

Ameris Bancorp
Form S-3
December 19, 2008
Table of Contents

As filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on December 19, 2008

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 **58-1456434**
(State or other jurisdiction of incorporation or organization) (I.R.S. Employer Identification Number)
24 Second Avenue, 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
24 Second Avenue, S.E.
Moultrie, Georgia 31768
(229) 890-1111

Edgar Filing: Ameris Bancorp - Form S-3

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

Copy to:

Steven E. Fox, Esq.

Jody L. Spencer, Esq.

Rogers & Hardin LLP

2700 International Tower

229 Peachtree Street, NE

Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Telephone: (404) 522-4700

Telecopy: (404) 525-2224

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: "

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, other than securities offered only in connection with dividend or interest reinvestment plans, check the following box: x

If this Form is filed to register additional securities for an offering pursuant to Rule 462(b) under the Securities Act, please 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 post-effective amendment filed pursuant to Rule 462(c) under the Securities Act, 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 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, 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, 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 Exchange Act:

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 | Proposed maximum offering price per unit | Proposed maximum aggregate offering price | Amount of registration fee |
|---|-------------------------|--|---|----------------------------|
| Warrant to Purchase Common Stock, \$1.00 par value per share, and underlying shares of Common Stock (1) | 679,443(1) | \$11.48(2) | \$7,800,000(2) | \$306.54 |

(1) There are being registered hereunder (a) a warrant to purchase 679,443 shares of common stock with an initial per share exercise price of \$11.48 per share, (b) the 679,443 shares of common stock issuable upon exercise of such warrant and (c) such additional number of shares of common stock, of a currently indeterminable amount, as may from time to time become issuable by reason of stock splits, stock dividends and certain anti-dilution provisions set forth in such warrant, which shares of common stock are registered hereunder pursuant to Rule 416.

(2) Calculated in accordance with Rule 457(i) with respect to the per share exercise price of the warrant of \$11.48.

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 OR UNTIL THE REGISTRATION STATEMENT SHALL BECOME EFFECTIVE ON SUCH DATE AS THE COMMISSION ACTING PURSUANT TO SAID SECTION 8(a) MAY DETERMINE.

Table of Contents

THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS PROSPECTUS IS NOT COMPLETE AND MAY BE CHANGED. THE SELLING SECURITYHOLDERS MAY NOT SELL THESE SECURITIES UNTIL THE REGISTRATION STATEMENT AMERIS BANCORP FILED WITH THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION IS EFFECTIVE. THIS PROSPECTUS IS NOT AN OFFER TO SELL THESE SECURITIES AND IS NOT SOLICITING AN OFFER TO BUY THESE SECURITIES IN ANY STATE WHERE THE OFFER OR SALE IS NOT PERMITTED.

SUBJECT TO COMPLETION, DATED DECEMBER 19, 2008

PRELIMINARY PROSPECTUS

AMERIS BANCORP

WARRANT TO PURCHASE 679,443 SHARES OF COMMON STOCK

679,443 SHARES OF COMMON STOCK

This prospectus relates to the potential resale from time to time by selling securityholders of some or all of a warrant to purchase 679,443 shares of common stock and any shares of common stock issuable from time to time upon exercise of the warrant. In this prospectus, we refer to the warrant and the shares of common stock issuable upon exercise of the warrant, collectively, as the securities. The warrant was originally issued by us pursuant to the Letter Agreement dated November 21, 2008, and the related Securities Purchase Agreement Standard Terms, between us and the United States Department of the Treasury, which we refer to as the initial selling securityholder, in a transaction exempt from the registration requirements of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, or the Securities Act.

The initial selling securityholder and its successors, including transferees, which we collectively refer to as the selling securityholders, may offer the securities from time to time directly or through underwriters, broker-dealers or agents and in one or more public or private transactions and at fixed prices, prevailing market prices, at prices related to prevailing market prices or at negotiated prices. If these securities are sold through underwriters, broker-dealers or agents, the selling securityholders will be responsible for underwriting discounts or commissions or agents commissions.

We will not receive any proceeds from the sale of securities by the selling securityholders.

Our common stock is traded on the NASDAQ Global Select Market under the symbol ABCB. On December 18, 2008, the closing price of our common stock on the NASDAQ Global Select Market was \$11.08 per share. You are urged to obtain current market quotations of the common stock.

Investing in our securities involves a high degree of risk. See Risk Factors beginning on page 1.

Our principal executive offices are located at 24 Second Avenue, S.E., Moultrie, Georgia 31768, and our telephone number is (229) 890-1111. Our Internet address is <http://www.amerisbank.com>.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or passed upon the adequacy or accuracy of this prospectus. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The date of this prospectus is [_____], 2009.

Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

This prospectus is part of a registration statement we filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, or the SEC, using a shelf registration process. Under this shelf registration process, the selling securityholders may, from time to time, offer and sell, in one or more offerings, the securities described in this prospectus.

