

Ameris Bancorp
Form S-3
February 08, 2013
Table of Contents

As filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on February 8, 2013

Registration No. 333-

UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20549

FORM S-3
REGISTRATION STATEMENT
UNDER
THE SECURITIES ACT OF 1933

AMERIS BANCORP

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

Georgia
(State or other jurisdiction of

58-1456434
(I.R.S. Employer

Edgar Filing: Ameris Bancorp - Form S-3

incorporation or organization)

Identification Number)

310 First St., S.E.

Moultrie, Georgia 31768

(229) 890-1111

(Address, including zip code, and telephone number, including area code, of registrant's principal executive offices)

Mr. Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.

Chief Executive Officer

Ameris Bancorp

310 First St., S.E.

Moultrie, Georgia 31768

(229) 890-1111

(Name, address, including zip code, and telephone number, including area code, of agent for service)

Copy to:

Jody L. Spencer, Esq.

Rogers & Hardin LLP

2700 International Tower

229 Peachtree Street, NE

Atlanta, Georgia 30303

(404) 522-4700

(404) 525-2224 (facsimile)

Approximate date of commencement of proposed sale to the public: From time to time after the effective date of this registration statement.

If the only securities being registered on this Form are being offered pursuant to dividend or interest reinvestment plans, please check the following box: "

Edgar Filing: Ameris Bancorp - Form S-3

If any of the securities being registered on this Form are to be offered on a delayed or continuous basis pursuant to Rule 415 under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, other than securities offered only in connection with dividend or interest reinvestment plans, check the following box:

If this Form is filed to register additional securities for an offering pursuant to Rule 462(b) under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, please check the following box and list the Securities Act registration statement number of the earlier effective registration statement for the same offering.

If this Form is a post-effective amendment filed pursuant to Rule 462(c) under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, check the following box and list the Securities Act registration statement number of the earlier effective registration statement for the same offering.

Table of Contents

If this Form is a registration statement pursuant to General Instruction I.D. or a post-effective amendment thereto that shall become effective upon filing with the Commission pursuant to Rule 462(e) under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, check the following box: "

If this Form is a post-effective amendment to a registration statement filed pursuant to General Instruction I.D. filed to register additional securities or additional classes of securities pursuant to Rule 413(b) under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, check the following box: "

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer, or a smaller reporting company. See the definitions of large accelerated filer, accelerated filer and smaller reporting company in Rule 12b-2 of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended:

Large accelerated filer " Accelerated filer x
 Non-accelerated filer " (Do not check if a smaller reporting company) Smaller reporting company "

CALCULATION OF REGISTRATION FEE

Title of each class of securities to be registered	Amount to be registered ⁽¹⁾	Proposed maximum offering price per unit ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	Proposed maximum aggregate offering price ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	Amount of registration fee ⁽³⁾
Common Stock				
Preferred Stock				
Debt Securities				
Warrants				
Subscription Rights				
Purchase Contracts				
Purchase Units				
Total	\$100,000,000	100%	\$100,000,000	\$13,640

- (1) Pursuant to Form S-3 General Instruction II.D., the amount registered by class does not need to be specified. An indeterminate number or amount of securities of each identified class are being registered as may from time to time be offered at currently indeterminate prices and as may be issuable upon conversion, redemption, repurchase, exchange or exercise of any securities registered hereunder, including under any applicable anti-dilution provisions. Securities registered hereunder may be sold separately, together or as units with other securities registered hereunder.
- (2) Estimated solely for the purpose of calculating the registration fee pursuant to Rule 457(o) under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, and exclusive of accrued interest and dividends, if any.
- (3) Calculated pursuant to Rule 457(o) of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, based on the maximum aggregate offering price of all securities registered hereunder.

THE REGISTRANT HEREBY AMENDS THIS REGISTRATION STATEMENT ON SUCH DATE OR DATES AS MAY BE NECESSARY TO DELAY ITS EFFECTIVE DATE UNTIL THE REGISTRANT SHALL FILE A FURTHER AMENDMENT WHICH SPECIFICALLY STATES THAT THIS REGISTRATION STATEMENT SHALL THEREAFTER BECOME EFFECTIVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 8(a) OF THE SECURITIES ACT OF 1933, AS AMENDED, OR UNTIL THE REGISTRATION STATEMENT SHALL BECOME EFFECTIVE ON SUCH DATE AS THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION ACTING PURSUANT TO SAID SECTION 8(a) MAY DETERMINE.

Table of Contents

The information in this prospectus is not complete and may be changed. We may not sell these securities until the registration statement filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission is effective. This prospectus is not an offer to sell these securities and it is not soliciting an offer to buy these securities in any state where the offer or sale is not permitted.

Subject to completion, dated February 8, 2013

PROSPECTUS

\$100,000,000

Common Stock

Preferred Stock

Debt Securities

Warrants

Subscription Rights

Purchase Contracts

Purchase Units

We may from time to time offer to sell any combination of the securities described in this prospectus in one or more offerings. The aggregate initial offering price of all securities sold under this prospectus will not exceed \$100,000,000.

This prospectus provides a general description of the securities we may offer. Each time we sell securities, we will provide specific terms of the securities offered in a supplement to this prospectus. The prospectus supplement may also add, update or change information contained in this prospectus. You should read this prospectus and the applicable prospectus supplement carefully before you invest in any securities. This prospectus may not be used to consummate a sale of securities unless accompanied by the applicable prospectus supplement.

We will sell these securities directly to our shareholders or to purchasers or through agents on our behalf or through underwriters or dealers as designated from time to time. If any agents or underwriters are involved in the sale of any of these securities, the applicable prospectus supplement will provide the names of the agents or underwriters and any applicable fees, commissions or discounts.

Our common stock is traded on the Nasdaq Global Select Market under the symbol ABCB. Each prospectus supplement will indicate if the securities offered thereby will be listed on any securities exchange.

Investing in our securities involves a high degree of risk. Before buying our securities, you should carefully consider the risk factors discussed in the section entitled Risk Factors beginning on page 2 of this prospectus and in the sections entitled Risk Factors in our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K and in any Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q, as well as in any prospectus supplement related to the specific offerings.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or determined if this prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The date of this prospectus is _____, 2013.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<u>About this Prospectus</u>	1
<u>Forward-Looking Statements</u>	1
<u>About Ameris Bancorp</u>	2
<u>Risk Factors</u>	2
<u>Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges and Ratio of Earnings to Combined Fixed Charges and Preferred Stock Dividends</u>	3
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	3
<u>Plan of Distribution</u>	4
<u>Description of Capital Stock</u>	5
<u>Description of Debt Securities</u>	10
<u>Description of Warrants</u>	13
<u>Description of Subscription Rights</u>	14
<u>Description of Purchase Contracts and Purchase Units</u>	15
<u>Legal Matters</u>	16
<u>Experts</u>	16
<u>Limitation on Liability and Disclosure of Commission Position on Indemnification for Securities Act Liabilities</u>	16
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	17

Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

This prospectus is a part of a registration statement that we filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, or the SEC, utilizing a shelf registration process. Under this shelf registration process, we may offer to sell any combination of the securities described in this prospectus in one or more offerings up to a total dollar amount of \$100,000,000.

This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities we may offer. Each time we sell securities under this shelf registration, we will provide a prospectus supplement that will contain specific information about the terms of that offering. The prospectus supplement may also add, update or change information contained in this prospectus. To the extent that any statement that we make in a prospectus supplement is inconsistent with statements made in this prospectus, the statements made in this prospectus will be deemed modified or superseded by those made in the prospectus supplement. You should read both this prospectus and any prospectus supplement, including all documents incorporated herein or therein by reference, together with additional information described under [Where You Can Find More Information](#).

We have not authorized any dealer, salesperson or other person to give any information or to make any representation other than those contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus and the accompanying prospectus supplement. You must not rely upon any information or representation not contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus or the accompanying prospectus supplement. This prospectus and the accompanying prospectus supplement do not constitute an offer to sell or the solicitation of an offer to buy any securities other than the registered securities to which they relate, nor do this prospectus and the accompanying prospectus supplement constitute an offer to sell or the solicitation of an offer to buy securities in any jurisdiction to any person to whom it is unlawful to make such offer or solicitation in such jurisdiction. You should not assume that the information contained in this prospectus and the accompanying prospectus supplement is accurate on any date subsequent to the date set forth on the front of the document or that any information we have incorporated by reference is correct on any date subsequent to the date of the document incorporated by reference, even though this prospectus and any accompanying prospectus supplement is delivered or securities are sold on a later date.

