

SOUTHERN FIRST BANCSHARES INC

Form S-3

February 18, 2014

As filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission on February 18, 2014

Registration Statement No. 333-

UNITED STATES

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Washington, D.C. 20549

Form S-3

REGISTRATION STATEMENT

UNDER

THE SECURITIES ACT OF 1933

SOUTHERN FIRST BANCSHARES, INC.

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

South Carolina
(State or other jurisdiction of incorporation or organization)

58-2459561
(I.R.S. Employer Identification Number)

100 Verdae Boulevard, Suite 100

Greenville, South Carolina 29606

(800) 679-9000

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

R. Arthur Seaver, Jr.

Chief Executive Officer

Southern First Bancshares, Inc.

100 Verdae Boulevard, Suite 100

Greenville, South Carolina 29606

(800) 679-9000

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

Copies to:

Neil E. Grayson

Benjamin A. Barnhill

Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP

104 South Main Street, Suite 900

Greenville, South Carolina 29601

(864) 250-2235

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.

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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.

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. (Check one):

Large accelerated filer Accelerated filer
Non-accelerated filer Smaller reporting company
(Do not check if a 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 Share⁽²⁾ | Proposed Maximum Aggregate Offering Price⁽²⁾ | Amount of Registration Fee |
|---|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| Common Stock, \$0.01 par value per share | 475,000 | \$13.55 | \$6,436,250 | \$829 |

(1) In addition, pursuant to Rule 416(a) under the Securities Act of 1933 (the Securities Act), this Registration Statement also relates to such indeterminate number of additional shares of common stock of the Registrant as may be issuable in the event of a stock dividend, stock split, recapitalization, or other similar changes in the capital structure, merger, consolidation, spin-off, split-off, spin-out, split-up, reorganization, partial or complete liquidation, or other distribution of assets, issuance of rights or warrants to purchase securities, or any other corporate transaction or event having an effect similar to any of the foregoing.

(2) Estimated solely for the purpose of calculating the amount of the registration fee pursuant to Rule 457(c) under the Securities Act. The price per share and aggregate offering price are based on the average of the high and low sales prices of the registrant's common stock on February 14, 2014, as reported on the NASDAQ Global Market.

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 or until this Registration Statement shall become effective on such date as the Securities and Exchange Commission acting pursuant to said Section 8(a) may determine.

The information in this Prospectus is not complete and may be changed. This Prospectus is included in a registration statement that we filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission. 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 is not soliciting an offer to buy these securities in any state where the offer or sale is not permitted.

Subject to Completion

Preliminary Prospectus dated February 18, 2014

PROSPECTUS

475,000 Shares of Common Stock

This prospectus relates to the potential resale from time to time by the selling shareholders identified on page 7 of this prospectus of some or all of the 475,000 shares of common stock of Southern First Bancshares, Inc. These shares were issued to the selling shareholders on January 27, 2014 in a transaction exempt from the registration requirements of the Securities Act of 1933.

The selling shareholders may offer the shares directly or through underwriters, broker-dealers or agents and in one or more public or private transactions and at fixed prices, at prevailing market prices, at prices related to prevailing market prices, at various prices determined at the time of sale or otherwise at negotiated prices. If the shares are sold through underwriters, broker-dealers, or agents, the selling shareholders (or the purchasers of the shares as negotiated with the selling shareholders) will be responsible for underwriting discounts or commissions or agent commissions, if any. The registration of the shares does not necessarily mean that any of the shares will be sold by the selling shareholders. The timing and amount of any sale is within the respective selling shareholders' sole discretion, subject to certain restrictions. We will not receive any of the proceeds from the sales of shares by the selling shareholders.

Shares of our common stock are traded on the NASDAQ Global Market under the symbol **SFST**. The closing sale price of our common stock as reported on the NASDAQ Global Market on February 14, 2014 was \$13.55 per share.

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

These securities are unsecured and are not deposits and are not insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other governmental agency.