We may provide a prospectus supplement at any time to add, update or change information in this prospectus. If the information in this prospectus is inconsistent with a prospectus supplement, you should rely on the information in that prospectus supplement. You should read both this prospectus and, if applicable, any prospectus supplement. See **Where You Can Find More Information** for more information.

In this prospectus, Ameris Bancorp, Ameris, we, our, ours and us refer to Ameris Bancorp, which is a financial holding company headquartered in Moultrie, Georgia, and its subsidiaries on a consolidated basis, unless the context otherwise requires. References to Bank mean Ameris Bank, which is our principal bank subsidiary.

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.

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, the equity, debt, currency and other financial markets, as well as factors specific to Ameris and its subsidiaries, including the Bank.

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 heading **Where You Can Find More Information**, all of which are accessible on the SEC's website at <http://www.sec.gov>.

RISK FACTORS

An investment in our securities involves significant risks. You should carefully consider the risks and uncertainties and the risk factors set forth below in the documents and reports filed with the SEC that are incorporated by reference into this prospectus, as well as any risks described in any applicable prospectus supplement, before you make an investment decision regarding the securities. Additional risks and uncertainties not presently known to us or that we currently deem immaterial may also affect our business operations.

Table of Contents

Recent negative developments in the financial services industry and U.S. and global credit markets may adversely impact our operations and results.

Negative developments in the capital markets in the latter half of 2007 and in 2008 and the expectation of the general economic downturn continuing in 2009 have resulted in uncertainty in the financial markets in general. Loan portfolio performances have deteriorated at many institutions resulting from, among other factors, a weak economy and a decline in the value of the collateral supporting their loans. The competition for our deposits has increased significantly due to liquidity concerns at many of these same institutions. Stock prices of bank holding companies, like ours, have been negatively affected by the current condition of the financial markets, as has our ability, if needed, to raise capital or borrow in the debt markets. As a result, there is a potential for new federal or state laws and regulations regarding lending and funding practices and liquidity standards, and financial institution regulatory agencies are expected to be very aggressive in responding to concerns and trends identified in examinations. Negative developments in the financial services industry and the impact of new legislation in response to those developments could adversely impact our operations, including our ability to originate or sell loans, and adversely impact our financial performance

Changes in interest rates could adversely impact our financial condition and results of operations.

Our earnings and cash flows are largely dependent upon our net interest income. Net interest income is the difference between interest income earned on interest-earning assets, such as loans and securities, and interest expense paid on interest-bearing liabilities, such as deposits and borrowed funds. Interest rates are highly sensitive to many factors that are beyond our control, including general economic conditions and policies of various governmental and regulatory agencies and, in particular, the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, or the Federal Reserve Board. Changes in monetary policy, including changes in interest rates, could influence not only the interest we receive on loans and securities and the amount of interest we pay on deposits and borrowings, but such changes could also affect our ability to originate loans and obtain deposits, the fair value of our financial assets and liabilities and the average duration of our mortgage-backed securities portfolio. If the interest rates paid on deposits and other borrowings increase at a faster rate than the interest rates received on loans and other investments, our net interest income and, therefore, our earnings, could be adversely affected. Earnings could also be adversely affected if the interest rates received on loans and other investments fall more quickly than the interest rates paid on deposits and other borrowings, which may be expected in the current economic climate. Although management believes it has implemented effective asset and liability management strategies to reduce the potential effects of changes in interest rates on our results of operations, any substantial, unexpected, prolonged change in market interest rates could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations.

If we have higher loan losses than anticipated, our earnings could materially decrease.

Our loan customers may not repay loans in accordance with their terms, and the collateral securing the payment of loans may be insufficient to assure repayment. We may, therefore, experience significant credit losses which could have a material adverse effect on our operating results. We make various assumptions and judgments about the collectability of our loan portfolio, including the creditworthiness of borrowers and the value of the real estate and other assets serving as collateral for the repayment of loans. In determining the size of the allowance for loan losses, we rely on many factors, including our previous experience and our evaluation of economic conditions. If assumptions prove to be incorrect, the current allowance for loan losses may not be sufficient to cover losses inherent in the loan portfolio and adjustment may be necessary to allow for different economic conditions or adverse developments in the loan portfolio. Consequently, a problem with one or more loans could require us to significantly increase the level of our provision for loan losses. In addition, federal and state regulators periodically review our allowance for loan losses and may require us to increase our provision for loan losses or recognize further loan charge-offs. Material additions to the allowance would materially decrease our net income.

Table of Contents

We have a high concentration of loans secured by real estate and a downturn in the real estate market, for any reason, could result in losses and materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, results of operations and future prospects.