Unless this prospectus otherwise indicates or the context otherwise requires, the terms [Ameris Bancorp](#), [the Company](#), [our](#), [us](#) and [we](#) as used in this prospectus refer to Ameris Bancorp and its subsidiaries as a combined entity.

FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference contain statements that are considered forward looking statements within the meaning of United States securities laws. In addition, Ameris and its management may make other written or oral communications from time to time that contain forward-looking statements. Forward-looking statements, including statements about industry trends, management's future expectations and other matters that do not relate strictly to historical facts, are based on assumptions by management, and are often identified by such forward-looking terminology as [expect](#), [look](#), [believe](#), [anticipate](#), [estimate](#), [seek](#), [may](#), [will](#), [trend](#), [target](#) and [goal](#) or similar variations of such terms. Forward-looking statements may include, among other things, statements about Ameris's confidence in its strategies and its expectations about financial performance, market growth, market and regulatory trends and developments, acquisitions and divestitures, new technologies, services and opportunities and earnings.

Table of Contents

Forward-looking statements are subject to various risks and uncertainties, which change over time, are based on management's expectations and assumptions at the time the statements are made, and are not guarantees of future results. Management's expectations and assumptions, and the continued validity of the forward-looking statements, are subject to change due to a broad range of factors affecting the national and global economies and the equity, debt, currency and other financial markets, as well as factors specific to Ameris and its subsidiaries.

Actual outcomes and results may differ materially from what is expressed in our forward-looking statements and from our historical financial results due to the factors discussed elsewhere in this prospectus or disclosed in our other SEC filings. Forward-looking statements should not be relied upon as representing our expectations or beliefs as of any date subsequent to the time this prospectus is filed with the SEC. Ameris undertakes no obligation to revise the forward-looking statements contained in this prospectus to reflect events after the time it is filed with the SEC. The factors discussed herein are not intended to be a complete summary of all risks and uncertainties that may affect our businesses. Though we strive to monitor and mitigate risk, we cannot anticipate all potential economic, operational and financial developments that may adversely impact our operations and our financial results.

Forward-looking statements should not be viewed as predictions, and should not be the primary basis upon which investors evaluate Ameris. Any investor in Ameris should consider all risks and uncertainties disclosed in our SEC filings described below under the section entitled "Where You Can Find More Information," all of which are accessible on the SEC's website at <http://www.sec.gov>.

ABOUT AMERIS BANCORP

We are a bank holding company, and our primary business is to manage the business and affairs of our banking subsidiary, Ameris Bank, which provides a full range of banking services to its retail and commercial customers located primarily in Georgia, Alabama, Florida and South Carolina. As a bank holding company, we perform certain shareholder and investor relations functions and seek to provide financial support, if necessary, to our subsidiary.

We incorporated on December 18, 1980, as a Georgia corporation. Our executive office is located at 310 First St., SE, Moultrie, Georgia 31768, our telephone number is (229) 890-1111 and our website address is <http://www.amerisbank.com>.

RISK FACTORS

An investment in our securities involves a high degree of risk. You should carefully consider the specific risks set forth under "Risk Factors" in the applicable prospectus supplement, under "Risk Factors" under Item 1A of Part I of our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2011, and under "Risk Factors" under Item 1A of Part II of our subsequent Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q, each of which is incorporated by reference in this prospectus, before making an investment decision. If any of the foregoing risks actually materializes, our business, financial condition, results of operations and prospects could be materially adversely affected. As a result, the value of our securities could decline, and you could lose part or all of your investment. The foregoing risks are not the only ones we face. Additional risks and uncertainties not presently known to us or that we currently deem immaterial may also materially affect our business, financial condition, results of operations and prospects. See the section entitled "Where You Can Find More Information" beginning on page 17 of this prospectus.

Table of Contents**RATIO OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES AND RATIO OF EARNINGS TO COMBINED****FIXED CHARGES AND PREFERRED STOCK DIVIDENDS**

The following table sets forth certain information concerning our ratio of earnings to fixed charges and our ratio of earnings to combined fixed charges and preferred stock dividends, both including and excluding interest on deposits, for each of the years in the five-year period ended December 31, 2011 and for the nine-month period ended September 30, 2012.

For purposes of computing the following ratios, earnings consist of net income from continuing operations before income tax provision. Fixed charges, excluding interest on deposits, consist of all interest expense and the proportion deemed representative of the interest factor of rent expense. Fixed charges, including interest on deposits, include all of such items plus interest on deposits.

	Nine Months Ended September 30, 2012	2011	Year Ended December 31,			
		2010	2009	2008	2007	
Ratio of Earnings to Fixed Charges						
Including interest on deposits	2.15	2.13	0.76	0.15	0.89	1.32
Excluding interest on deposits	8.81	13.14	(3.99)	(13.92)	(0.28)	3.57
Ratio of Earnings to Combined Fixed Charges and Preferred Stock Dividends						
Including interest on deposits	1.80	1.91	0.69	0.14	0.89	1.32
Excluding interest on deposits	3.79	5.86	(1.23)	(5.88)	(0.26)	3.57

For the years ended December 31, 2010, 2009 and 2008, earnings were insufficient to cover fixed charges by \$7,184,000, \$34,492,000 and \$5,969,000, respectively. For the years ended December 31, 2010, 2009 and 2008, earnings were insufficient to cover fixed charges and preferred stock dividends by \$10,397,000, \$37,653,000 and \$6,297,000, respectively.

USE OF PROCEEDS

Except as may be set forth in a particular prospectus supplement, we will add the net proceeds from sales of securities to our funds available for general corporate purposes, which we may use for funding capital expenditures, pursuing growth initiatives, whether through acquisitions or otherwise, repaying or refinancing indebtedness or other obligations and financing working capital. Any specific allocation of the net proceeds of an offering of securities to a specific purpose will be determined at the time of such offering and will be described in the related prospectus supplement. We will have significant discretion in the use of any net proceeds.

Table of Contents

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We may sell the securities from time to time pursuant to underwritten public offerings, negotiated transactions, block trades or a combination of these methods. We may sell the securities as follows:

through one or more underwriters or dealers in a public offering and sale by them;

through agents;

directly to one or more purchasers; or

through a combination of any of these methods.

We may distribute the securities from time to time in one or more transactions as follows:

at a fixed price or prices, which may be changed;

at market prices prevailing at the time of sale;

at prices related to such prevailing market prices; or

at negotiated prices.

We may solicit directly offers to purchase the securities being offered by this prospectus. We may also designate agents to solicit offers to purchase the securities from time to time. We will name in a prospectus supplement any agent involved in the offer or sale of our securities.

If we utilize a dealer in the sale of the securities being offered by this prospectus, we will sell the securities to the dealer, as principal. The dealer may then resell the securities to the public at varying prices to be determined by the dealer at the time of resale.

If we utilize an underwriter in the sale of the securities being offered by this prospectus, we will execute an underwriting agreement with the underwriter at the time of sale, and we will provide the name of any underwriter in the prospectus supplement that the underwriter will use to make resales of the securities to the public. In connection with the sale of the securities, we or the purchasers of securities for whom the underwriter may act as agent may compensate the underwriter in the form of underwriting discounts or commissions. The underwriter may sell the securities to or through dealers, and the underwriter may compensate those dealers in the form of discounts, concessions or commissions.

We will provide in the applicable prospectus supplement any compensation we will pay to underwriters, dealers or agents in connection with the offering of the securities, and any discounts, concessions or commissions allowed by underwriters to participating dealers. Underwriters, dealers and agents participating in the distribution of the securities may be deemed to be underwriters within the meaning of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, or the Securities Act, and any discounts and commissions received by them and any profit realized by them on resale of the securities may be deemed to be underwriting discounts and commissions. We may enter into agreements to indemnify underwriters, dealers and agents against civil liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act, or to contribute to payments they may be required to make in respect thereof.

The securities may or may not be listed on a national securities exchange. To facilitate the offering of the securities, certain persons participating in the offering may engage in transactions that stabilize, maintain or otherwise affect the price of the securities. This may include

Edgar Filing: Ameris Bancorp - Form S-3

over-allotments or short sales of the securities, which involves the sale by persons participating in the offering of more securities than we sold to them. In these circumstances, these persons would cover such over-allotments or short positions by making purchases in the open market or by exercising their over-allotment option. In addition, these persons may stabilize or maintain the price of the securities by bidding for or purchasing

Table of Contents

securities in the open market or by imposing penalty bids, whereby selling concessions allowed to dealers participating in the offering may be reclaimed if securities sold by them are repurchased in connection with stabilization transactions. The effect of these transactions may be to stabilize or maintain the market price of the securities at a level above that which might otherwise prevail in the open market. These transactions may be discontinued at any time.

