell County was created from all of what was then known as "East Baker" in December 1857.

Like other parts of Southwest Georgia, refugees from vulnerable areas in the Confederate States located in the Gum Pond Community during the Civil War. The War, however, had little effect on this locality other than its economic implications and the soldiers and aid which were provided. The citizens of Gum Pond were, of course, sympathetic to the Confederacy. After the war, Southwest Georgia began to develop at an unprecedented rate.

In 1867 the Southern Florida and Western Railroad was chartered to run a line from Thomasville to Albany, Georgia. One of the directors of the railroad was Major Robert J. Bacon who lived on a plantation in northern Mitchell County along the Flint River. The most direct route for the line from Camilla to Albany passed through Major Bacon's land, which right-of-way he donated. In 1869 the line reached that point and a station was located on it. The engineers named the station Baconton in his honor. The railroad was completed to Albany in 1870 and in that same year a post office was established there, replacing the one at nearby Gum Pond which had been discontinued in 1867.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property N/A

Quadrangle name Baconton North, Georgia

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References Baconton South, Georgia

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Section 7.

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	a)	Erick Montgomery	telephone	a)	912-336-5616
	b)	Richard Cloues		b)	404-656-2840
organization	a)	Southwest Georgia Area Planning & Development Commission	date	October 10, 1983	
	b)	Historic Preservation Section, Dept. of Natural Resources			
street & number	a)	P. O. Box 346	state	Georgia	
	b)	270 Washington St. S. W.			
city or town	a)	Camilla	state	Georgia	
	b)	Atlanta			

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

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 10/11/83

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

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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Gum Pond, which was approximately three miles east of Baconton, soon began to wane in importance to the village of Baconton, and many of the area's pioneer families moved their homes to the new village. The town was developed from lands owned by Robert J. Bacon on the west and George W. Jackson on the east. Streets were laid out in gridiron sections parallel to the railroad tracks, but appear to have had no overall pattern. Present Church Street marks the property line between the Jackson and Bacon lands, and the gridiron follows a more direct north-south pattern starting at this point and to the east. Initial development in the latter nineteenth century spread along the railroad tracks and east and west from the station.

The first stores built were frame structures and were spread randomly on both sides of the railroad tracks. In the first decade of the twentieth century, brick store buildings were constructed in rows on Walton Street east of the tracks. This started the existing commercial district and commercial development west of the tracks soon disappeared. Residential development began to spread east, west, and south of the commercial core. The residential development to the east centered around the Methodist Church, which was the denomination of G. W. Jackson, the original land holder in that end of town. On the west, the residential development centered on the Baptist Church, the denomination of R. J. Bacon, who was the original land owner in the western section of Baconton.

An interesting and important development which occurred in the Baconton vicinity in the latter part of the nineteenth century was the development of the cultivated pecan. In the 1870s R. J. Bacon's daughters received a shipment of pecans from an aunt in Texas. After planting some of these in their garden, a cousin, G. M. Bacon took five of the young trees and transplanted them to his plantation at DeWitt, just north of Baconton in Mitchell County. From these five trees sprang what is believed to have been the first cultivated pecan grove in Georgia, consisting of 700 acres. By the early twentieth century pecan groves were planted throughout Mitchell and Dougherty Counties. The industry became associated with both Baconton and Albany. While Baconton called itself the "Pecan Center of the World," Albany claimed to be the "Pecan Capital of the World."

By 1903 the village of Baconton had grown to about 500 people and in August of that year was incorporated by the State of Georgia as a town. The legislature appointed W. J. Mullins as first mayor and also named five councilmen. It specified that the "incorporate limits" would be a circle radiating 1,000 yards from the public well, which was located at the intersection of Walton and Railroad Streets. In 1910 a new charter was granted changing the town limits to a square with sides measuring 2,000 yards each. The town well remained the center point.

Just as the railroad gave life to the community, so did another form of transportation - the automobile. In 1927 and 1928 the "Dixie Highway" connecting Albany and Thomasville was paved. This was a link of the major highway which led from New York to Florida. The Dixie Highway was the first paved highway in the area and therefore added considerably to Baconton's economy and stature.

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Two banks existed in Baconton in the past. The Bank of Baconton was founded in 1907 and located in the business district on the north side of Walton Street. Its president was R. P. Jackson. The bank closed in 1929. The Pecan Banking Company existed in Baconton in the 1910s and 1920s. Its president was J. B. Miller. Since 1929 there has been no bank located in the town.

Prior to 1890, before a large concentration of children lived in the village of Baconton, a school was conducted in a vacant store across from the depot. In 1890, a one room frame school house was constructed at the corner of Walton and Church Streets where the Methodist Church now stands. In 1899 a second school was constructed on North Church Street consisting of two large classrooms and an upstairs auditorium. This school taught students through grade ten, and declared itself a College Preparatory institution. In the 1903-04, the school was placed on the state list of accredited high schools. In 1915 this structure burned. In 1916 a third school house was built of brick with a tile roof, four large classrooms, a large auditorium and two restrooms. An eleventh grade was added in 1916. The present school building was erected in 1936 with eight classrooms, a library, principal's office, restrooms, and an auditorium. A gymnasium was added in 1939. This building housed grades five through eleven; leaving the lower grades in the other building. In 1947 the Baconton High School was merged with the Camilla High School to form Mitchell County High School. The school on Walton Street became the Baconton Elementary School until it was closed in 1967. The building is now vacant. The 1916 school building on Church Street has been demolished.