A significant portion of our loan portfolio is dependent on real estate. In addition to the financial strength and cash flow characteristics of the borrower in each case, often loans are secured with real estate collateral. At December 31, 2007, approximately 78.2% of loans have commercial or residential real estate as a component of collateral. The real estate in each case provides an alternate source of repayment in the event of default by the borrower and may deteriorate in value during the time the credit is extended. Further adverse changes in the economy affecting values of real estate generally or in our primary markets specifically could significantly impair the value of our collateral and our ability to sell the collateral upon foreclosure. Furthermore, it is likely that, in a declining real estate market, we would be required to increase our allowance for loan losses as occurred in 2007 and 2008, causing material strain on recurring levels of net income. If we are required to liquidate the collateral securing a loan to satisfy the debt during a period of reduced real estate values or to increase our allowance for loan losses, our profitability and financial condition could be adversely impacted.

We operate in a highly regulated environment and may be adversely impacted by changes in law and regulations.

Ameris Bancorp, primarily through the Bank, is subject to extensive federal and state regulation and supervision. Banking regulations are primarily intended to protect depositors' funds, federal deposit insurance funds and the banking system as a whole, not shareholders. These regulations affect our lending practices, capital structure, investment practices, dividend policy and growth, among other things. Congress and federal regulatory agencies continually review banking laws, regulations and policies for possible changes. Changes to statutes, regulations or regulatory policies, including changes in interpretation or implementation of statutes, regulations or policies, could affect the Company in substantial, unpredictable and adverse ways. Such changes could subject us to additional costs, limit the types of financial services and products we may offer and increase the ability of non-banks to offer competing financial services and products, among other things. Failure to comply with laws, regulations or policies could result in sanctions by regulatory agencies, civil money penalties and damage to our reputation, which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. While we have policies and procedures designed to prevent any such violations, there is no assurance that such violations will not occur.

We rely on dividends from our banking subsidiary for most of our revenue.

Ameris Bancorp is a separate and distinct legal entity from its subsidiaries. It receives substantially all of its revenue from dividends from the Bank. These dividends are the principal source of funds to pay dividends on the common stock and interest and principal on our debt. Various federal and state laws and regulations limit the amount of dividends that the Bank may pay to Ameris Bancorp. Also, our right to participate in a distribution of assets upon a subsidiary's liquidation or reorganization is subject to the prior claims of the subsidiary's creditors. In the event the Bank is unable to pay dividends to Ameris Bancorp, then we may not be able to service debt, pay obligations or pay dividends on the common stock and our business, financial condition and results of operations may be adversely affected.

Our articles of incorporation, as amended, and our amended and restated bylaws may prevent or delay a takeover by another company.

Our articles of incorporation permit our board of directors to issue preferred stock without shareholder action. The ability to issue preferred stock could discourage a company from attempting to obtain control of us by means of a tender offer, merger, proxy contest or otherwise. Additionally, our articles of incorporation and our bylaws divide our board of directors into three classes, as nearly equal in size as possible, with staggered three-year terms. One class is elected each year. The classification of our board of directors could make it more difficult for a company to acquire control of us. We are also subject to certain provisions of the Georgia Business Corporation Code and our articles of incorporation relating to business combinations with interested shareholders.

Table of Contents

We operate in a highly competitive industry and market areas.

We face substantial competition in all areas of our operations from a variety of different competitors, many of whom are larger and may have more financial resources. Such competitors primarily include national, regional and community banks within the various markets in which the Bank operates. We also face competition from many other types of financial institutions, including savings and loan institutions, credit unions, finance companies, brokerage firms, insurance companies, factoring companies and other financial intermediaries. The financial services industry could become even more competitive as a result of legislative, regulatory and technological changes and continued consolidation. Banks, securities firms and insurance companies can merge under the umbrella of a financial holding company, which can offer virtually any type of financial service, including banking, securities underwriting, insurance (both agency and underwriting) and merchant banking. Also, technology has lowered barriers to entry and made it possible for non-banks to offer products and services traditionally provided by banks, such as automatic transfer and automatic payment systems. Many of our competitors have fewer regulatory constraints and may have lower cost structures. Additionally, due to their size, many competitors may be able to achieve economies of scale and, as a result, may offer a broader range of products and services as well as better pricing for those products and services than we can.

Our ability to compete successfully depends on a number of factors, including, among others:

the ability to develop, maintain and build upon long-term customer relationships based on quality service, high ethical standards and safe, sound assets;

the ability to expand our market position;

the scope, relevance and pricing of products and services offered to meet customer needs and demands;

the rate at which we introduce new products and services relative to our competitors;

customer satisfaction with our level of service; and

industry and general economic trends.

Failure to perform in any of these areas could significantly weaken our competitive position and adversely affect our growth and profitability, which, in turn, could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations.

Potential acquisitions may disrupt our business and dilute shareholder value.