We may authorize underwriters, dealers or agents to solicit offers by certain purchasers to purchase the securities from us at the public offering price set forth in the prospectus supplement pursuant to delayed delivery contracts providing for payment and delivery on a specified date in the future. The contracts will be subject only to those conditions set forth in the prospectus supplement, and the prospectus supplement will set forth any commissions we pay for solicitation of these contracts.

We may enter into derivative transactions with third parties or sell securities not covered by this prospectus to third parties in privately negotiated transactions. In connection with any derivative transaction, if indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, the third parties may sell securities covered by this prospectus and the applicable prospectus supplement, including in short sale transactions. If so, the third party may use securities pledged by us or borrowed from us or others to settle those sales or to close out any related open borrowings of stock and may use securities received from us in settlement of those derivatives to close out any related open borrowings of stock. The third party in such sale transactions will be an underwriter and, if not identified in this prospectus, will be identified in the applicable prospectus supplement or a post-effective amendment to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part. In addition, we may otherwise loan or pledge securities to a financial institution or other third party that in turn may sell the securities short using this prospectus. Such financial institution or other third party may transfer its economic short position to investors in our securities or in connection with a concurrent offering of other securities.

The underwriters, dealers and agents may engage in transactions with us, or perform services for us, in the ordinary course of business.

DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK

The following discussion includes summaries of some of the terms of our Articles of Incorporation, as amended (the "articles of incorporation"), and our Amended and Restated Bylaws (the "bylaws") and the Georgia Business Corporation Code (the "GBCC"). Reference is made to the more detailed provisions of, and this discussion is qualified in its entirety by reference to, our articles of incorporation and bylaws, copies of which are filed with the SEC as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part and which may be obtained as described under "Where You Can Find More Information," and applicable law.

General

As of January 31, 2013, we had 105,000,000 shares of capital stock authorized. The authorized capital stock consisted of:

100,000,000 shares of common stock, par value \$1.00 per share, 23,880,168 of which were outstanding; and

5,000,000 shares of preferred stock, 28,000 of which were outstanding.

Table of Contents

Common Stock

Voting Rights. Each holder of our common stock is entitled to one vote per share held on any matter submitted to a vote of shareholders. There are no cumulative voting rights in the election of directors.

Dividends. Holders of our common stock are entitled to receive dividends only if, as and when declared by our board of directors out of funds legally available, subject to certain restrictions imposed by state and federal laws and the preferential dividend rights of the preferred stock.

No Preemptive or Conversion Rights. Holders of our common stock do not have preemptive rights to purchase additional shares of any class of our stock, nor do they have conversion or redemption rights.

Calls and Assessments. All of the issued and outstanding shares of common stock are fully paid and non-assessable.

Liquidation Rights. In the event of our liquidation, dissolution or winding up, the holders of our common stock (and the holders of any class or series of stock entitled to participate with the common stock in the distribution of assets) shall be entitled to receive, in cash or in kind, our assets available for distribution remaining after payment or provision for payment of our debts and liabilities and distributions or provision for distributions to holders of the preferred stock having preference over the common stock.

Preferred Stock

Our board of directors may, from time to time, issue shares of the authorized, undesignated preferred stock in one or more classes or series without shareholder approval. In connection with any such issuance, our board of directors may by resolution determine the designation, preferences, limitations, conversion rights, cumulative, relative, participating, optional or other rights, including voting rights, qualifications, limitations or restrictions, of such shares of preferred stock.

The particular terms of any series of preferred stock that we offer under this prospectus will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement relating to that series of preferred stock. Those terms may include the following:

the designation of such class or series, the number of shares to constitute such class or series and the stated value thereof if different from the par value thereof;

whether the shares of such class or series shall have voting rights, in addition to any voting rights provided by law, and, if so, the terms of such voting rights, which may (i) be general or limited, (ii) subject to applicable law or regulation, including the rules of any securities exchange on which securities of any class may be listed, permit more than one vote per share, or (iii) vary among shareholders of the same class based upon such factors as our board of directors may determine, including the size of a shareholder's position and the length of time with respect to which such position has been held;

the dividends, if any, payable on such class or series, whether any such dividends shall be cumulative, and, if so, from what dates, the conditions and dates upon which such dividends shall be payable, and the preference or relation which such dividends shall bear to the dividends payable on any shares of stock of any other class or any other series of the same class;

Table of Contents

whether the shares of such class or series shall be subject to redemption by us and, if so, the times, prices and other conditions of such redemption;

the amount or amounts payable upon shares of such series upon, and the rights of the holders of such class or series in connection with, the voluntary or involuntary liquidation, dissolution or winding up of us, or upon any distribution of our assets;

whether the shares of such class or series shall be subject to the operation of a retirement or sinking fund and, if so, the extent to and manner in which any such retirement or sinking fund shall be applied to the purchase or redemption of the shares of such class or series for retirement or other corporate purposes and the terms and provisions relative to the operation thereof;

whether the shares of such class or series shall be convertible into, or exchangeable for, shares of stock of any other class or any other series of the same class or any other securities (including common stock) and, if so, the price or prices or the rate or rates of conversion or exchange and the method, if any, of adjusting the same and any other terms and conditions of conversion or exchange;

the limitations and restrictions, if any, to be effective while any shares of such class or series are outstanding upon the payment of dividends or the making of other distributions on, and upon the purchase, redemption or other acquisition by us of, the common stock or shares of stock of any other class or any other series of the same class;

the conditions or restrictions, if any, upon the creation of indebtedness or upon the issue of any additional stock, including additional shares of such class or series or of any other series of the same class or of any other class;

the ranking (be it pari passu, junior or senior) of each class or series vis-a-vis any other class or series of any class of preferred stock as to the payment of dividends, the distribution of assets and all other matters;

the listing, if any, of the preferred stock being offered on any securities exchange;

a discussion of any material United States federal income tax considerations applicable to the preferred stock being offered;

information with respect to book-entry procedures, if any; and

any other powers, preferences and relative, participating, optional and other special rights, and any qualifications, limitations and restrictions thereof, insofar as they are not inconsistent with the provisions of our articles of incorporation, to the full extent permitted in accordance with the laws of the State of Georgia.

The summary in this prospectus is not complete. You should refer to the articles of amendment to our articles of incorporation establishing a particular class or series of preferred stock that will be filed with the Secretary of State of the State of Georgia and the SEC in connection with the offering of the preferred stock.

Table of Contents

Preferred Stock Fixed Rate Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series A

As of the date hereof, our board of directors has created one series of preferred stock, our Fixed Rate Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series A, or the Series A Preferred Stock, which we issued to the United States Treasury, or the Treasury, under the Capital Purchase Program. Pursuant to the Letter Agreement dated November 21, 2008, and the related Securities Purchase Agreement Standard Terms, between us and the Treasury, we issued 52,000 shares of Series A Preferred Stock having a liquidation preference per share of \$1,000. The Series A Preferred Stock accrues cumulative dividends at a rate of 5% per year for the first five years and thereafter at a rate of 9% per year, but such dividends will be paid only if, as and when declared by our board of directors. The Series A Preferred Stock is non-voting, except in limited circumstances. In the event that we do not pay dividends on the Series A Preferred Stock for six dividend periods, whether or not consecutive, the size of our board of directors will automatically be increased by two, and the holders of the Series A Preferred Stock shall have the right to elect two directors to fill such newly created directorships at the next annual meeting of shareholders and at each subsequent annual meeting until all accrued and unpaid dividends for all past dividend periods, including the latest completed dividend period, on all outstanding shares of Series A Preferred Stock have been declared and paid in full.

On June 14, 2012, all outstanding shares of the Series A Preferred Stock were sold by the Treasury through a registered public offering. In December 2012, we repurchased 24,000 shares of the Series A Preferred Stock from the holders of such shares.

The foregoing description of the Series A Preferred Stock is qualified in its entirety by reference to the articles of amendment to our articles of incorporation designating such series.

Certain Provisions of Our Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws and the GBCC

Our articles of incorporation and bylaws contain provisions that could make more difficult an acquisition of us by means of a tender offer, a proxy contest or otherwise. These provisions are expected to discourage specific types of coercive takeover practices and inadequate takeover bids as well as to encourage persons seeking to acquire control to first negotiate with us. Although these provisions may have the effect of delaying, deferring or preventing a change in control, we believe that the benefits of increased protection through the potential ability to negotiate with the proponent of an unfriendly or unsolicited proposal to acquire or restructure our company outweigh the disadvantages of discouraging these proposals because, among other things, negotiation of such proposals could result in an improvement of their terms.