Investing in our securities involves a high degree of risk. See the section **Risk Factors on page 6 of this prospectus, as well as in any supplements to this prospectus.**

The date of this prospectus is _____, 2014

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ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

Prospective investors may rely only on the information specifically incorporated by reference or contained in this prospectus or any applicable prospectus supplement. Southern First Bancshares, Inc., the selling security holders, and any underwriters or agents that may be involved in the sale of the offered securities have not authorized anyone to provide prospective investors with information different from that incorporated by reference or contained in this prospectus or any applicable prospectus supplement. This prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement are not offers to sell nor are they seeking an offer to buy these securities in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted. The information contained in this prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement is complete and correct only as of the date on the front cover of such documents, regardless of the time of the delivery of such documents or any sale of these securities. In this prospectus, the Company, we, us, and our refer to the consolidated operations of Southern First Bancshares, Inc., and references to a company name refer solely to such company.

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

Statements included in this prospectus, including information incorporated herein by reference, which are not historical in nature are intended to be, and are hereby identified as, forward-looking statements for purposes of the safe harbor provided by Section 21E of the Exchange Act. The words may, will, anticipate, should, would, contemplate, expect, estimate, continue, may, and intend, as well as other similar words and expressions of t are intended to identify forward-looking statements. We caution readers that forward-looking statements are estimates reflecting our judgment based on current information, and are subject to certain risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from anticipated results. Such risks and uncertainties include, among others, the following:

Credit losses as a result of declining real estate values, increasing interest rates, increasing unemployment, changes in payment behavior or other factors;

Credit losses due to loan concentration;

Changes in the amount of our loan portfolio collateralized by real estate and weaknesses in the real estate market;

Restrictions or conditions imposed by our regulators on our operations;

Increases in competitive pressure in the banking and financial services industries;

Changes in the interest rate environment which could reduce anticipated or actual margins;

Changes in political conditions or the legislative or regulatory environment, including governmental initiatives affecting the financial services industry;

Changes in economic conditions resulting in, among other things, a deterioration in credit quality;

Changes occurring in business conditions and inflation;

Changes in access to funding or increased regulatory requirements with regard to funding;

Increased cybersecurity risk, including potential business disruptions or financial losses;

Changes in deposit flows;

Changes in technology;

The adequacy of the level of our allowance for loan losses and the amount of loan loss provisions required in future periods;

Examinations by our regulatory authorities, including the possibility that the regulatory authorities may, among other things, require us to increase our allowance for loan losses or write-down assets;

Changes in monetary and tax policies;

Changes in accounting policies and practices;

The rate of delinquencies and amounts of loans charged-off;

The rate of loan growth in recent years and the lack of seasoning of a portion of our loan portfolio;

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Our ability to maintain appropriate levels of capital and to comply with our capital ratio requirements;

Our ability to attract and retain key personnel;

Our ability to retain our existing clients, including our deposit relationships; and

Adverse changes in asset quality and resulting credit risk-related losses and expenses.

Some of the factors that could cause actual results to differ from those expressed or implied in forward-looking statements may be described in any prospectus supplement and in the Risk Factors and other sections of the documents that we incorporate by reference into this prospectus, including our Annual Reports on Form 10-K and our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q and in our other reports filed with the SEC. Should one or more of these risks or uncertainties materialize, or should underlying assumptions prove incorrect, actual outcomes may vary materially from those anticipated. All subsequent written and oral forward-looking statements attributable to us or persons acting on our behalf are expressly qualified in their entirety by reference to these risks and uncertainties. You should not place undue reliance on our forward-looking statements. Each forward-looking statement speaks only as of the date of the particular statement, and we undertake no duty to update any forward-looking statement.

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INCORPORATION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION BY REFERENCE

The SEC allows us to incorporate by reference into this prospectus the information we file with it, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to those documents. Information incorporated by reference is considered to be part of this prospectus, except for any information that is superseded by information included directly in this prospectus. Any statement contained in this prospectus or a document incorporated by reference in this prospectus will be deemed to be modified or superseded for purposes of this prospectus to the extent that a statement contained in this prospectus or in any other subsequently filed document that is incorporated by reference in this prospectus modifies or supersedes the statement. Any statement so modified or superseded will not be deemed, except as so modified or superseded, to constitute a part of this prospectus.

