

Two years before his death, Charles Sterrett Ridgely sold Oakland for \$47,000 to Robert Oliver, a wealthy merchant from Baltimore. The estate was given to Robert's son, Thomas, to use as a summer home. At this time, the estate comprised 567 acres, about half of its original size. The Olivers purchased nearby tracts to increase the holdings to 775 acres.

The Oliver family owned Oakland for about thirteen years. George Riggs Gaither bought it in November for \$50,459.95. Gaither raised and trained a squadron of cavalry at Oakland and held the rank of major in the Maryland militia. He used Oakland as his country estate until he sold it to Mr. and Mrs. Philip Tabb in 1864.

Avid horse racing fans, the Tabbs constructed a half mile track and bred a number of famous race horses during the latter part of the nineteenth century. In 1906, the Tabb family sold Oakland, then consisting of 421 acres to John V.L. Finley. Finley, in turn, offered the property for sale in 1923, and advertised that the mansion with fifteen rooms and three baths was lighted by electricity.

Dramatic changes were made to Oakland by the next owners, Mr. and Mrs. A.H. Ryan of Washington, D.C. In the mid-1930's, the original stucco and the south porch were removed, and a terrace was created instead. A greenhouse at the east end of the house was demolished to make way for a rose garden. Interior work included a great deal of wall demolition to create a more open area.

Several more owners moved through Oakland after the Second World War before the Rouse Company acquired it in 1965. In the ensuing years, it served as the Rouse Company's first headquarters for the Columbia project, as Dag Hammerskjold College and Antioch College, and finally, as the county offices of the American Red Cross.

OAKLAND'S PORTRAITS



Mary Sterrett
(Mrs. Richard Gittings, Sr.)
1772-1847
Charles Wilson Peale, 1788

"Known as Polly, Mary Sterrett was the daughter of Captain John and Deborah Ridgely Sterrett of Baltimore. This likeness was painted in anticipation of her marriage to Richard Gittings, Senior (1763-1830), also of Baltimore, on November 20, 1788. It apparently predates the pendant of her fiancé...judging by an entry in Peale's diary for September 6, 1788, recording payment for Gittings' likeness, but noting that the frame for "Miss Sterrett's" was still to be paid for."

Courtesy of the Baltimore Museum of Art



Archibald Dobbin, Jr.
1764-1830
Joshua Johnson, 1803

"A fine example of a bust-length portrait by Joshua Johnson, one of the first free Black men in the state of Maryland. This ranks among the finest of the artist's known bust-length portraits within a trompe-l'oeil oval."

Collection of the Maryland Historical Society



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A STEP BACK IN TIME: THE HISTORY OF OAKLAND

When Jim Rouse was planning Columbia, he took special care to preserve some of Columbia's historic buildings such as Dorsey Manor, the stone house at Wilde Lake, the Barn at Oakland Mills, Oliver's Carriage House, and Oakland, one of the oldest buildings in Howard County. Rouse wanted to make sure that the people of Columbia understood that the city had roots that must be cherished and protected.

The area surrounding Oakland was originally surveyed by the Honourable John Dorsey in 1688. Before Howard County was formed, the 1100 acre tract of land known as *Felicity* was part of Upper Anne Arundel County. Two houses stood on the property, one of log and stone, and the other of log.



Mrs. John (Deborah) Sterrett, a widow, inherited the land from her father's family, the Ridgelys. When Mrs. Sterrett died, *Felicity* went to her son, Charles, who changed his surname to Ridgely in 1790 to inherit the estate from his uncle.

In 1811, then a Speaker of Maryland's House of Delegates, Charles Sterrett Ridgely constructed Oakland as a country home to supplement his town home in Baltimore. Originally built in the federal style by Abraham Lerew, a Baltimore housewright, Oakland is now a blend of the Federal, Greek Revival, and Colonial Revival periods.

HISTORIC OAKLAND SELF-GUIDED TOUR

We are delighted that you have taken time from your busy day to step back in time to Oakland, where nineteenth century elegance meets twenty-first century amenities. As you follow this self-guided tour, you can easily imagine the many events that have been held here. We hope you will enjoy your tour.



As you step into the foyer, you pass under one of the oldest and largest leaded glass fan lights in the state of Maryland. A copy is mirrored above the entrance to the ballroom. The Belgian chandeliers were added circa 1940.

Entering the ballroom, note the crystal chandeliers and sconces. The twin fireplaces in both the ballroom and foyer are typical of the high style federal mantels found in the Maryland-Tidewater region in the early 1800's.

Turn right out of the ballroom and walk down a short corridor past a coat room and into a favorite spot at Oakland...the library. The library's quiet grace makes it a retreat within a retreat. The room provides the perfect backdrop for photographs commemorating special events and our gift shop where you can find items to remember your special event. The bookshelves of Oakland are filled with volumes about Howard County and fiction of the 1800's.



Since Oakland opened its doors in October 1989, under the Columbia Association's management and since 2002 the Town Center Community Association's (TCCA) management, thousands of visitors and guests have been welcomed. Refurbished close to its original federal style, today Oakland serves as a meeting and social event center.



Oakland's gardens were designed by Charles Shaw, to reflect plantings common at the time that Oakland was built. Designated originally as a greenhouse, the renovated Bishop's Garden is located outside the east wing of Oakland.

Oakland is graciously situated in a beautiful park like setting. The landscaping features many traditional favorites such as southern magnolia, boxwood, and rhododendron which compliment the building's character.

Today, Oakland has the grace and beauty of a "Step Back in Time." A lovely site for weddings, special occasions, business meetings, and it also serves as the community center for the residents of Columbia Town Center. In this way, Oakland has been adapted for modern uses while preserving the heritage of its past.

HISTORIC OAKLAND SELF-GUIDED TOUR CONTINUED

Returning to the foyer, you will note that the twin staircases added in the late 1930's lead to an upper level room on either side. The staircase by the reception desk takes you to the Sterrett Room, named for Charles Sterrett Ridgely, the first owner of Oakland.



Walking through the upstairs hallway, you will find the Gaither Room, a men's room, women's room, and lounge. The lounge is used as a private readying room for guests of honor. At the top of the other staircase is the Ridgely Room, also named for Oakland's builder. This room contains the only original curved doorway and door, as well as a reproduction of the original mantel and the original slate surrounds.

The lower level of Oakland, reached through the interior rear staircase or two exterior doors, houses the original kitchen. It is a bright sunny room with a large non-working fireplace that was considered very modern when Oakland was built. A sophisticated "all-in-one" system, with a bain-marie to the right and bread baking component directly above it, the kitchen allowed both baking and warming to take place.

The remaining rooms on the lower level are private offices, restrooms, and a community meeting room.