The GBCC also provides additional provisions which, if adopted by our board of directors, would further inhibit certain unsolicited acquisition proposals.

Classified Board of Directors. Our bylaws provide that our board of directors shall consist of not less than seven and not more than 15 members. Our bylaws provide for a classified board of directors, divided into three classes, with each class consisting as nearly as possible of one-third of the total number of directors, and with our shareholders electing one class each year for a three-year term. Between shareholders meetings, only our board of directors is permitted to appoint new directors to fill vacancies or newly created directorships so that no more than the number of directors in any given class could be replaced each year and it would take three successive annual meetings to replace all directors.

Shareholder Action Through Written Consent. Our bylaws only provide for shareholder action by written consent in lieu of a meeting if all shareholders entitled to vote on such action sign such consent.

Table of Contents

Nominations to Board of Directors. Our articles of incorporation and bylaws provide that nominations for the election of directors may be made by our board of directors or any committee appointed by our board of directors or by any shareholder entitled to vote generally in the election of directors. Our bylaws establish an advance notice procedure for shareholder nominations to our board of directors. A shareholder may only make a nomination to our board of directors if he or she complies with the advance notice and other procedural requirements of our bylaws and is entitled to vote on such nomination at the meeting.

Removal of Directors; Board of Directors Vacancies. Our articles of incorporation provide that members of our board of directors may only be removed for cause and then only with a vote of at least a majority of the outstanding shares entitled to vote in the election of directors. Our bylaws further provide that only our board of directors may fill vacant directorships. These provisions would prevent a shareholder from gaining control of our board of directors by removing incumbent directors and filling the resulting vacancies with such shareholder's own nominees.

Authorized But Unissued Stock. The authorized but unissued shares of common stock and preferred stock are available for future issuance without shareholder approval. These additional shares may be used for a variety of corporate purposes, including future public offerings to raise additional capital, corporate acquisitions and employee benefit plans. The existence of authorized but unissued and unreserved shares of common stock and preferred stock may enable our board of directors to issue shares to persons friendly to current management, which could render more difficult or discourage any attempt to obtain control of us by means of a proxy contest, tender offer, merger or otherwise, and thereby protect the continuity of our management.

Georgia Fair Price Statute. Sections 14-2-1110 through 14-2-1113 of the GBCC, or the Fair Price Statute, generally restrict a company from entering into certain Business Combinations (as defined in the GBCC) with an interested shareholder unless:

the transaction is unanimously approved by the continuing directors who must constitute at least three members of the board of directors at the time of such approval; or

the transaction is recommended by at least two-thirds of the continuing directors and approved by a majority of the shareholders excluding the interested shareholder.

Georgia Business Combination Statute. Sections 14-2-1131 through 14-2-1133 of the GBCC, or the Business Combination Statute, generally restrict a company from entering into certain business combinations (as defined in the GBCC) with an interested shareholder for a period of five years after the date on which such shareholder became an interested shareholder unless:

the transaction is approved by the board of directors of the company prior to the date the person became an interested shareholder;

the interested shareholder acquires at least 90% of the company's voting stock in the same transaction (calculated pursuant to GBCC Section 14-2-1132) in which such person became an interested shareholder; or

subsequent to becoming an interested shareholder, the shareholder acquires at least 90% (calculated pursuant to GBCC Section 14-2-1132) of the company's voting stock and the business combination is approved by the holders of a majority of the voting stock entitled to vote on the matter (excluding the stock held by the interested shareholder and certain other persons pursuant to GBCC Section 14-2-1132).

Table of Contents

The GBCC provides that the restrictions set forth in the Fair Price Statute and the Business Combination Statute will not apply unless the bylaws of the corporation specifically provide that these provisions of the GBCC are applicable to the corporation (and in certain other situations). We have not elected to be covered by such statutes, but we could do so by action of our board of directors, without a vote by our shareholders except as may be prohibited by law, at any time.

Stock Exchange Listing

The common stock is listed on the Nasdaq Global Select Market under the symbol ABCB.

Transfer Agent and Registrar

The transfer agent and registrar for the common stock is Computershare Investor Services.

DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES

We may offer secured or unsecured debt securities which may be senior, subordinated or junior subordinated, and which may be convertible into other securities. We may issue debt securities in one or more series.

The following description briefly sets forth certain general terms and provisions of the debt securities. The particular terms of the debt securities offered by any prospectus supplement and the extent, if any, to which these general provisions may apply to the debt securities, will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement. Unless otherwise specified in the applicable prospectus supplement, our debt securities will be issued in one or more series under an indenture to be entered into between us and a trustee to be named in the applicable prospectus supplement. A form of the indenture is attached as an exhibit to the registration statement of which this prospectus forms a part. The terms of the debt securities will include those set forth in the indenture and those made a part of the indenture by the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended, or the Trust Indenture Act. You should read the summary below, the applicable prospectus supplement and the provisions of the indenture and indenture supplement, if any, in their entirety before investing in our debt securities.

The aggregate principal amount of debt securities that may be issued under the indenture is unlimited. The prospectus supplement relating to any series of debt securities that we may offer will contain the specific terms of the debt securities. These terms may include the following:

the title and aggregate principal amount of the debt securities and any limit on the aggregate principal amount;

whether the debt securities will be senior, subordinated or junior subordinated;

whether the debt securities will be secured or unsecured;

any applicable subordination provisions for any subordinated debt securities;

the maturity date(s) or method for determining same;

the interest rate(s) or the method for determining same;

Table of Contents

the dates on which interest will accrue or the method for determining dates on which interest will accrue and dates on which interest will be payable and whether interest shall be payable in cash or additional securities;

whether the debt securities are convertible or exchangeable into other securities and any related terms and conditions;

redemption or early repayment provisions;

authorized denominations;

if other than the principal amount, the principal amount of debt securities payable upon acceleration;

place(s) where payment of principal and interest may be made, where debt securities may be presented and where notices or demands upon the Company may be made;

whether such debt securities will be issued in whole or in part in the form of one or more global securities and the date at which the securities are dated if other than the date of original issuance;

amount of discount or premium, if any, with which such debt securities will be issued;

any covenants applicable to the particular debt securities being issued;

any additions or changes in the defaults and events of default applicable to the particular debt securities being issued;

the currency, currencies or currency units in which the purchase price for, the principal of and any premium and any interest on, such debt securities will be payable;

the time period within which, the manner in which and the terms and conditions upon which the holders of the debt securities or the Company can select the payment currency;

our obligation or right to redeem, purchase or repay debt securities under a sinking fund, amortization or analogous provision;

any restriction or conditions on the transferability of the debt securities;

provisions granting special rights to holders of the debt securities upon occurrence of specified events;

additions or changes relating to compensation or reimbursement of the trustee of the series of debt securities;

additions or changes to the provisions for the defeasance of the debt securities or to provisions related to satisfaction and discharge of the indenture;

Table of Contents

provisions relating to the modification of the indenture both with and without the consent of holders of debt securities issued under the indenture and the execution of supplemental indentures for such series; and

any other terms of the debt securities (which terms shall not be inconsistent with the provisions of the Trust Indenture Act, but may modify, amend, supplement or delete any of the terms of the indenture with respect to such series of debt securities).

General

We may sell the debt securities, including original issue discount securities, at par or at a substantial discount below their stated principal amount. Unless we inform you otherwise in a prospectus supplement, we may issue additional debt securities of a particular series without the consent of the holders of the debt securities of such series or any other series outstanding at the time of issuance. Any such additional debt securities, together with all other outstanding debt securities of that series, will constitute a single series of securities under the indenture.

We will describe in the applicable prospectus supplement any other special considerations for any debt securities we sell which are denominated in a currency or currency unit other than United States dollars. In addition, debt securities may be issued where the amount of principal and/or interest payable is determined by reference to one or more currency exchange rates, commodity prices, equity indices or other factors. Holders of such securities may receive a principal amount or a payment of interest that is greater than or less than the amount of principal or interest otherwise payable on such dates, depending upon the value of the applicable currencies, commodities, equity indices or other factors. Information as to the methods for determining the amount of principal or interest, if any, payable on any date, the currencies, commodities, equity indices or other factors to which the amount payable on such date is linked.

United States federal income tax consequences and special considerations, if any, applicable to any such series will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement. Unless we inform you otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, the debt securities will not be listed on any securities exchange.

