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### CONDITION

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The LeVert Historic District comprises an area of approximately twenty-five acres in a residential neighborhood, just south of Talbotton's central business district. It includes a variety of structures ranging from private residences to a former college. The buildings vary in age from fifty to one hundred and forty years old, with the majority being 19th century structures. The district is a picturesque neighborhood dotted with large trees and shrubbery. It contains a total of twenty-two buildings.

Straus-LeVert Memorial Hall, located on College Avenue between Clark and Polk Streets, was built circa 1856 to house LeVert College, one of the earliest colleges for women chartered by the Georgia General Assembly. The building is a white frame two-story Greek Revival structure, almost square, with sash windows, fluted columns and a pedimented gable roof. One story wings with hipped roofs extend from the main structure along the rear portions of both side elevations. A columned portico, two-stories in height, wraps around three sides of the building terminating on the side elevations just before reaching the one-story wings. A pediment rises over the columns on the facade. Originally, there was a balcony which extended the length of the portico with two sets of outside stairs. The balcony and stairs were removed sometime prior to 1890. Among the most unusual features of the building are the capitals on the columns. Carved from wood, they are a local variation of the Ionic order and are repeated on two other houses in Talbotton. These structures are probably the work of the same craftsman.

Zion Episcopal Church is located in the block behind Straus-LeVert Memorial Hall. Built in 1848, the small wooden church is an exceptional example of English Gothic Revival Architecture and is already on the National Register.

The Talbotton Methodist Church and parsonage occupy a large triangular shaped city block south of Zion Church and the former college. The Greek Revival Church was built in 1857 by Miranda Fort, master brick mason and builder, who migrated to Talbotton from Virginia in 1831. The church is a substantial rectangular brick structure with stuccoed facade spanned by six massive masonry columns. A pediment rises over the columns and is topped by a short domed steeple. The sanctuary contains the original slave gallery, and shaped ceiling with plaster mouldings and medallions. The chancel was altered in 1957, but the original chancel rail was retained. The original pews were also replaced in 1957. The church is constructed of brick handmade from local clay.

North of the Methodist Church is the Methodist parsonage, a Victorian cottage built in 1895. Decorated by an elaborate porch with cut and turned wood emballishments in the Eastlake Victorian style, the parsonage once had a balustrade on the roof which was removed in the early 1920's. Plans are underway by the church board to restore the exterior of the building to its original appearance, including the replacement of the ornate chimneys which were removed in 1970.

The remaining structures scattered throughout the district are private residences, in the Greek Revival and Victorian designs, except one former residence which is presently used as a mortuary.

A Greek Revival house, known as the Little-Thomas House, was built circa 1845. It is located north-east of Straus-LeVert Memorial Hall on College Avenue. Consisting of a two-story structure flanked by one story wings, the Little Thomas House has a portico with square wooden columns, capped by a simple entablature and pediment. Between the capitals of the columns, simple arches were installed forming three arched bays. The spandrels are

### SIGNIFICANCE

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The LeVert Historic District contains a variety of structures that have architectural and historic significance. The District is a compact area which contains examples from several different architectural styles that represent various phases in Talbotton's development.

. ( Talbotton, incorporated in 1828, was a thriving regional center prior to the Civil War. Designated as the county seat of Talbot County, the town served as a trading and éducational center for central West Georgia. By 1850 Talbot County had become Georgia's fifth largest county in population, and one of the state's largest cotton producers.

Many religious facilities added to the business and cultural resources of the town. Two churches are located in the district, Zion Episcopal, in the Gothic Revival style, and Talbotton Methodist, in the Greek Revival style. Zion Episcopal is presently on the National Register, and is a magnificent example of the County English Gothic Revival style. picturesque church, which is built of wood, is a rare extant example of this particular style of mid-nineteenth century ecclesiastical architecture. Talbotton Methodist Church, is an exceptionally fine example of Greek Revival Architecture. It is the oldest brick church in the South Georgia Conference.

Methodism was brought to Talbotton in 1830 by Rev. H. W. Hilliard, a missionary from Columbia, South Carolina. Rev. Hilliard later became a member of Congress and a minister to European courts. The Talbotton Methodist Church was formerly organized in 1831 as a separate charge of the South Georgia Conference. Colonel Henry Mims and Rev. Charles Fisher were the primary contributors of money to construct the first church building on the site in 1831. This building, a wooden structure, was used until 1857 when it was rased to make room for the construction of the present building. The Talbotton Methodist Church has been served by more than seventy-five ministers, many of whom became very prominent in religious circles. During the Civil War the church grounds were used as the assembly point for local troops. Here they were provided farewell dinners before departing for the front. After the war, Confederate Veterans held many of their meetings on the church grounds.