Three churches are located in Baconton. The oldest congregation is the Saint James Missionary Baptist Church and was established in 1876 by former slaves in West Baconton. Later a plot of ground was donated to the church on Lester Road in North Baconton and the Church relocated there. In 1924 a frame building was erected, but was replaced in 1976 by the present structure. In 1898 the Baconton Baptist Church was established to relieve its members from having to travel five miles to the Mount Enon Baptist Church in the older settlement of Gum Pond. The first building was brick and located on West Durham Street. This burned shortly after completion. A large frame structure replaced this in the same location as soon as it could be erected. This building was remodeled in 1927 and a baptistry was added in 1967. In 1971 a third building was completed and connected to the annex on the west. The 1898 structure was demolished. Since 1870 the Methodist Church has been located in various places between Lester and Baconton (east of Baconton). The congregation went by the name of Shiloh. In 1902 the membership decided to move into the village and located its building on the corner of Walton and Church Streets. This remains today as Baconton's oldest existing church building.

The population of Baconton remained relatively steady at about 500 people until the 1950s when it began to climb. Presently the town has a population of almost 800.

Many of the residents of Baconton continue to be associated with the pecan industry or other areas of agriculture. Gold Kist now occupies most of the 100 block of Walton Street. Other residents commute to Camilla and Albany for employment.

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Services have been added for the convenience of Baconton residents since the early twentieth century. The telephone system was installed in 1910, electricity in 1914, and a water system prior to 1916. Streets began to be paved in 1948 and a town hall erected in 1951. The town of Baconton became the City of Baconton in 1953.

Interest spurred by the American Bi-Centennial prompted a group of Baconton citizens to compile a history of their town and community. This project was finally completed in 1977 under the direction and leadership of Mildred Jackson Cole. The book is entitled From Stage Coaches to Train Whistles. In 1980 the Mitchell County Council for Historic Preservation was formed with Mrs. Cole and Mayor J. B. Tyre of Baconton as members. In 1981 it was decided that a Multiple Resource Nomination to the National Register should be prepared as one part of the town's participation in the Governor's Project Competition. After a committee was formed the nomination was compiled based largely on the recent history which had been written.

Baconton is a unique small community in Southwest Georgia in that it is very conscious of the value of its past while striving to improve the prospects of its future. This nomination is hoped to insure a consistency and cooperation between these two valuable components of the city of Baconton, Georgia.

Areas of Significance

Agriculture - Baconton is significant in the area of agriculture due to its being both a small farming center as well as the "World's Pecan Center." Pecans have effected the growth and prosperity of this city since the early twentieth century. In this sense, Baconton is significant to the agricultural development of the state, being the center of the cultivated pecan crop in Georgia.

Architecture - Within the limits of the city of Baconton is located a very good sampling of twentieth century architectural styles. These styles include South Georgia vernacular commercial buildings, late Victorian, Neoclassical, Bungalow, "Four-Square" houses, Georgian Revival, and the non-historic ranch style house. Baconton is notable for its diversity in architectural types and building scales.

Commerce - Being located on a major rail line, as well as a major highway, Baconton has become the largest commercial center between Albany and Camilla. Historically its business district supplied all of the essential needs of Baconton and surrounding countryside.

Community Planning - Baconton was laid out on two basic grid-iron plans that are connected at Church Street. Streets were only created when a need arose, but followed the appropriate gridiron system. Large spaces are left between streets, being filled in with pecan orchards.

Exploration/Settlement - Baconton sprang into existence because of the railroad which runs through it. Many of the early settlers of Northern Mitchell County relocated their homes in Baconton in the latter part of the nineteenth century because of the better accessibility of the area due to the railroad. The rise of Baconton is directly related to the decline of nearby Gum Pond, which had no rail service.

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Landscape Architecture - Baconton's most famous industry, the pecan, has created a very distinctive landscape both in and around the town. Pecan groves are planted in grids which create a very pleasing geometric effect. The view through rows of trees is straight and unobstructed in every direction. Landscape architecture is also significant on Walton and Church Streets due to the gardens and yards surrounding many of the houses.

Transportation - The existence of Baconton is due to transportation. The coming of the railroad through this area created the opportunity for a station which gave rise to a Post Office and a village. After the town sprang to life, it was also on the route of the Dixie Highway.

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Mildred Jackson Cole, From Stage Coaches to Train Whistles, (Mount Enon Historical Committee: Baconton, Ga., 1977).

Margaret Spence and Anna M. Fleming, History of Mitchell County, 1858-1975. (Camilla Enterprise: Camilla, GA.).

Thronateeska Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution, History and Reminiscences of Dougherty County (The Reprint Company: Spartanburg, S. C., 1978 reprinted from 1924 edition).

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Baconton Multiple Resource Area
State Mitchell County, GEORGIA

Cover 12/1/83

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Walton Street-Church Street
Historic District **Substantive Review**

Keeper

Wend Dubie 12/1/83

Attest

2. South Railroad Historic District **Entered in the
National Register**

for Keeper

Delores Byers 12/1/83

Attest

3. Jackson, George W., House **Entered in the
National Register**

for Keeper

Delores Byers 12/1/83

Attest

4. Baconton Commercial Historic District **Entered in the
National Register**

for Keeper

Delores Byers 12/1/83

Attest

5.

Keeper

Attest

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Keeper

Attest

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Keeper

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