Acquiring other banks, businesses or branches involves various risks commonly associated with acquisitions, including, among others:

potential exposure to unknown or contingent liabilities of the target company;

exposure to potential asset quality issues of the target company;

difficulty and expense of integrating the operations and personnel of the target company;

Edgar Filing: Ameris Bancorp - Form S-3

potential disruption to our business;

potential diversion of our management's time and attention;

the possible loss of key employees and customers of the target company;

difficulty in estimating the value of the target company; and

Table of Contents

potential changes in banking or tax laws or regulations that may affect the target company.

We have previously acquired other financial institutions and often evaluate additional merger and acquisition opportunities related to possible transactions with other financial institutions and financial services companies. As a result, merger or acquisition discussions and, in some cases, negotiations may take place and future mergers or acquisitions involving cash, debt or equity securities may occur at any time. Acquisitions typically involve the payment of a premium over book and market values, and, therefore, some dilution of our tangible book value and net income per common share may occur in connection with any future transaction. Furthermore, failure to realize the expected revenue increases, cost savings, increases in geographic or product presence and other projected benefits and synergies from an acquisition could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations.

We continually encounter technological change.

The financial services industry is continually undergoing rapid technological change with frequent introductions of new technology-driven products and services. The effective use of technology increases efficiency and enables financial institutions to better serve customers and to reduce costs. Our future success depends, in part, upon our ability to address the needs of our customers by using technology to provide products and services that will satisfy customer demands, as well as to create additional efficiencies in our operations. Many of our competitors have substantially greater resources to invest in technological improvements. We may not be able to effectively implement new technology-driven products and services or be successful in marketing these products and services to our customers. Failure to successfully keep pace with technological change affecting the financial services industry could have a material adverse impact on our business and, in turn, our financial condition and results of operations.

We may not be able to attract and retain skilled people.

Our success depends, in large part, on our ability to attract and retain key people. Competition for the best people in most activities engaged in by us can be intense, and we may not be able to hire people or to retain them. The unexpected loss of services of one or more of our key personnel could have a material adverse impact on our business because of their skills, knowledge of our market, years of industry experience and the difficulty of promptly finding qualified replacement personnel.

Financial services companies depend on the accuracy and completeness of information about customers and counterparties.

In deciding whether to extend credit or enter into other transactions, we may rely on information furnished by or on behalf of customers and counterparties, including financial statements, credit reports and other financial information. We may also rely on representations of those customers, counterparties or other third parties, such as independent auditors, as to the accuracy and completeness of that information. Reliance on inaccurate or misleading financial statements, credit reports or other financial information could have a material adverse impact on our business and, in turn, our financial condition and results of operations.

USE OF PROCEEDS

We will not receive any proceeds from any sale of the securities by the selling securityholders.

DESCRIPTION OF WARRANT TO PURCHASE COMMON STOCK

The following is a brief description of the terms of the warrant that may be resold by the selling securityholders and does not purport to be complete in all respects. This description is subject to and qualified in its entirety by reference to the warrant, a copy of which has been filed with the SEC and is also available upon request from us.

Table of Contents

Shares of Common Stock Subject to the Warrant

The warrant is initially exercisable for 679,443 shares of our common stock. If we complete one or more qualified equity offerings on or prior to December 31, 2009 that result in our receipt of aggregate gross proceeds of not less than \$52.0 million, which is equal to 100% of the aggregate liquidation preference of our outstanding Fixed Rate Cumulative Perpetual Preferred Stock, Series A, or the series A preferred stock, the number of shares of common stock underlying the warrant then held by the selling securityholders will be reduced by 50% to 339,721 shares. The number of shares subject to the warrant is subject to the further adjustments described below under the heading *Adjustments to the Warrant*.

Exercise of the Warrant

The initial exercise price applicable to the warrant is \$11.48 per share of common stock for which the warrant may be exercised. The warrant may be exercised at any time on or before November 21, 2018 by surrender of the warrant and a completed notice of exercise attached as an annex to the warrant and the payment of the exercise price for the shares of common stock for which the warrant is being exercised. The exercise price may be paid either by the withholding by Ameris of such number of shares of common stock issuable upon exercise of the warrant equal to the value of the aggregate exercise price of the warrant determined by reference to the market price of our common stock on the trading day on which the warrant is exercised or, if agreed to by us and the warrant holder, by the payment of cash equal to the aggregate exercise price. The exercise price applicable to the warrant is subject to the further adjustments described below under the heading *Adjustments to the Warrant*.

Upon exercise of the warrant, certificates for the shares of common stock issuable upon exercise will be issued to the warrant holder. We will not issue fractional shares upon any exercise of the warrant. Instead, the warrant holder will be entitled to a cash payment equal to the market price of our common stock on the last day preceding the exercise of the warrant (less the pro-rated exercise price of the warrant) for any fractional shares that would have otherwise been issuable upon exercise of the warrant. We will at all times reserve the aggregate number of shares of our common stock for which the warrant may be exercised. We have listed the shares of common stock issuable upon exercise of the warrant with the NASDAQ Global Select Market.