During the 1850's Talbotton was becoming recognized for its educational institutions. In addition to several academies for elementary education, there were three schools which provided specialized or higher education. These were: Collingsworth Institute, a boarding school, which specialized in agricultural and manual training for males; Rose Hill Episcopal Seminary which provided both religious training and the arts for young ladies; and LeVert College, one of the first State Chartered Colleges for women in Georgia.

LeVert College, presently known as Straus-LeVert Memorial Hall is located in the District. LeVert College was preceded by the Talbotton Female academy, a school which occupied the site from 1830 to 1856. Very little is known about the building which housed

### 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Culpepper, Gene, local researcher, Talbotton, Ga. Macgregor, Elizabeth Z., consultant; Personal inspection, Spring 1974. Stavrolakis, Kristalia, Personal inspection, August 13, 1974.

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plain and undecorated. The plan of the Little-Thomas House is most unusual. The front entrance opens into a large drawing room approximately 20 feet wide by 30 feet long. The drawing room is flanked by a library on one side and a dining room on the other. A hall extends across the width of the two-story portion of the house connecting the two back rooms of each wing. This hall widens into a stair hall containing a stair case with half-turn and landing. The balusters are simple, but delicate, and support a mahogany rail. The woodwork is simple, and the mantelpieces are distinguished by rounded openings above the fireplace, suggestive of a much earlier 19th century style. Although the house is presently used for apartments, there have been no major structural changes made to the building.

To the north of the Little-Thomas House is the Freeman-Watts House, a Victorian cottage, built in 1892. Decorated with a porch covered with cut-out wood designs, the house has been meticulously maintained and is in excellent condition. A small section of the porch was destroyed by a falling tree in 1959 and was removed. However, this removal did not damage the integrity of the house.

On the block west of the Freeman-Watts House is a white frame classical cottage. This building, facing College Avenue, is the Mathews-Talbotton Funeral Home. Built in 1913 by Mr. Ed Mathews as a private residence, the structure is a one-story neo-classical cottage with a front and side porch. The building stands on the side of an earlier Greek-Revival house.

The Radcliff-Spivey House is west of the Mathews-Talbotton Funeral Home and faces Jackson Avenue. Built circa 1845-50 by Richard Radcliff, Sr., the house is a frame Greek Revival cottage with hipped roof. The building contains a one bay portico supported by two simple pillars. A detached kitchen and dining room burned in 1965.

North of the Radcliff-Spivey House is a small simple Victorian cottage, built circa 1898 by the Spivey family. This small cottage has a porch across the front decorated with simple cutout wood designs. The cottage has two front entrances.

The Blount-Maxwell House, facing Madison Street, is a very handsome Greek Revival cottage built in 1836 by John Thomas Blount, Sr. A porch extends across the facade with six simple fluted columns supporting the main hipped roof of the house. Balustrades connect the columns of the porch. The entrance consists of an especially fine Greek Revival style double doorway with side lights and transom. The house is meticulously maintained and is in excellent condition. The outbuildings, which included a cooks house, carriage house and kitchen were demolished in the early 1930's.

East of the Blount-Maxwell House, on the corner of College Avenue and Madison Street is the Robins-Taylor House. This ten room two-story house was built between 1900 and 1905. While the interior of the house is in high Victorian style, the exterior is relatively plain. A wide porch extends across the front and along one side of the house, the roof of which is supported by sandstone pillars. A balustrade connects the pillars.

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Atop the hipped roof house are dormer windows. The house is well maintained and is in excellent condition.

South of the Robins-Taylor House and facing College Avenue is the O'Neal-Smith House, originally a large two-story Greek Revival House (circa 1850) which was remodeled in the 1890's and made into a one-story cottage with a simple Victorian porch.

Another Greek Revival house is located South and East of the intersection of Clark Street and College Avenue. Known as the Willis-Gordon House, it was built by Roland Willis, a local planter and merchant. The house, a one-story cottage with hipped roof and six fluted columns spanning the width of the house, was renovated in 1960, somewhat altering the fenestration of the facade. The house is maintained in excellent condition.

South of the Willis-Gordon House and facing College Avenue, are two one-story neo-classical cottages with front and side porches. These structures known as the McDowell-Cheney Homes and the Mahone-Culpepper House are very similar in style to that of the Mathews-Talbotton Funeral Home. Between these two neo-classical cottages are two cottages built in the 1920's, and although, they have no particular historic or architectural significance, these two cottages blend beautifully with the older houses in the district. All four of the above houses occupy the former site of the Beall House, a larger Greek Revival house which burned at the turn of the century.