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We incorporate by reference into this prospectus the documents listed below and any future filings we will make with the SEC under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act after the date of this prospectus but before the termination of the offering of the securities covered by this prospectus, except to the extent that any information contained in such filings is deemed furnished in accordance with SEC rules (unless otherwise indicated therein):

Our Annual Reports on Form 10-K and Form 10-K/A for the year ended December 31, 2012, filed with the SEC on March 5, 2013 and March 6, 2013, respectively;

Our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for the quarters ended March 31, 2013, June 30, 2013, and September 30, 2013, filed with the SEC on May 6, 2013, August 6, 2013, and November 5, 2013, respectively; and

Our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed with the SEC on January 10, 2013, April 2, 2013, May 22, 2013, October 3, 2013, and January 28, 2014, and Current Report on Form 8-K/A filed with the SEC on October 16, 2013.

We will provide a copy of any and all of the information that is incorporated by reference in this prospectus to any person, including a beneficial owner, to whom a prospectus is delivered, without charge, upon written or oral request. Written requests for copies should be directed to Attn: Michael D. Dowling, Southern First Bancshares, Inc., 100 Verdae Boulevard, Suite 100, Greenville, South Carolina, 29606. Telephone requests for copies should be directed to Mr. Dowling at (864) 679-9070.

We maintain an Internet website at www.southernfirst.com where the incorporated reports listed above can be accessed. Neither this website nor the information on this website is included or incorporated in, or is a part of, this prospectus.

This summary highlights selected information contained elsewhere or incorporated by reference in this prospectus and may not contain all the information that you need to consider in making your investment decision to purchase shares of our common stock. You should carefully read this entire prospectus, as well as the information incorporated by reference herein and therein, before deciding whether to invest in our common stock. You should carefully consider the sections entitled Risk Factors in this prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference herein and therein to determine whether an investment in our common stock is appropriate for you.

Southern First Bancshares, Inc.

We are a bank holding company organized in 1999 and headquartered in Greenville, South Carolina. We serve as the bank holding company for Southern First Bank, which began operations in 2000. Through our bank, we offer a wide range of traditional banking products and services to individuals and small to mid-size businesses throughout our primary market areas of Greenville, Columbia, and Charleston, South Carolina, including commercial and consumer loan and deposit services, as well as mortgage services. We serve this market with a client-focused structure called relationship teams, which provides each client with a specific banker contact and support team responsible for all of the client's banking needs. The purpose of this structure is to provide a consistent and superior level of professional service, and we believe it provides us with a distinct competitive advantage.

Our principal executive offices are located at 100 Verdae Boulevard, Suite 100, Greenville, South Carolina 29606, and our telephone number is (800) 679-9000. We maintain an Internet website at www.southernfirst.com. Neither this website nor the information on this website is included or incorporated in, or is a part of, this prospectus.

Private Offering of Our Common Stock

On January 27, 2014, we consummated a private offering pursuant to which we issued 475,000 shares of our common stock at \$13.00 per share. The selling shareholders who purchased shares of our common stock in the private offering are accredited investors within the meaning of Rule 501 of Regulation D promulgated under the Securities Act of 1933 (the Securities Act).

RISK FACTORS

Investing in the securities involves risk. Please see the **Risk Factors** section in our most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K, along with the disclosure related to the risk factors contained in any of our subsequent Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q, which are incorporated by reference in this prospectus, as updated by our future filings with the SEC. Before making an investment decision, you should carefully consider these risks as well as other information contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus and any prospectus supplement. The risks and uncertainties not presently known to the Company or that the Company currently deems immaterial may also impair its business operations, its financial results and the value of the securities.

USE OF PROCEEDS

We will not receive any proceeds from the sale by the Selling Shareholders of the Shares.

SELLING SHAREHOLDERS

This prospectus covers the offer and sale by the selling shareholders of up to an aggregate of 475,000 shares of common stock. The following table sets forth to our knowledge, certain information about the selling shareholders as of January 31, 2014, based on information furnished to us by the selling shareholders. Each selling shareholder has indicated to us that neither it nor any of its affiliates has held any position or office or had any other material relationship with us in the past three years.

All of the shares of common stock being offered under this prospectus were acquired by the selling shareholders in a private offering transaction that was completed on January 27, 2014, as described above under the heading, **Prospectus Summary Private Offering of Our Common Stock** beginning on page 5.