Rights as a Shareholder

The warrant holder shall have no rights or privileges of the holders of our common stock, including any voting rights, until (and then only to the extent) the warrant has been exercised.

Transferability

The initial selling securityholder may not transfer a portion of the warrant with respect to more than 339,721 shares of common stock until the earlier of the date on which Ameris has received aggregate gross proceeds from a qualified equity offering of at least \$52 million and December 31, 2009. The warrant, and all rights under the warrant, are otherwise transferable.

Adjustments to the Warrant

Adjustments in Connection with Stock Splits, Subdivisions, Reclassifications and Combinations. The number of shares for which the warrant may be exercised and the exercise price applicable to the warrant will be proportionately adjusted in the event we pay dividends or make distributions of our common stock, subdivide, combine or reclassify outstanding shares of our common stock.

Anti-dilution Adjustment. Until the earlier of November 21, 2011 and the date the initial selling securityholder no longer holds the warrant (and other than in certain permitted transactions described below), if we issue any shares of common stock (or securities convertible or exercisable into common stock) for less than 90% of the market price of the common stock on the last trading day prior to pricing such shares, then the number of shares of common stock into which the warrant is exercisable and the exercise price will be adjusted. Permitted transactions include issuances:

Table of Contents

as consideration for, or to fund the acquisition of, businesses and related assets;

in connection with employee benefit plans and compensation related arrangements in the ordinary course and consistent with past practice approved by our board of directors;

in connection with public or broadly marketed offerings and sales of common stock or convertible securities for cash conducted by us or our affiliates pursuant to registration under the Securities Act or Rule 144A thereunder on a basis consistent with capital-raising transactions by comparable financial institutions (but do not include other private transactions); and

in connection with the exercise of preemptive rights on terms existing as of November 21, 2008.

Other Distributions. If we declare any dividends or distributions other than our historical, ordinary cash dividends, the exercise price of the warrant will be adjusted to reflect such distribution.

Certain Repurchases. If we effect a *pro rata* repurchase of common stock both, the number of shares issuable upon exercise of the warrant and the exercise price will be adjusted.

Business Combinations. In the event of a merger, consolidation or similar transaction involving Ameris and requiring shareholder approval, the warrant holder's right to receive shares of our common stock upon exercise of the warrant shall be converted into the right to exercise the warrant for the consideration that would have been payable to the warrant holder with respect to the shares of common stock for which the warrant may be exercised, as if the warrant had been exercised prior to such merger, consolidation or similar transaction.

DESCRIPTION OF COMMON STOCK

General

We have 30,000,000 shares of authorized common stock, \$1.00 par value per share, of which 13,565,766 shares were outstanding as of December 16, 2008.

Holders of our common stock are entitled to receive dividends if, as and when declared by our board of directors out of any funds legally available for dividends. Holders of our common stock are also entitled, upon liquidation, and after claims of creditors and the preferences of series A preferred stock (which has an aggregate liquidation preference of \$52 million), and any other class or series of preferred stock outstanding at the time of liquidation, to receive *pro rata* our net assets. We pay dividends on our common stock only if we have paid or provided for all dividends on our outstanding series of preferred stock for the then current period and, in the case of any cumulative preferred stock, all prior periods.

Our series A preferred stock has, and any other series of preferred stock upon issuance will have, preference over our common stock with respect to the payment of dividends and the distribution of assets in the event of our liquidation or dissolution. Holders of shares of series A preferred stock are entitled to receive if, as and when declared by our board of directors or a duly authorized committee of our board of directors, out of assets legally available for payment, cumulative cash dividends on a liquidation preference of \$1,000 per share of series A preferred stock at a rate of 5% per annum until November 21, 2013, and at a rate of 9% per annum thereafter. The series A preferred stock has no maturity date.

Holders of our common stock are entitled to one vote for each share that they hold and are vested with all of the voting power except as our board of directors has provided, or may provide in the future, with respect to preferred stock or any other class or series of preferred stock that the board of directors may hereafter authorize. Shares of our common stock are not redeemable and have no subscription, conversion or preemptive rights.

Our common stock is listed on the NASDAQ Global Select Market. Outstanding shares of our common stock are validly issued, fully paid and non-assessable. The transfer agent and registrar for our common stock is Computershare Investor Services.

Table of Contents

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

The selling securityholders and their successors, including their transferees, may sell the securities directly to purchasers or through underwriters, broker-dealers or agents, who may receive compensation in the form of discounts, concessions or commissions from the selling securityholders or the purchasers of the securities. These discounts, concessions or commissions as to any particular underwriter, broker-dealer or agent may be in excess of those customary in the types of transactions involved.