Southwest of the Mahone-Culpepper House and facing Washington Avenue is the Smith-Battle House, a nine room Greek Revival cottage with hipped roof and columned porch, built in 1840. The structure contains twin one room wings. The kitchen and dining room ell at the rear of the house was once separated from the main house, but is now connected by an enclosed porch.

### 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

Historic American Building Survey (Ga. - 1136, Ga. - 1108, Ga. - 1126) Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

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the Female Academy. As the need arose for an institution of higher learning for young ladies, the General Assembly issued a new charter changing the name to LeVert College and making the school a full fledged college for women.

The act of 1856 named the following persons as trustees of LeVert College: Thomas B. Turner, Thomas A. Brown, Allen F. Owen, Josiah M. Matthews, Edmond H. Worrell, James P. Leonard, John T. Blount, William B. Marshall, Harrison W. Hagerman, Anderson W. Wynn, William M. Born, Francis M. Murray, David Kendall, Washington C. Cleveland, and Hiram Drane. The act further provided that the President of the college "shall have power to confer such honors, degrees and privileges as are usually conferred in Female Colleges and to grant diplomas in the manner and style as he may deem appropriate".

The College was named for Madame Octavia Walton LeVert, granddaughter of George Walton, one of the Georgia signers of the Declaration of Independance. On numerous occasions during her trips between New Orleans and Augusta, Madame LeVert stopped in Talbot County to visit her relatives, the Waltons of Baughville.

LeVert College flourished until the recession of 1878 when it, as well as Collings-worth Institute were beset with financial problems. The two schools were merged that year. The charter was never changed so LeVert continued to confer degrees upon the girls, but could only recommend the boys to other colleges for additional study.

In 1882, the General Assembly passed a special act authorizing the transfer of LeVert College to the City of Talbotton, and at the same time amended the city's charter to provide for operation of the college out of public funds.

In 1907 the Town of Talbotton was authorized to operate a public school system, at which time LeVert became the towns public elementary and high school. In 1924, use of the building for a school was discontinued, at which time the property was purchased by the family of Lazarus Straus and converted into a community building. Lazarus Straus, a member of a well known Jewish family in Bavaria, was forced to flee his homeland after the political upheavals in Bavaria in the late 1840's. He migrated to Talbotton in 1852, opened a store, and shortly thereafter sent for his family. Until the Civil War, Lazarus and his family made their home in Talbotton where his business prospered, and where his sons, Isidor, Nathan and Oscar attended Collingsworth Institute. With the hardships which followed the Civil War, the family moved to New York where again they prospered, founding first the business known as LeStraus and Sons and later the R. H. Macy Company. Oscar attended Columbia Law School, served as minister to Turkey under President Cleveland, as ambassador to Turkey under President McKinley, as a member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Haque under Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson and as Secretary of Commerce and Labor under Theodore Roosevelt. He was also a candidate for Governor of New York on the progressive party ticket in 1912.

In addition to his business and financial interests, Isidor was also keenly interested in politics. He served as a member of Congress from New York Park Commission from 1889 to

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1893, and as President of the New York Board of Health in 1898. In 1892 he initiated a campaign for compulsary pasteurization of milk and set up free milk depots in thirty-six American cities. He also set up homes for homeless men and found ways of providing coal for heating the homes of the poor. He led a movement to establish a tubercular sanitarium in New York and aided scientists in finding a cure for hydrophobia. In 1923, Nathan Straus was, by popular vote in New York City, named the "citizen who had achieved the most for public good" since the establishment of Greater New York City some twenty-five years before.

The Straus family refurbished old LeVert College and presented it to a board of trustees for use as a community building for the people of Talbotton. The building was renamed Straus-LeVert Memorial Hall in honor of both Madame LeVert and the Lazarus Straus Family. The building was later deeded to the City of Talbotton.

Additional buildings in the district provide an insight into the domestic architecture of the 19th and early 20th centuries in an aristocratic small Southern town. Some examples of both Greek Revival and Victorian architecture are evident throughout the district, and several of the homes have been occupied by prominent Talbot County residents.

One of these houses, the Radcliff-Spivey House (c.1845-50) has remained in the same family throughout its existence. The home was built by Richard Radcliff, Sr., the great-grandfather of the present owner, Felden R. Spivey. The Spiveys are also owners of the oldest mercantile business in the county.