We expect most debt securities to be issued in fully registered form without coupons and in denominations of \$1,000 and any integral multiples in excess thereof. Subject to the limitations provided in the indenture and in the prospectus supplement, debt securities that are issued in registered form may be transferred or exchanged at the designated corporate trust office of the trustee, without the payment of any service charge, other than any tax or other governmental charge payable in connection therewith.

Global Securities

Unless we inform you otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, the debt securities of a series may be issued in whole or in part in the form of one or more global securities that will be deposited with, or on behalf of, a depository identified in the applicable prospectus supplement. Global securities will be issued in registered form and in either temporary or definitive form. Unless and until it is exchanged in whole or in part for the individual debt securities, a global security may not be transferred except as a whole by the depository for such global security to a nominee of such depository or by a nominee of such depository to such depository or another nominee of such depository or by such depository or any such nominee to a successor of such depository or a nominee of such successor. The specific terms of the depository arrangement with respect to any debt securities of a series and the rights of and limitations upon owners of beneficial interests in a global security will be described in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Table of Contents

Governing Law

The indenture and the debt securities shall be construed in accordance with and governed by the laws of the State of New York, except to the extent the Trust Indenture Act is applicable.

DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS

We may issue warrants for the purchase of common stock, preferred stock or debt securities. We may issue warrants independently or together with any offered securities. The warrants may be attached to or separate from those offered securities. We will issue the warrants under one or more warrant agreements to be entered into between us and a warrant agent to be named in the applicable prospectus supplement. The warrant agent will act solely as our agent in connection with the warrants and will not assume any obligation or relationship of agency or trust for or with any holders or beneficial owners of warrants.

The prospectus supplement relating to any warrants that we may offer will contain the specific terms of the warrants. These terms may include the following:

the title of the warrants;

the price or prices at which the warrants will be issued;

the designation, amount and terms of the securities for which the warrants are exercisable;

the designation and terms of the other securities, if any, with which the warrants are to be issued and the number of warrants issued with each other security;

the aggregate number of warrants;

any provisions for adjustment of the number or amount of securities receivable upon exercise of the warrants or the exercise price of the warrants;

the price or prices at which the securities purchasable upon exercise of the warrants may be purchased;

if applicable, the date on and after which the warrants and the securities purchasable upon exercise of the warrants will be separately transferable;

a discussion of any material United States federal income tax considerations applicable to the exercise of the warrants;

the date on which the right to exercise the warrants will commence, and the date on which the right will expire;

the maximum or minimum number of warrants that may be exercised at any time;

information with respect to book-entry procedures, if any; and

any other terms of the warrants, including terms, procedures and limitations relating to the exchange and exercise of the warrants.

Table of Contents

Exercise of Warrants

Each warrant will entitle the holder of the warrant to purchase for cash the amount of common stock, preferred stock or debt securities at the exercise price stated or determinable in the applicable prospectus supplement for the warrants. Warrants may be exercised at any time up to the close of business on the expiration date shown in the applicable prospectus supplement, unless otherwise specified in such prospectus supplement. After the close of business on the expiration date, unexercised warrants will become void. Warrants may be exercised as described in the applicable prospectus supplement. When the warrant holder makes the payment and properly completes and signs the warrant certificate at the corporate trust office of the warrant agent or any other office indicated in the prospectus supplement, we will, as soon as possible, forward the common stock, preferred stock or debt securities that the warrant holder has purchased. If the warrant holder exercises the warrant for less than all of the warrants represented by the warrant certificate, we will issue a new warrant certificate for the remaining warrants.

The description in the applicable prospectus supplement of any warrants we offer will not necessarily be complete and will be qualified in its entirety by reference to the applicable warrant agreement and warrant certificate, which will be filed with the SEC if we offer warrants. For more information on how you can obtain copies of any warrant certificate or warrant agreement if we offer warrants, see the section entitled **Where You Can Find More Information** beginning on page 17 of this prospectus. We urge you to read the applicable warrant certificate, the applicable warrant agreement and any applicable prospectus supplement in their entirety.

DESCRIPTION OF SUBSCRIPTION RIGHTS

We may issue subscription rights to purchase common stock, preferred stock, debt securities or other securities. We may issue subscription rights independently or together with any other offered security, which may or may not be transferable by the securityholder. In connection with any offering of subscription rights, we may enter into a standby arrangement with one or more underwriters or other purchasers pursuant to which the underwriters or other purchasers may be required to purchase any securities remaining unsubscribed for after such offering.

The prospectus supplement relating to any subscription rights we may offer will contain the specific terms of the subscription rights. These terms may include the following:

the price, if any, for the subscription rights;

the exercise price payable for each common stock, preferred stock, debt securities or other securities upon the exercise of the subscription rights;

the number of subscription rights issued to each securityholder;

the number and terms of each common stock, preferred stock, debt securities or other securities which may be purchased per each subscription right;

the extent to which the subscription rights are transferable;

any provisions for adjustment of the number or amount of securities receivable upon exercise of the subscription rights or the exercise price of the subscription rights;

Table of Contents

any other terms of the subscription rights, including the terms, procedures and limitations relating to the exchange and exercise of the subscription rights;

the date on which the right to exercise the subscription rights shall commence, and the date on which the subscription rights shall expire;

the extent to which the subscription rights may include an over-subscription privilege with respect to unsubscribed securities; and

if applicable, the material terms of any standby underwriting or purchase arrangement entered into by us in connection with the offering of subscription rights.

The description in the applicable prospectus supplement of any subscription rights we offer will not necessarily be complete and will be qualified in its entirety by reference to the applicable subscription rights certificate or subscription rights agreement, which will be filed with the SEC if we offer subscription rights. For more information on how you can obtain copies of any subscription rights certificate or subscription rights agreement if we offer subscription rights, see the section entitled *Where You Can Find More Information* beginning on page 17 of this prospectus. We urge you to read the applicable subscription rights certificate, the applicable subscription rights agreement and any applicable prospectus supplement in their entirety.

DESCRIPTION OF PURCHASE CONTRACTS AND PURCHASE UNITS

We may issue purchase contracts for the purchase or sale of common stock, preferred stock or debt securities issued by us or by third parties as specified in the applicable prospectus supplement. Each purchase contract will entitle the holder thereof to purchase or sell, and obligate us to sell or purchase on specified dates, such securities at a specified purchase price, which may be based on a formula, all as set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement. We may, however, satisfy our obligations, if any, with respect to any purchase contract by delivering the cash value of such purchase contract or the cash value of the securities otherwise deliverable, as set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement. The applicable prospectus supplement will also specify the methods by which the holders may purchase or sell such securities, and any acceleration, cancellation or termination provisions or other provisions relating to the settlement of a purchase contract. The price per security and the number of securities may be fixed at the time the purchase contracts are entered into or may be determined by reference to a specific formula set forth in the applicable purchase contracts.

The purchase contracts may be issued separately or as part of units consisting of a purchase contract and debt securities or debt obligations of third parties, including United States treasury securities, or any other securities described in the applicable prospectus supplement or any combination of the foregoing, securing the holders' obligations to purchase the securities under the purchase contracts, which we refer to herein as purchase units.

The purchase contracts may require holders to secure their obligations under the purchase contracts in a specified manner. The purchase contracts also may require us to make periodic payments to the holders of the purchase contracts or the purchase units, as the case may be, or vice versa, and those payments may be unsecured or pre-funded on some basis.

The prospectus supplement relating to any purchase contracts or purchase units we may offer will contain the specific terms of the purchase contracts or purchase units. These terms may include the following:

Table of Contents

whether the purchase contracts obligate the holder to purchase or sell, or both, our common stock, preferred stock or debt securities, and the nature and amount of each of those securities, or method of determining those amounts;

whether the purchase contracts are to be prepaid or not;

whether the purchase contracts are to be settled by delivery, or by reference or linkage to the value, performance or level of our common stock or preferred stock;

any acceleration, cancellation, termination or other provisions relating to the settlement of the purchase contracts; and

whether the purchase contracts will be issued in fully registered global form.

The description in the applicable prospectus supplement of any purchase contract or purchase unit we offer will not necessarily be complete and will be qualified in its entirety by reference to the applicable purchase contract or purchase unit, which will be filed with the SEC if we offer purchase contracts or purchase units. For more information on how you can obtain copies of any purchase contract or purchase unit we may offer, see the section entitled "Where You Can Find More Information" beginning on page 17 of this prospectus. We urge you to read the applicable purchase contract or applicable purchase unit and any applicable prospectus supplement in their entirety.

LEGAL MATTERS

Rogers & Hardin LLP will issue an opinion about certain legal matters with respect to the securities.