The securities may be sold in one or more transactions at fixed prices, at prevailing market prices at the time of sale, at varying prices determined at the time of sale or at negotiated prices. These sales may be effected in transactions, which may involve crosses or block transactions:

on any national securities exchange or quotation service on which the common stock may be listed or quoted at the time of sale, including, as of the date of this prospectus, the NASDAQ Global Select Market;

in the over-the-counter market;

in transactions otherwise than on these exchanges or services or in the over-the-counter market; or

through the writing of options, whether the options are listed on an options exchange or otherwise.

In addition, any securities that qualify for sale pursuant to Rule 144 under the Securities Act may be sold under Rule 144 rather than pursuant to this prospectus.

In connection with the sale of the securities or otherwise, the selling securityholders may enter into hedging transactions with broker-dealers, which may, in turn, engage in short sales of the common stock issuable upon exercise of the warrant in the course of hedging the positions they assume. The selling securityholders may also sell short the common stock issuable upon exercise of the warrant and deliver common stock to close out short positions or loan or pledge the common stock issuable upon exercise of the warrant to broker-dealers that, in turn, may sell these securities.

The aggregate proceeds to the selling securityholders from the sale of the securities will be the purchase price of the securities less discounts and commissions, if any.

In effecting sales, broker-dealers or agents engaged by the selling securityholders may arrange for other broker-dealers to participate. Broker-dealers or agents may receive commissions, discounts or concessions from the selling securityholders in amounts to be negotiated immediately prior to the sale.

In offering the securities covered by this prospectus, the selling securityholders and any broker-dealers who execute sales for the selling securityholders may be deemed to be underwriters within the meaning of Section 2(a)(11) of the Securities Act in connection with such sales. Any profits realized by the selling securityholders and the compensation of any broker-dealer may be deemed to be underwriting discounts and commissions. Selling securityholders who are underwriters within the meaning of Section 2(a)(11) of the Securities Act will be subject to the prospectus delivery requirements of the Securities Act and may be subject to certain statutory and regulatory liabilities, including liabilities imposed pursuant to Sections 11, 12 and 17 of the Securities Act and Rule 10b-5 under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, or the Exchange Act.

In order to comply with the securities laws of certain states, if applicable, the securities must be sold in such jurisdictions only through registered or licensed brokers or dealers. In addition, in certain states the securities may not be sold unless they have been registered or qualified for sale in the applicable state or an exemption from the registration or qualification requirement is available and is complied with.

The anti-manipulation rules of Regulation M under the Exchange Act may apply to sales of securities pursuant to this prospectus and to the activities of the selling securityholders. In addition, we will make copies of this prospectus available to the selling securityholders for the purpose of satisfying the prospectus delivery requirements of the Securities Act, which may include delivery through the facilities of The New

Edgar Filing: Ameris Bancorp - Form S-3

York Stock Exchange pursuant to Rule 153 under the Securities Act.

Table of Contents

At the time a particular offer of securities is made, if required, a prospectus supplement will set forth the number and type of securities being offered and the terms of the offering, including the name of any underwriter, dealer or agent, the purchase price paid by any underwriter, any discount, commission and other item constituting compensation, any discount, commission or concession allowed or reallocated or paid to any dealer, and the proposed selling price to the public.

We do not intend to apply for listing of the warrant on any securities exchange or for inclusion of the warrant in any automated quotation system. No assurance is given as to the liquidity of the trading market, if any, for the warrant.

We have agreed to indemnify the selling securityholders against certain liabilities, including certain liabilities under the Securities Act. We have also agreed, among other things, to bear substantially all expenses (other than underwriting discounts and selling commissions) in connection with the registration and sale of the securities covered by this prospectus.

SELLING SECURITYHOLDERS

On November 21, 2008, we issued the securities covered by this prospectus to the United States Department of the Treasury, which is the initial selling securityholder under this prospectus, in a transaction exempt from the registration requirements of the Securities Act. The initial selling securityholder, or its successors, including transferees, may from time to time offer and sell, pursuant to this prospectus or a supplement to this prospectus, any or all of the securities they own. The securities to be offered under this prospectus for the account of the selling securityholders are:

a warrant to purchase 679,443 shares of our common stock, representing beneficial ownership of approximately 5% of our common stock as of December 16, 2008; and

679,443 shares of our common stock issuable upon exercise of the warrant, which shares, if issued, would represent ownership of approximately 5% of our common stock as of December 16, 2008.

For purposes of this prospectus, we have assumed that, after completion of the offering, none of the securities covered by this prospectus will be held by the selling securityholders.

Beneficial ownership is determined in accordance with the rules of the SEC and includes voting or investment power with respect to the securities. To our knowledge, the initial selling securityholder has sole voting and investment power with respect to the securities.