The Smith-Battle House (c.1840) was originally built on the plantation of Major Ezedial B. Smith, near Geneva, Georgia. Shortly after its completion, Smith moved to Talbotton and brought the house with him. The structure carefully dismantled and reassembled on its present site in the mid 1840's.

One of the largest houses in the District is the Little-Thomas House (c.1850) built by Dr. William G. Little, one of the earliest and most distinguished physicians in Talbot County. The structure remained in the Little family until 1885, when it was purchased by George Henson Estes, a prominent Talbotton banker. In the early 20's it was purchased by William Dennis, a member of one of the county's oldest families. The house is presently owned by the W. C. Thomas estate.

The Freeman-Watts House was built by architect W. A. Bennet, who came to Talbotton in 1892 to construct the present Talbot County Courthouse. The house was constructed the same year as the courthouse and contains mantels, wainscoting, and woodwork identical to that used in the courthouse.

The Blount-Maxwell House (c.1836) was built by John T. Blount, Sr., for his bride. Mr. Blount was a planter and merchant and one of the original trustees of LeVert College. The house is presently owned by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Sewell Maxwell, Sr.

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

The Robins-Taylor House (c.1905) was built by Thomas Bardwell, but was purchased when new by Mrs. John Robins, a widow, whose large Greek Revival home, "Ridge Crest", had recently burned. John Robins, a state legislator, a planter and a leading local merchant was killed in an accident in Macon leaving a widow and seven daughters. One daughter married and had a child, Marie (Mrs. Jessie Fort), a noted author on flower arranging. Mrs. Robins and her six single daughters occupied the house until their deaths. No direct descendants of the family are now living. The house is presently owned by Mr. & Mrs. Mayo Taylor.

The O'Neal-Smith House was the home of Dr. Z. H. O'Neal one of the city's earliest and most distinguished dentists. The property was acquired around the turn of the century by Dr. E. L. Bardwell, Sr., one of Talbottons noted physicians, and remained in the ownership of the Bardwell family until the late 1950's when it was purchased by the present owners, Mr. & Mrs. Doland Smith.

The Willis-Gordon House (c.1855) was built by Roland Willis, a planter, merchant and Captain in the Confederate Army. The Roland Willis family and descendants occupied the house until the late 1940's. It was purchased by its present owner Mr. Jack McCutcheon Gordon in the early 1950's.

Consisting of approximately twenty-five acres of land, the LeVert Historic District contains examples for several architectural modes. This area of Talbotton, displaying such a diverse group of buildings and styles, is important to the history of the region and ought to be preserved in tact.

### 10 Geographical Data (Verbal Boundary Description) Cont.

a distance of 700' more or less to the centerline of Washington Avenue; thence South along the centerline of Washington Avenue for a distance of 150' more or less to the South property line of the J. T. Battle residence; thence West along said property line for a distance of 350' more or less; thence North for a distance of 300' more or less to the centerline of Smith Street; thence East along the centerline of Smith Street for a distance of 300' more or less to the intersection of Washington Avenue; thence North along the centerline of Washington Avenue to the point of beginning.

TALBOTTON, GEORGIA Le Vert HISTORICAL DISTRICT U.S.80 Radcliff-Spivey Zion Greek Revival Episcopal Church Commercial Cottage 1848 Victorian District Cottage C-1898 C-1850 JACKSON AVENUE Smith-Methodist Church Battle Straus-LeVert 1857 Greek C-1912 Memorial Hall Revival C = 1856Blount-Maxwell Greek Cottage New STREET Greek-Revival Revival Parsonage Methodist Cottage Cottage Memorial C-1840 Park C-1913 1895 C-1836 COLLEGE AVENUE Cottage Little-Thomas Greek2 story Reviva1 Cottage Brick Cottage Cottage Cottage 1920's Greek Revival Greek 1913 Cottage 1920's C-1850 1900 C-1845 Regional 1920's J. C. Watts Robins-Cottage Victorian Taylor Willis-Gordon 1913 Cottage 2 story Greek 1892 C-1905 Revival Cottage C-1845 Railroad Line Coast Seaboard

Form No. 10-301 (Rev. 10-74)

# UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR . NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY MAP FORM

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11	NAM:	<b>E</b> LeVert Historic D	istrict				•	
	AND/OR CO	OMMON						
2	LOCA	Talbotton	VICINITY OF	: Talbot	COUNTY	Georgia	STATE	
3	SOURCE	REFERENCE First Alabama Georg		r.l. 1075				
	SCALE	Not to Scale	DATE 0	fuly, 1975				

### **4 REQUIREMENTS**

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

- 1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
- 2. NORTH ARROW
- 3. UTM REFERENCES

INT: 3464-75