For purposes of this prospectus, we have assumed that, after completion of the offering covered by this prospectus, none of the shares covered by this prospectus will be held by the selling shareholders. We do not know when or in what amounts the selling shareholders may offer the shares for sale. The selling shareholders might not sell any or all of the shares offered by this prospectus. Because the selling shareholders may offer all or some of the shares pursuant to this offering, and because currently no sale of any of the shares is subject to any agreements, arrangements or

understandings, we cannot estimate the number of the shares that will be held by the selling shareholders after completion of the offering.

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, except as indicated by footnote, and subject to community property laws where applicable, the persons named in the table below have sole voting and investment power with respect to all shares of common stock shown as beneficially owned by them. Percentage of beneficial ownership is based on 4,810,123 shares of common stock outstanding as of January 31, 2014. Since the date each of the selling shareholders provided information regarding its ownership of the shares, it may have sold, transferred, or otherwise disposed of all or a portion of its shares of common stock in transactions exempt from the registration requirements of the Securities Act. Information concerning the selling shareholders may change from time to time and, when necessary, any changed information will be set forth in a prospectus supplement to this prospectus.

The shares of common stock being offered under this prospectus may be offered for sale from time to time during the period the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part remains effective, by or for the accounts of the selling shareholders named below.

Each selling shareholder has informed us that it is not a registered broker-dealer and does not have any written or oral agreement or understanding, directly or indirectly, with any person to distribute the shares of common stock being offered under this prospectus.

The following table provides information regarding the beneficial ownership of our common stock held by the selling shareholders as of January 31, 2014 and the shares included in the offering.

| Name of Investor | Beneficial Ownership(1) | Number of Shares being Registered | Amount of Beneficial Ownership Post Offering | % Beneficially Owned Post Offering |
|--|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| EJF Financial Opportunities Master Fund, LP(2) | 67,877 | 67,877 | 0 | 0% |
| EJF Financial Services Fund, LP(3) | 407,123 | 407,123 | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 475,000 | 475,000 | 0 | 0% |

(1) The number and percentage of shares beneficially owned is determined in accordance with Rule 13d-3 of the Exchange Act, and the information is not necessarily indicative of beneficial ownership for any other purpose. Under such rule, beneficial ownership includes any shares as to which the selling shareholder has sole or shared voting power or investment power and also any shares which the selling shareholder has the right to acquire within 60 days. The percentage of shares owned by each selling shareholder is based on a total outstanding number of 4,810,123 shares of common stock as of January 31, 2014.

(2) EJF Financial Opportunities GP, LLC is the general partner of EJF Financial Opportunities Master Fund, LP. EJF Capital LLC is the sole member of EJF Financial Opportunities GP, LLC. Emanuel J. Friedman, the Chief Executive Officer of EJF Capital LLC, is deemed to have voting and investment power over the securities beneficially owned by EJF Financial Opportunities Master Fund, LP.

(3) EJF Financial Services GP, LLC is the general partner of EJF Financial Services Fund, LP. EJF Capital LLC is the sole member of EJF Financial Services GP, LLC. Emanuel J. Friedman, the Chief Executive Officer of EJF Capital LLC, is deemed to have voting and investment power over the securities beneficially owned by EJF Financial Services Fund, LP.

The selling shareholders, or their partners, pledgees, donees, transferees or other successors that receive the shares and their corresponding registration in accordance with the registration rights agreement to which the selling shareholder is party (each also a selling shareholder for purposes of this prospectus), may sell up to all of the shares of our common stock shown in the table above under the heading **Number of Shares Being Registered** pursuant to this prospectus in one or more transactions from time to time as described below under **Plan of Distribution**. However, the selling shareholders are not obligated to sell any of the shares of our common stock offered by this prospectus.

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We are registering the shares of common stock issued to the selling shareholders to permit the resale of these shares by the holders of the shares from time to time after the date of this prospectus. We will not receive any of the proceeds from the sale by the selling shareholders of the shares of common stock. We will bear all fees and expenses incident to our obligation to register the shares of common stock.