EXPERTS

The consolidated financial statements of Ameris Bancorp appearing in its Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2011, and the effectiveness of its internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2011, have been audited by Porter Keadle Moore, LLC, independent registered public accounting firm, as set forth in their reports thereon, included therein, and incorporated herein by reference. Such consolidated financial statements are incorporated herein by reference in reliance upon such reports given on the authority of such firm as experts in accounting and auditing.

LIMITATION ON LIABILITY AND DISCLOSURE OF COMMISSION POSITION ON

INDEMNIFICATION FOR SECURITIES ACT LIABILITIES

Our bylaws provide that our current and former officers and directors may be indemnified for any liability and expense resulting from any threatened, pending or completed action or proceeding in which they may become involved by reason of any action taken or not taken in their capacity as an officer or director. Insofar as indemnification for liabilities arising under the Securities Act may be permitted to directors, officers and controlling persons pursuant to our bylaws, or otherwise, we have been advised that, in the opinion of the SEC, such indemnification is against public policy as expressed in the Securities Act and is, therefore, unenforceable.

Table of Contents

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We file annual, quarterly and current reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. You may read and copy, at prescribed rates, any documents we have filed with the SEC at its Public Reference Room located at 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20549. You may obtain information on the operation of the Public Reference Room by calling the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330. We also file these documents with the SEC electronically. You can access the electronic versions of these filings on the SEC's Internet website found at <http://www.sec.gov> and our website at <http://www.amerisbank.com> (the other information contained in, or that can be accessed through, our website is not a part of this prospectus or any prospectus supplement).

The SEC allows us to incorporate by reference information into this prospectus and any accompanying prospectus supplement, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to other documents filed separately with the SEC. The information incorporated by reference is considered part of this prospectus, and information filed with the SEC subsequent to this prospectus and prior to the termination of the particular offering referred to in such prospectus supplement will automatically be deemed to update and supersede this information. We incorporate by reference into this prospectus and any accompanying prospectus supplement the documents listed below (excluding any portions of such documents that have been furnished but not filed for purposes of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, or the Exchange Act):

our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2011, filed on February 27, 2012;

our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for the quarters ended March 31, 2012, June 30, 2012, and September 30, 2012, filed on May 10, 2012, August 9, 2012 and November 9, 2012, respectively;

our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed on March 1, 2012, June 6, 2012, June 15, 2012, June 19, 2012, June 28, 2012, July 12, 2012, August 28, 2012, November 8, 2012, November 30, 2012, December 10, 2012 and January 11, 2013, and amendments to our Current Reports on Form 8-K/A filed on May 4, 2012, June 4, 2012 and October 17, 2012;

the information specifically incorporated by reference into our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2011 from our Definitive Proxy Statement on Schedule 14A filed on April 19, 2012; and

the description of our securities contained under the caption "Description of Capital Stock" found in our Preliminary Prospectus dated as of April 21, 1994, filed as part of our Registration Statement on Form SB-2 (Registration No. 33-77930) with the SEC on April 21, 1994, and any amendments or reports filed for the purpose of updating such description.

We also incorporate by reference any future filings made by us with the SEC pursuant to Section 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act between the date of this prospectus and the date all of the securities offered hereby are sold or the offering is otherwise terminated, with the exception of any information furnished under Item 2.02 and Item 7.01 of Form 8-K (and exhibits filed under Item 9.01 of Form 8-K relating to such information), which is not deemed filed and which is not incorporated by reference herein. Any such filings shall be deemed to be incorporated by reference and to be a part of this prospectus from the respective dates of filing of those documents.

We will provide without charge upon written or oral request to each person, including any beneficial owner, to whom a prospectus is delivered, a copy of any and all of the documents which are incorporated by reference into this prospectus but not delivered with this prospectus (other than exhibits

Table of Contents

unless such exhibits are specifically incorporated by reference in such documents). You may request a copy of these documents by writing or telephoning us at: Ameris Bancorp, 310 First St., S.E., Moultrie, Georgia 31768, Telephone: (229) 890-1111, Attn: Corporate Secretary.

Table of Contents**PART II****INFORMATION NOT REQUIRED IN PROSPECTUS****Item 14. Other Expenses of Issuance and Distribution.**

The following table sets forth the costs and expenses payable by Ameris Bancorp in connection with the sale of the securities being registered hereby. All amounts are estimates except the Securities and Exchange Commission registration fee.

SEC registration fee	\$ 13,640
Blue sky fees and expenses	*
Printing expenses	*
Legal fees and expenses	*
Accounting fees and expenses	*
Transfer agent and registrar fees	*
Trustee fees and expenses	*
Miscellaneous fees and expenses	*
Total	*

* These fees are calculated based on the securities offered and the number of issuances and, accordingly, cannot be calculated at this time.

Item 15. Indemnification of Directors and Officers.

Subsection (a) of Section 14-2-851 of the Georgia Business Corporation Code, or the GBCC, provides that a corporation may indemnify an individual who is party to a proceeding because he or she is or was a director against liability incurred in the proceeding if: (1) such individual conducted himself or herself in good faith; and (2) such individual reasonably believed (A) in the case of conduct in his or her official capacity, that such conduct was in the best interests of the corporation, (B) in all other cases, that such conduct was at least not opposed to the best interests of the corporation, and (C) in the case of any criminal proceeding, that the individual had no reasonable cause to believe that such conduct was unlawful. Subsection (d) of Section 14-2-851 of the GBCC provides that a corporation may not indemnify a director in connection with a proceeding by or in the right of the corporation, except for reasonable expenses incurred in connection with the proceeding if it is determined that the director has met the relevant standard of conduct, or in connection with any proceeding with respect to conduct for which he or she was adjudged liable on the basis that personal benefit was improperly received by him or her, whether or not involving action in his or her official capacity. Notwithstanding the foregoing, pursuant to Section 14-2-854 of the GBCC, a court may order a corporation to indemnify a director if such court determines, in view of all the relevant circumstances, that it is fair and reasonable to indemnify or advance expenses to the director, even if the director has not met the relevant standard of conduct set forth in subsections (a) and (b) of Section 14-2-851 of the GBCC, failed to comply with Section 14-2-853 of the GBCC, or was adjudged liable in a proceeding referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) of subsection (d) of Section 14-2-851 of the GBCC but if the director was adjudged so liable, the indemnification shall be limited to reasonable expenses incurred in connection with the proceeding.

Table of Contents

Section 14-2-852 of the GBCC provides that a corporation shall indemnify a director who was wholly successful, on the merits or otherwise, in the defense of any proceeding to which he or she was a party because he or she was a director of the corporation against reasonable expenses incurred by the director in connection with the proceeding.

Section 14-2-857 of the GBCC provides that a corporation may indemnify and advance expenses to an officer of the corporation who is a party to a proceeding because he or she is an officer of the corporation to the same extent as a director. If the officer is not a director (or if the officer is a director but the sole basis on which he or she is made a party to the proceeding is an act or omission solely as an officer), the corporation may also indemnify and advance expenses to such officer to such further extent as may be provided by the articles of incorporation or the bylaws of the corporation, by a resolution of the board of directors of the corporation, or by contract, except for liability arising out of conduct that constitutes: (1) the appropriation, in violation of their duties, of any business opportunity of the corporation; (2) acts or omissions which involve intentional misconduct or a knowing violation of law; (3) the types of liability set forth in Section 14-2-832 of the GBCC; or (4) receipt of an improper personal benefit. An officer of a corporation who is not a director is entitled to mandatory indemnification under Section 14-2-852 of the GBCC and may apply to a court under Section 14-2-854 of the GBCC for indemnification or advances, in each case to the same extent to which a director may be entitled to indemnification under those provisions. Finally, a corporation may also indemnify an employee or agent who is not a director to the extent, consistent with public policy, that may be provided by its articles of incorporation or bylaws, by general or specific action by its board of directors or by contract.

Article XI of the articles of incorporation, as amended, of the registrant provides that, except as may be limited by the GBCC or any successor law, no director shall be personally liable to the registrant or any of its shareholders for monetary damages for breach of his or her duty of care or other duty as a director.