We do not know when or in what amounts the selling securityholders may offer the securities for sale. The selling securityholders might not sell any or all of the securities offered by this prospectus. Because the selling securityholders may offer all or some of the securities pursuant to this offering, and because currently no sale of any of the securities is subject to any agreements, arrangements or understandings, we do not know the number of the securities that will be held by the selling securityholders after completion of the offering.

Other than with respect to the acquisition of the securities, the initial selling securityholder has not had a material relationship with us.

Information about the selling securityholders may change over time. Any such changed information will be set forth in supplements to this prospectus if and when necessary.

LEGAL MATTERS

The validity of the securities offered hereby will be passed upon for us by Rogers & Hardin LLP.

Table of Contents

EXPERTS

The consolidated financial statements of Ameris Bancorp appearing in its Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2007, and the effectiveness of its internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2007 have been audited by Mauldin & Jenkins, 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.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We file annual, quarterly and current reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. Our SEC filings are available to the public over the Internet at the SEC's website at <http://www.sec.gov>. Copies of certain information filed by us with the SEC are also available on our website at <http://www.amerisbank.com>. Our website is not a part of this prospectus. You may also read and copy any document we file at the SEC's public reference room, 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20549. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 for further information on the operation of the public reference room.

The SEC allows us to incorporate by reference information we file with it, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to other documents. The information incorporated by reference is considered to be a part of this prospectus, and information that we file later with the SEC will automatically update and supersede this information. In all cases, you should rely on the later information over different information included in this prospectus.

We incorporate by reference the documents listed below and all future filings we make with the SEC under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act after the date of the initial filing of the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part and prior to the termination of the offering, except to the extent that any information contained in such filings is deemed furnished in accordance with SEC rules:

Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2007;

Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for the quarters ended March 31, 2008, June 30, 2008 and September 30, 2008;

Current Reports on Form 8-K filed on January 31, 2008, April 10, 2008, April 29, 2008, June 3, 2008, July 1, 2008, July 18, 2008, September 3, 2008, September 18, 2008, October 21, 2008 and November 21, 2008; and

The description of our securities contained under the caption "Description of Capital Stock" found on pages 51-52 of the Preliminary Prospectus dated as of April 21, 1994, filed as part of our Registration Statement on Form SB-2 (Registration No. 33-77930) filed with the SEC on April 21, 1994, and our Registration Statement on Form 8-A12B (File No. 001-13901), filed with the SEC on February 25, 1998.

You may request a copy of these filings, at no cost, by writing or telephoning us at the following address:

Ameris Bancorp

24 Second Avenue, S.E.

Moultrie, Georgia 31768

Telephone: (229) 890-1111

Attn: Corporate Secretary

Table of Contents

AMERIS BANCORP
WARRANT TO PURCHASE 679,443 SHARES OF COMMON STOCK
678,443 SHARES OF COMMON STOCK
PROSPECTUS

[], 2009

No dealer, salesperson or other individual has been authorized to give any information or to make any representations not contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus in connection with any offering to be made by the prospectus. If given or made, such information or representations must not be relied upon as having been authorized by us. This prospectus does not constitute an offer to sell, or a solicitation of an offer to buy, the securities offered hereby, in any jurisdiction where, or to any person to whom, it is unlawful to make such offer or solicitation. Neither the delivery of this prospectus nor any offer or sale made hereunder shall, under any circumstance, create an implication that there has been no change in the facts set forth in this prospectus or in our affairs since the date hereof.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|--|-------------|
| <u>ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS</u> | 1 |
| <u>FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS</u> | 1 |
| <u>RISK FACTORS</u> | 1 |
| <u>USE OF PROCEEDS</u> | 5 |
| <u>DESCRIPTION OF WARRANT TO PURCHASE COMMON STOCK</u> | 5 |
| <u>DESCRIPTION OF COMMON STOCK</u> | 7 |
| <u>PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION</u> | 8 |
| <u>SELLING SECURITYHOLDERS</u> | 9 |
| <u>LEGAL MATTERS</u> | 9 |
| <u>EXPERTS</u> | 10 |
| <u>WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION</u> | 10 |

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

The following table sets forth the various expenses to be incurred in connection with the sale and distribution of the securities being registered hereby, all of which will be borne by the Registrant (except any underwriting discounts and commissions and expenses incurred by the selling securityholders for brokerage, accounting, tax or legal services or any other expenses incurred by the selling securityholders in disposing of the shares). All amounts shown are estimates except the SEC registration fee.

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| SEC registration fee | \$ 307 |
| Legal fees and expenses | \$ 25,000 |
| Accounting fees and expenses | \$ 10,000 |
| Miscellaneous expenses | \$ 2,000 |
| Total expenses | \$ 37,307 |

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.

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

Table of Contents

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.

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 (a) 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 (b) 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 (c) 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 (i) any rights to which any director or officer may otherwise be entitled under any bylaw, agreement, vote of shareholders or otherwise and (ii) 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.