The selling shareholders may sell all or a portion of the shares of common stock beneficially owned by them and offered hereby from time to time directly or through one or more underwriters, broker-dealers or agents. If the shares of common stock are sold through underwriters or broker-dealers, the selling shareholders will be responsible for underwriting discounts or commissions or agent's commissions. The shares of common stock may be sold on any national securities exchange or quotation service on which the securities may be listed or quoted at the time of sale, in the over-the-counter market or in transactions otherwise than on these exchanges or systems or in the over-the-counter market and in one or more transactions at fixed prices, at prevailing market prices at the time of the 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. The selling shareholders may use any one or more of the following methods when selling shares of common stock:

ordinary brokerage transactions and transactions in which the broker-dealer solicits purchasers;

block trades in which the broker-dealer will attempt to sell the shares as agent but may position and resell a portion of the block as principal to facilitate the transaction;

purchases by a broker-dealer as principal and resale by the broker-dealer for its account;

an exchange distribution in accordance with the rules of the applicable exchange;

privately negotiated transactions;

settlement of short sales entered into after the effective date of the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part;

broker-dealers may agree with the selling shareholders to sell a specified number of such shares at a stipulated price per share;

through the writing or settlement of options or other hedging transactions, whether such options are listed on an options exchange or otherwise;

a combination of any such methods of sale; and

any other method permitted pursuant to applicable law.

The selling shareholders also may resell all or a portion of the shares of common stock in open market transactions in reliance upon Rule 144 under the Securities Act, as permitted by that rule, or Section 4(1) under the Securities Act, if available, rather than under this prospectus, provided that they meet the criteria and conform to the requirements of those provisions.

Broker-dealers engaged by the selling shareholders may arrange for other broker-dealers to participate in sales. If the selling shareholders effect such transactions by selling shares of common stock to or through underwriters, broker-dealers, or agents, such underwriters, broker-dealers, or agents may receive commissions in the form of discounts, concessions or commissions from the selling shareholders, or commissions from purchasers of the shares of common stock for whom they may act as agent or to whom they may sell as principal. Such commissions will be in

amounts to be negotiated, but, except as set forth in a supplement to this prospectus, in the case of an agency transaction will not be in excess of a customary brokerage commission in compliance with NASD Rule 2440, and in the case of a principal transaction, a markup or markdown in compliance with NASD IM-2440.

In connection with sales of the shares of common stock or otherwise, the selling shareholders may enter into hedging transactions with broker-dealers or other financial institutions, which may in turn engage in short sales of the shares of common stock in the course of hedging in positions they assume. The selling shareholders may also sell shares of common stock short and, if such short sale shall take place after the date that the registration statement, of which this prospectus forms a part, is declared effective by the SEC, the selling shareholders may deliver shares of common stock covered by this prospectus to close out short positions and to return borrowed shares in connection with such short sales. The selling shareholders may also loan or pledge shares of common stock to broker-dealers that in turn may sell such shares, to the extent permitted by applicable law. The selling shareholders may also enter into option or other transactions with broker-dealers or other financial institutions or the creation of one or more derivative securities which require the delivery to such broker-dealer or other financial institution of shares offered by this prospectus, which shares such broker-dealer or other financial institution may resell pursuant to this prospectus (as supplemented or amended to reflect such transaction). Notwithstanding the foregoing, the selling shareholders have been advised that they may not use shares registered on the registration statement, of which this prospectus forms a part, to cover short sales of our shares of common stock made prior to the date the registration statement has been declared effective by the SEC.

The selling shareholders may, from time to time, pledge or grant a security interest in some or all of the shares of common stock owned by them and, if they default in the performance of their secured obligations, the pledgees or secured parties may offer and sell the shares of common stock from time to time pursuant to this prospectus or any amendment to this prospectus under Rule 424(b)(3) or other applicable provision of the Securities Act amending, if necessary, the list of selling shareholders to include the pledgee, transferee, or other successors in interest as selling shareholders under this prospectus. The selling shareholders also may transfer and donate the shares of common stock in other circumstances in which case the transferees, donees, pledgees, or other successors in interest will be the selling beneficial owners for purposes of this prospectus.

The selling shareholders and any broker-dealer or agents participating in the distribution of the shares of common stock may be deemed to be underwriters within the meaning of Section 2(11) of the Securities Act in connection with such sales. In such event, any commissions paid, or any discounts or concessions allowed, to any such broker-dealer or agent and any profit on the resale of the shares purchased by them may be deemed to be underwriting commissions or discounts under the Securities Act. Selling shareholders who are underwriters within the meaning of Section 2(11) of the Securities Act will be subject to the applicable prospectus delivery requirements of the Securities Act and may be subject to certain statutory liabilities of, including but not limited to, Sections 11, 12, and 17 of the Securities Act and Rule 10b-5 under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, or the Exchange Act.