Article VII of the amended and restated bylaws of the registrant provides that every person (and the heirs and legal representatives of such person) who is or was a director or officer of the registrant or any other corporation of which he or she served as such at the request of the registrant and of which the registrant directly or indirectly is a shareholder or creditor, or in which or in the stocks, bonds, securities or other obligations of which the registrant is in any way interested, may be indemnified for any liability and expense resulting from any threatened, pending or completed action, suit or proceeding, civil, criminal, administrative or investigative or derivative or otherwise, or in connection with any appeal relating thereto, in which he or she may become involved, as a party or prospective party or otherwise, by reason of any action taken or not taken in his or her capacity as a director or officer or as a member of any committee appointed by the board of directors of the registrant to act for, in the interest of, or on behalf of the registrant, whether or not he or she continues to be a director or officer at the time such liability or expense is incurred; provided such person acted in good faith and in a manner he or she reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the registrant and, in addition, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, did not have reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful. The termination of any claim, action, suit or proceeding, by judgment, order, compromise, settlement (with or without court approval) or conviction or upon a plea of guilty or of nolo contendere, or its equivalent, does not create a presumption that a director or officer did not meet the standards of conduct set forth in the amended and restated bylaws. Expenses incurred with respect to any claim, action, suit or proceeding of the character described in Article VII of the bylaws of the registrant may be advanced by the registrant prior to the final disposition thereof upon receipt of any undertaking by or on behalf of the recipient to repay such amount, unless it is ultimately determined that he or she is entitled to indemnification under the bylaws.

Table of Contents

Notwithstanding the foregoing, Article VII of the registrant's bylaws provides that no officer or director who was or is a party to any action or suit by or in the right of the registrant to procure a judgment in its favor by reason of the fact that he or she is or was an officer or director of the registrant or such other corporation can be indemnified in respect of any claim, issue or matter as to which such person is adjudged to be liable for negligence or misconduct in the performance of his or her duty to the registrant, unless the court in which such action or suit was brought determines that, despite the adjudication of liability and in view of all the circumstances of the case, such person is fairly and reasonably entitled to indemnity for such expenses as the court deems proper.

Article VII of the registrant's bylaws further provides that every person (and the heirs and legal representatives of such person) referred to above who has been wholly successful, on the merits or otherwise, with the respect to such claim, action, suit or proceeding is entitled to indemnification as of right without any further action or approval by the board of directors of the registrant, and any indemnification pursuant to the bylaws of the registrant will be made at the discretion of the registrant only if: (1) the board of directors, acting by majority vote of a quorum consisting of directors who were not parties to such claim, action, suit or proceeding, present or voting, finds that the director or officer met the standard of conduct set forth in the bylaws; or (2) no such quorum of the board of directors exists, independent legal counsel at the request of either the registrant or the person seeking indemnification, delivers to the registrant such counsel's written opinion that such director or officer met such standards; or (3) the holders of a majority of stock then entitled to vote for the election of directors determines by affirmative vote that such director or officer met such standards.

The rights of indemnification provided in Article VII of the registrant's bylaws are in addition to: (1) any rights to which any director or officer may otherwise be entitled under any bylaw, agreement, vote of shareholders or otherwise; and (2) the power of the registrant to purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of any director or officer against any liability asserted against him or her and incurred by him or her in such capacity, or arising out of his or her status as such, regardless of whether the registrant would have the power to indemnify against such liability under the amended and restated bylaws or otherwise.

The registrant's bylaws further provide that any repeal or modification of the bylaws by the shareholders of the registrant cannot adversely affect any right or protection of a director of the registrant existing at the time of such repeal or modification.

Item 16. Exhibits.

Exhibit No.	Description
1.1	Form of Underwriting Agreement.*
3.1	Articles of Incorporation of Ameris Bancorp, as amended (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 2.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Regulation A Offering Statement on Form 1-A filed August 14, 1987).
3.2	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation of Ameris Bancorp (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.7 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 26, 1999).
3.3	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation of Ameris Bancorp (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.9 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 31, 2003).
3.4	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation of Ameris Bancorp (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on December 1, 2005).

Table of Contents

- 3.5 Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation of Ameris Bancorp (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on November 21, 2008).
- 3.6 Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on June 1, 2011).
- 3.7 Amended and Restated Bylaws of Ameris Bancorp (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2005).
- 4.1 Specimen Common Stock Certificate (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 1 to Ameris Bancorp's Registration Statement on Form 8-A filed with the SEC on September 2, 1987).
- 4.2 Form of Preferred Stock Certificate.*
- 4.3 Form of Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation for Preferred Stock.*
- 4.4 Form of Debt Securities Indenture.
- 4.5 Form of Debt Security.*
- 4.6 Form of Warrant Agreement (including form of Warrant Certificate).*
- 4.7 Form of Subscription Rights Agreement (including form of Subscription Rights Certificate).*
- 4.8 Form of Purchase Contract (including form of Purchase Contract Certificate).*
- 4.9 Form of Purchase Unit Agreement (including form of Purchase Unit Certificate).*
- 5.1 Opinion of Rogers & Hardin LLP.
- 12.1 Statement Regarding Computation of Ratios of Earnings to Fixed Charges and of Earnings to Combined Fixed Charges and Preferred Stock Dividends.
- 23.1 Consent of Porter Keadle Moore, LLP.
- 23.2 Consent of Rogers & Hardin LLP (included in Exhibit 5.1).
- 24.1 Powers of Attorney (included on signature page).
- 25.1 Form T-1 Statement of Eligibility under the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended, of the Trustee under the Debt Securities Indenture.**

* To be filed by amendment or as an exhibit to a report filed under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, and incorporated herein by reference.

** Where applicable, to be incorporated by reference to a subsequent filing in accordance with Section 305(b)(2) of the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended.

Item 17. Undertakings.

(a) The undersigned registrant hereby undertakes:

(1) To file, during any period in which offers or sales are being made, a post-effective amendment to this registration statement:

(i) To include any prospectus required by Section 10(a)(3) of the Securities Act;

(ii) To reflect in the prospectus any facts or events arising after the effective date of the registration statement (or the most recent post-effective amendment thereof) which, individually or in the aggregate, represent a fundamental change in the information set forth in the registration statement. Notwithstanding the foregoing, any increase or decrease in volume of securities offered

Edgar Filing: Ameris Bancorp - Form S-3

(if the total dollar value of securities offered would not exceed that which was registered) and any deviation from the low or high end of the estimated

II-4

Table of Contents

maximum offering range may be reflected in the form of prospectus filed with the SEC pursuant to Rule 424(b) if, in the aggregate, the changes in volume and price represent no more than a 20 percent change in the maximum aggregate offering price set forth in the Calculation of Registration Fee table in the effective registration statement;

(iii) To include any material information with respect to the plan of distribution not previously disclosed in the registration statement or any material change to such information in this registration statement; *provided, however*, that the undertakings set forth in paragraphs (a)(1)(i) and (a)(1)(ii) and (a)(1)(iii) above do not apply if the registration statement is on Form S-3 or Form F-3 and the information required to be included in a post-effective amendment by those paragraphs is contained in reports filed with or furnished to the SEC by the registrant pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Exchange Act that are incorporated by reference in the registration statements or is contained in a form of prospectus filed pursuant to Rule 424(b) that is a part of the registration statement.

(2) That, for the purpose of determining any liability under the Securities Act, each such post-effective amendment shall be deemed to be a new registration statement relating to the securities offered therein, and the offering of such securities at that time shall be deemed to be the initial *bona fide* offering thereof.

(3) To remove from registration by means of a post-effective amendment any of the securities being registered which remain unsold at the termination of the offering.

(4) The undersigned registrant hereby further undertakes that, for the purpose of determining liability under the Securities Act to any purchaser:

(i) If the registrant is relying on Rule 430B:

(A) Each prospectus filed by a registrant pursuant to Rule 424(b)(3) shall be deemed to be part of the registration statement as of the date the filed prospectus was deemed part of and included in the registration statement; and

(B) Each prospectus required to be filed pursuant to Rule 424(b)(2), (b)(5), or (b)(7) as part of a registration statement in reliance on Rule 430B relating to an offering made pursuant to Rule 415(a)(1)(i), (vii), or (x) for the purpose of providing the information required by Section 10(a) of the Securities Act shall be deemed to be part of and included in the registration statement as of the earlier of the date such form of prospectus is first used after effectiveness or the date of the first contract of sale of securities in the offering described in the prospectus. As provided in Rule 430B, for liability purposes of the issuer and any person that is at that date an underwriter, such date shall be deemed to be a new effective date of the registration statement relating to the securities in the registration statement to which that prospectus relates, and the offering of such securities at that time shall be deemed to be the initial *bona fide* offering thereof; *provided, however*, that no statement made in a registration statement or prospectus that is part of the registration statement or made in a document incorporated or deemed incorporated by reference into the registration statement or prospectus that is part of the registration statement will, as to a purchaser with a time of contract of sale prior to such effective date, supersede or modify any statement that was made in the registration statement or prospectus that was part of the registration statement or made in any such document immediately prior to such effective date; or

Table of Contents

- (ii) If the registrant is subject to Rule 430C, each prospectus filed pursuant to Rule 424(b) as part of a registration statement relating to an offering, other than registration statements relying on Rule 430B or other than prospectuses filed in reliance on Rule 430A, shall be deemed to be part of and included in the registration statement as of the date it is first used after effectiveness. Provided, however, that no statement made in a registration statement or prospectus that is part of the registration statement or made in a document incorporated or deemed incorporated by reference into the registration statement or prospectus that is part of the registration statement will, as to a purchaser with a time of contract of sale prior to such first use, supersede or modify any statement that was made in the registration statement or prospectus that was part of the registration statement or made in any such document immediately prior to such date of first use.