Table of Contents

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.

Insofar as indemnification for liabilities arising under the Securities Act may be permitted to directors, officers or persons controlling the Registrant pursuant to the foregoing provisions, the Registrant has been informed that, in the opinion of the SEC, such indemnification is against public policy as expressed in the Securities Act and is, therefore, unenforceable.

Item 16. Exhibits

EXHIBIT

| NUMBER | DESCRIPTION |
|---------------|--|
| 4.1 | Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation of the Registrant (filed as Exhibit 3.1 to the Registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed on November 21, 2008 and incorporated herein by reference). |
| 4.2 | Amended and Restated By-laws of the Registrant (filed as Exhibit 3.1 to the Registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K, filed on March 15, 2005 and incorporated herein by reference). |
| 4.3 | Letter Agreement, dated November 21, 2008, including Securities Purchase Agreement Standard Terms incorporated by reference therein, between the Registrant and the United States Department of the Treasury (filed as Exhibit 10.1 to the Registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed on November 21, 2008 and incorporated herein by reference.) |
| 4.4 | Warrant, dated November 21, 2008, to purchase shares of common stock of the Registrant (filed as Exhibit 3.2 to the Registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed on November 21, 2008 and incorporated herein by reference). |
| 5.1 | Opinion of Rogers & Hardin LLP. |
| 23.1 | Consent of Mauldin & Jenkins, LLC. |
| 23.2 | Consent of Rogers & Hardin LLP, included in Exhibit 5.1 filed herewith. |
| 24.1 | Powers of Attorney (included in the signature pages to the Registration Statement). |

Item 17. Undertakings

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 (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 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 20 percent change in the maximum aggregate offering price set forth in the Calculation of Registration Fee table in the effective registration statement;

Table of Contents

(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 the registration statement; *provided, however*, that paragraphs (1)(i), (1)(ii) and (1)(iii) 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 periodic 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 statement, or is contained in a form of prospectus filed pursuant to Rule 424(b) that is 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) That, for the purpose of determining liability under the Securities Act to any purchaser, 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) 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.

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 section 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.

Edgar Filing: Ameris Bancorp - Form S-3

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.

II-4

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 December 19, 2008.

AMERIS BANCORP

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

SIGNATURES AND POWERS 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 and Chief Executive Officer | December 19, 2008 |
| Edwin W. Hortman, Jr. | (Principal Executive Officer) | |
| /s/ Dennis J. Zember Jr. | Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer (Principal Financial Officer and Principal Accounting Officer) | December 19, 2008 |
| Dennis J. Zember Jr. | | |
| /s/ Johnny W. Floyd | Director | December 19, 2008 |
| Johnny W. Floyd | | |
| /s/ J. Raymond Fulp | Director | December 19, 2008 |
| J. Raymond Fulp | | |
| /s/ Daniel B. Jeter | Director | December 19, 2008 |
| Daniel B. Jeter | | |
| /s/ Glenn A. Kirbo | Director | December 19, 2008 |
| Glenn A. Kirbo | | |

Edgar Filing: Ameris Bancorp - Form S-3

| | | |
|---------------------|----------|-------------------|
| /s/ Robert P. Lynch | Director | December 19, 2008 |
| Robert P. Lynch | | |
| /s/ Brooks Sheldon | Director | December 19, 2008 |
| Brooks Sheldon | | |
| /s/ Jimmy D. Veal | Director | December 19, 2008 |
| Jimmy D. Veal | | |

Table of Contents

EXHIBIT INDEX

EXHIBIT

NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

| | |
|------|--|
| 4.1 | Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation of the Registrant (filed as Exhibit 3.1 to the Registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed on November 21, 2008 and incorporated herein by reference). |
| 4.2 | Amended and Restated By-laws of the Registrant (filed as Exhibit 3.1 to the Registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K, filed on March 15, 2005 and incorporated herein by reference). |
| 4.3 | Letter Agreement, dated November 21, 2008, including Securities Purchase Agreement Standard Terms incorporated by reference therein, between the Registrant and the United States Department of the Treasury (filed as Exhibit 10.1 to the Registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed on November 21, 2008 and incorporated herein by reference.) |
| 4.4 | Warrant, dated November 21, 2008, to purchase shares of common stock of the Registrant (filed as Exhibit 3.2 to the Registrant's Current Report on Form 8-K filed on November 21, 2008 and incorporated herein by reference). |
| 5.1 | Opinion of Rogers & Hardin LLP. |
| 23.1 | Consent of Mauldin & Jenkins, LLC. |
| 23.2 | Consent of Rogers & Hardin LLP, included in Exhibit 5.1 filed herewith. |
| 24.1 | Powers of Attorney (included in the signature page to the Registration Statement). |