Each selling shareholder has informed the company that it is not a registered broker-dealer and does not have any written or oral agreement or understanding, directly or indirectly, with any person to distribute the shares of common stock. Upon the company being notified in writing by a selling shareholder that any material arrangement has been entered into with a broker-dealer for the sale of shares of common stock through a block trade, special offering, exchange distribution or secondary distribution or a purchase by a broker or dealer, a supplement to this prospectus will be filed, if required, pursuant to Rule 424(b) under the Securities Act, disclosing (i) the name of each such selling shareholder and of the participating broker-dealer(s), (ii) the number of shares involved, (iii) the price at which such shares of common stock were sold, (iv) the commissions paid or discounts or concessions allowed to such broker-dealer(s), where applicable, (v) that such broker-dealer(s) did not conduct any investigation to verify the information set out or incorporated by reference in this prospectus, and (vi) other facts material to the transaction. In no event shall any broker-dealer receive fees, commissions and markups, which, in the aggregate, would exceed eight percent (8%).

Under the securities laws of some states, the shares of common stock may be sold in such states only through registered or licensed brokers or dealers. In addition, in some states the shares of common stock may not be sold unless such shares have been registered or qualified for sale in such state or an exemption from registration or qualification is available and is complied with.

There can be no assurance that any selling shareholder will sell any or all of the shares of common stock registered pursuant to the shelf registration statement, of which this prospectus forms a part.

Each selling shareholder and any other person participating in such distribution will be subject to applicable provisions of the Exchange Act and the rules and regulations thereunder, including, without limitation, to the extent applicable, Regulation M of the Exchange Act, which may limit the timing of purchases and sales of any of the shares of common stock by the selling shareholder and any other participating person. To the extent applicable, Regulation M may also restrict the ability of any person engaged in the distribution of the shares of common stock to engage in market-making activities with respect to the shares of common stock. All of the foregoing may affect the marketability of the shares of common stock and the ability of any person or entity to engage in market-making activities with respect to the shares of common stock.

We will pay all expenses of the registration of the shares of common stock pursuant to the registration rights agreement, including, without limitation, SEC filing fees and expenses of compliance with state securities or blue sky laws; provided, that each selling shareholder will pay all underwriting discounts and selling commissions, if any, incurred by it. We will indemnify the selling shareholders against certain liabilities, including some liabilities under the Securities Act, in accordance with the registration rights agreement, or the selling shareholders will be entitled to contribution. We may be indemnified by the selling shareholders against civil liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act, that may arise from any written information furnished to us by the selling shareholders specifically for use in this prospectus, in accordance with the related registration rights agreements, or we may be entitled to contribution.

LEGAL MATTERS

The validity of the Shares offered hereby have been passed upon for us by the law firm of Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP, Greenville, South Carolina.

EXPERTS

The consolidated financial statements incorporated in this prospectus, by reference from our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2012, have been audited by Elliott Davis, LLC, an independent registered public accounting firm, as stated in their report. Such report is 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 are subject to the informational requirements of the Exchange Act, and file with the SEC proxy statements, Annual Reports on Form 10-K, Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q and Current Reports on Form 8-K. You may read and copy any document we file at the SEC's public reference room at 100 F Street, NE, Room 1580, Washington, D.C. 20549. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 for further information on the public reference rooms. Our SEC filings are also available to the public from the SEC's web site at www.sec.gov or on our website at www.southernfirst.com under the Investor Relations tab. Information on, or that can be accessible through, our website does not constitute a part of, and is not incorporated by reference in, this prospectus.

This prospectus, which is a part of a registration statement on Form S-3 that we have filed with the SEC under the Securities Act, omits certain information set forth in the registration statement. Accordingly, for further information, you should refer to the registration statement and its exhibits on file with the SEC. Furthermore, statements contained in this prospectus concerning any document filed as an exhibit are not necessarily complete and, in each instance, we refer you to the copy of such document filed as an exhibit to the registration statement.