(5) The undersigned registrant hereby undertakes that, for the purpose of determining liability of the registrant under the Securities Act to any purchaser in the initial distribution of the securities, the undersigned registrant undertakes that in a primary offering of securities of the undersigned registrant pursuant to this registration statement, regardless of the underwriting method used to sell the securities to the purchaser, if the securities are offered or sold to such purchaser by means of any of the following communications, the undersigned registrant will be a seller to the purchaser and will be considered to offer or sell such securities to such purchaser: (i) Any preliminary prospectus or prospectus of the undersigned registrant relating to the offering required to be filed pursuant to Rule 424; (ii) any free writing prospectus relating to the offering prepared by or on behalf of the undersigned registrant or used or referred to by the undersigned registrant; (iii) the portion of any other free writing prospectus relating to the offering containing material information about the undersigned registrant or its securities provided by or on behalf of the undersigned registrant; and (iv) any other communication that is an offer in the offering made by the undersigned registrant to the purchaser.

(b) The undersigned registrant hereby undertakes that: (i) for purposes of determining any liability under the Securities Act, the information omitted from the form of prospectus filed as part of the registration statement in reliance upon Rule 430A and contained in a form of prospectus filed by the registrant pursuant to Rule 424(b)(1) or (4) or 497(h) under the Securities Act shall be deemed to be part of the registration statement as of the time it was declared effective; and (ii) for the purpose of determining any liability under the Securities Act, each post-effective amendment that contains a form of prospectus shall be deemed to be a new registration statement relating to the securities offered therein, and the offering of such securities at that time shall be deemed to be the initial *bona fide* offering thereof.

(c) The undersigned registrant hereby undertakes that, for purposes of determining any liability under the Securities Act, each filing of the registrant's annual report pursuant to Section 13(a) or 15(d) of the Exchange Act (and, where applicable, each filing of an employee benefit plan's annual report pursuant to Section 15(d) of the Exchange Act) that is incorporated by reference in the registration statement shall be deemed to be a new registration statement relating to the securities offered therein, and the offering of such securities at that time shall be deemed to be the initial *bona fide* offering thereof.

(d) Insofar as indemnification for liabilities arising under the Securities Act may be permitted to directors, officers and controlling persons of the registrant pursuant to the foregoing provisions or otherwise, the registrant has been advised that in the opinion of the SEC such indemnification is against public policy as expressed in the Securities Act and is therefore unenforceable. In the event that a claim for indemnification against such liabilities (other than the payment by the registrant of expenses incurred or paid by a director, officer or controlling person of the registrant in the successful defense of any action, suit or proceeding) is asserted by such director, officer or controlling person in connection with the securities being registered, the registrant will, unless in the opinion of its counsel the matter has been settled by controlling precedent, submit to a court of appropriate jurisdiction the question whether such indemnification by it is against public policy as expressed in the Securities Act, and will be governed by the final adjudication of such issue.

Table of Contents

(e) The undersigned registrant hereby undertakes to file an application for the purpose of determining the eligibility of the trustee to act under subsection (a) of Section 310 of the Trust Indenture Act of 1939 in accordance with the rules and regulations prescribed by the Securities and Exchange Commission under Section 305(b)(2) of the Trust Indenture Act of 1939.

II-7

Table of Contents**SIGNATURES**

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, the registrant certifies that it has reasonable grounds to believe that it meets all of the requirements for filing on Form S-3 and has duly caused this registration statement to be signed on its behalf by the undersigned, thereunto duly authorized, in the City of Moultrie, State of Georgia, on February 8, 2013.

AMERIS BANCORP

By: /s/ Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.
 Name: Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.
 Title: President and Chief Executive Officer

SIGNATURES AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

We, the undersigned officers and directors of Ameris Bancorp hereby severally constitute and appoint Edwin W. Hortman, Jr. and Dennis J. Zember Jr., and each of them singly, our true and lawful attorneys with full power to either of them, and to each of them singly, to sign for us and in our names in the capacities indicated below the registration statement on Form S-3 filed herewith and any and all pre-effective and post-effective amendments to said registration statement and generally to do all such things in our name and behalf in our capacities as officers and directors to enable Ameris Bancorp to comply with the provisions of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, and all requirements of the Securities and Exchange Commission, hereby ratifying and confirming our signatures as they may be signed by our said attorneys, or any of them, to said registration statement and any and all amendments thereto.

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, this registration statement has been signed by the following persons in the capacities and on the dates indicated.

Signature	Title	Date
/s/ Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.	President, Chief Executive Officer and	February 8, 2013
Edwin W. Hortman, Jr.	Director (Principal Executive Officer)	
/s/ Dennis J. Zember Jr.	Executive Vice President and Chief	February 8, 2013
Dennis J. Zember Jr.	Financial Officer (Principal Financial Officer and Principal Accounting Officer)	
/s/ R. Dale Ezzell	Director	February 8, 2013
R. Dale Ezzell		
/s/ J. Raymond Fulp	Director	February 8, 2013
J. Raymond Fulp		
/s/ Leo J. Hill	Director	February 8, 2013
Leo J. Hill		
/s/ Daniel B. Jeter	Director	February 8, 2013
Daniel B. Jeter		
/s/ Robert P. Lynch	Director	February 8, 2013

Edgar Filing: Ameris Bancorp - Form S-3

Robert P. Lynch

/s/ Brooks Sheldon

Director

February 8, 2013

Brooks Sheldon

/s/ Jimmy D. Veal

Director

February 8, 2013

Jimmy D. Veal

Table of Contents**EXHIBIT INDEX**

Exhibit No.	Description
1.1	Form of Underwriting Agreement.*
3.1	Articles of Incorporation of Ameris Bancorp, as amended (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 2.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Regulation A Offering Statement on Form 1-A filed August 14, 1987).
3.2	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation of Ameris Bancorp (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.7 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 26, 1999).
3.3	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation of Ameris Bancorp (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.9 to Ameris Bancorp's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 31, 2003).
3.4	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation of Ameris Bancorp (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on December 1, 2005).
3.5	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation of Ameris Bancorp (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on November 21, 2008).
3.6	Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on June 1, 2011).
3.7	Amended and Restated Bylaws of Ameris Bancorp (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.1 to Ameris Bancorp's Current Report on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on March 14, 2005).
4.1	Specimen Common Stock Certificate (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 1 to Ameris Bancorp's Registration Statement on Form 8-A filed with the SEC on September 2, 1987).
4.2	Form of Preferred Stock Certificate.*
4.3	Form of Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation for Preferred Stock.*
4.4	Form of Debt Securities Indenture.
4.5	Form of Debt Security.*
4.6	Form of Warrant Agreement (including form of Warrant Certificate).*
4.7	Form of Subscription Rights Agreement (including form of Subscription Rights Certificate).*
4.8	Form of Purchase Contract (including form of Purchase Contract Certificate).*
4.9	Form of Purchase Unit Agreement (including form of Purchase Unit Certificate).*
5.1	Opinion of Rogers & Hardin LLP.
12.1	Statement Regarding Computation of Ratios of Earnings to Fixed Charges and of Earnings to Combined Fixed Charges and Preferred Stock Dividends.
23.1	Consent of Porter Keadle Moore, LLP.
23.2	Consent of Rogers & Hardin LLP (included in Exhibit 5.1).
24.1	Powers of Attorney (included on signature page).
25.1	Form T-1 Statement of Eligibility under the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended, of the Trustee under the Debt Securities Indenture.**

* To be filed by amendment or as an exhibit to a report filed under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, and incorporated herein by reference.

Edgar Filing: Ameris Bancorp - Form S-3

** Where applicable, to be incorporated by reference to a subsequent filing in accordance with Section 305 (b)(2) of the Trust Indenture Act of 1939, as amended.