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

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| SEC Registration Fee | \$ 829 |
| Legal Fees and Expenses | \$ 10,000 |
| Accountant's Fees and Expenses | \$ 2,800 |
| Printing, Engraving and EDGAR | \$ - |
| Miscellaneous | \$ - |
| Total | \$ 13,629 |

Item 15. Indemnification of Directors and Officers.

Under our bylaws, each of our directors has the right to be indemnified by us to the maximum extent permitted by law against (i) reasonable expenses incurred in connection with any threatened, pending or completed civil, criminal, administrative, investigative or arbitrative action, suit or proceeding seeking to hold the director liable by reason of his or her actions in such capacity and (ii) reasonable payments made by the director in satisfaction of any judgment, money decree, fine, penalty or settlement for which he or she became liable in such action, suit or proceeding. This right to indemnification includes the right to the advancement of reasonable expenses by us, to the maximum extent permitted by law. Under our bylaws, each of our officers who are not directors is entitled to the same indemnification rights, including the right to the advancement of reasonable expenses, which are provided to our directors.

Pursuant to the Business Corporation Act, a South Carolina corporation has the power to indemnify its directors and officers provided that they act in good faith and reasonably believe that their conduct was lawful and in the corporate interest (or not opposed thereto), as set forth in the Business Corporation Act. Under the Business Corporation Act, unless limited by its articles of incorporation, a corporation must indemnify a director or officer who is 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 is or was a director or officer, against reasonable expenses incurred by the director or officer in connection with the proceeding. Our amended and restated articles of incorporation do not contain any such limitations. The Business Corporation Act permits a corporation to pay for or reimburse reasonable expenses in advance of final disposition of an action, suit or proceeding only upon (i) the director's certification that he or she acted in good faith and in the corporate interest (or not opposed thereto), (ii) the director furnishing a written undertaking to repay the advance if it is ultimately determined that he or she did not meet this standard of conduct, and (iii) a determination is made that the facts then known to those making the determination would not preclude indemnification under the Business Corporation Act.

Under our amended and restated articles of incorporation, no director will be liable to us or our shareholders for monetary damages for breach of his or her fiduciary duty as a director, to the maximum extent permitted by law.

The Business Corporation Act also empowers a corporation to provide insurance for directors and officers against liability arising out of their positions, even though the insurance coverage may be broader than the corporation's power to indemnify. We maintain directors and officers' liability insurance for the benefit of our directors and officers.

Item 16. Exhibits.

The exhibits to the Registration Statement are listed in the Exhibit Index attached hereto and incorporated by reference herein.

Item 17. Undertakings.

The undersigned Registrant hereby undertakes:

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(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 of 1933, as amended;

(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 Commission 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; and

(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 (a)(1)(i), (a)(1)(ii) and (a)(1)(iii) of the above do not apply if the information required to be included in a post-effective amendment by those paragraphs is contained in reports filed with or furnished to the Commission by the registrants pursuant to section 13 or section 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 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 of 1933, as amended, 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 of 1933, as amended, to any purchaser:

(i) 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

(ii) 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 of 1933 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 the 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.

(5) That, for the purpose of determining liability of a Registrant under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, to any purchaser in the initial distribution of the securities, the undersigned Registrants undertake that in a primary

offering of securities of the undersigned Registrants 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 Registrants 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 an 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 an undersigned Registrant or used or referred to by an undersigned Registrant;

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(iii) The portion of any other free writing prospectus relating to the offering containing material information about an undersigned Registrant or its securities provided by or on behalf of an undersigned Registrant; and

(iv) Any other communication that is an offer in the offering made by an undersigned Registrant to the purchaser.

(6) That, for purposes of determining any liability under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, each filing of the Registrant's annual report pursuant to Section 13(a) or Section 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, (and, where applicable, each filing of an employee benefit plan's annual report pursuant to Section 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended) 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.

(7) 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 in accordance with the rules and regulations prescribed by the Commission under Section 305(b)(2) of the Trust Indenture Act.

Insofar as indemnification for liabilities arising under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, may be permitted to directors, officers and controlling persons of each Registrant pursuant to the provisions described in Item 15 above, or

otherwise, each Registrant has been advised that in the opinion of the Securities and Exchange Commission such indemnification is against public policy as expressed in the Securities Act of 1933 and is, therefore, unenforceable. In the event that a claim for indemnification against such liabilities (other than the payment by a Registrant of expenses incurred or paid by a director, officer or controlling person of a 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, that 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 of 1933 and will be governed by the final adjudication of such issue.

SIGNATURES

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Act of 1933, Southern First Bancshares, Inc. 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 Greenville, State of South Carolina, on February 18, 2014.

SOUTHERN FIRST BANCSHARES, INC.

By: /s/R. Arthur Seaver, Jr.
Name: R. Arthur Seaver, Jr.
Title: Chief Executive Officer

Know all men by these presents, that each person whose signature appears below constitutes and appoints R. Arthur Seaver, Jr., his true and lawful attorney-in-fact and agent, with full power of substitution and resubstitution, for him and in his name, place and stead, in any and all capacities, to sign any and all amendments (including pre-effective and post-effective amendments) to this Registration Statement and to sign any registration statement (and any post-effective amendments thereto) effective upon filing pursuant to Rule 462(b) under the Securities Act of 1933, and to file the same, with all exhibits thereto, and other documents in connection therewith, with the Securities and Exchange Commission, granting unto said attorney-in-fact and agent full power and authority to do and perform each and every act and thing requisite and necessary to be done in and about the premises, as fully to all intents and purposed as he might or could do in person, hereby ratifying and confirming that said attorney-in-fact, agent or his substitutes may lawfully do or cause to be done by virtue hereof.

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Act of 1933, this Registration Statement has been signed by the following persons in the capacities indicated as of the dates indicated.

Signature

Title

/s/R. Arthur Seaver, Jr.
R. Arthur Seaver, Jr.
Date: February 18, 2014

Chief Executive Officer and Director
(Principal Executive Officer)

/s/Michael D. Dowling
Michael D. Dowling
Date: February 18, 2014

Chief Financial Officer
(Principal Financial Officer and
Principal Accounting Officer)

/s/James B. Orders, III
James B. Orders, III
Date: February 18, 2014

Chairman of the Board of Directors

/s/Andrew B. Cajka, Jr.
Andrew B. Cajka, Jr.
Date: February 18, 2014

Director

/s/Mark A. Cothran
Mark A. Cothran
Date: February 18, 2014

Director

/s/Leighton M. Cabbage
Leighton M. Cabbage
Date: February 18, 2014
Director

/s/David G. Ellison
David G. Ellison
Date: February 18, 2014
Director

/s/Anne S. Ellefson
Anne S. Ellefson
Date: February 18, 2014
Director

/s/Fred Gilmer, Jr.
Fred Gilmer, Jr.
Date: February 18, 2014
Director

/s/Tecumseh Hooper, Jr.
Tecumseh Hooper, Jr.
Date: February 18, 2014
Director

Rudolph G. Johnstone, III, M.D.
Date: February 18, 2014
Director

William B. Sturgis
Date: February 18, 2014
Director

EXHIBIT INDEX

| <u>Exhibit No.</u> | <u>Description of Exhibit</u> |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
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| 3.1 | Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.1 of the Company's Registration Statement on Form SB-2 filed on July 27, 1999, File No. 333- 83851) |
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| 3.2 | Articles of Amendment to the Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation establishing the terms of the Series T Preferred Stock (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.1 of the Company's Current Report on Form 8-K filed on March 3, 2009) |
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| 3.3 | Amended and Restated Bylaws dated March 18, 2008 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 3.4 of the Company's Form 10-K filed on March 24, 2008) |
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| 4.1 | Specimen Common Stock Certificate (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 4.2 of the Company's Registration Statement on Form SB-2 filed on July 27, 1999, File No. 333-83851) |
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| 5.1 | Opinion of Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP |
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| 10.1 | Form of Stock Purchase Agreement dated January 27, 2014 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.1 of the Company's Current Report on Form 8-K filed on January 28, 2014) |
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| 10.2 | Form of Registration Rights Agreement dated January 27, 2014 (incorporated by reference to Exhibit 10.2 of the Company's Current Report on Form 8-K filed on January 28, 2014) |
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| 23.1 | Consent of Elliott Davis, LLC |
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23.2 Consent of Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP (included in Exhibit 5.1)

24.1 Power of Attorney (included on the signature page of this registration statement)