UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME
HISTORIC
Oakland; Stephenson, James M., House
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION
STREET & NUMBER
1131 7th Street
CITY, TOWN
Parkersburg
STATE
West Virginia

3 CLASSIFICATION
CATEGORY
_ DISTRICT
_ BUILDING(S)
_ STRUCTURE
_ SITE
_ OBJECT
OWNERSHIP
_ PUBLIC
_ PRIVATE
_ BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION
_ IN PROCESS
_ BEING CONSIDERED
STATUS
_ OCCUPIED
_ UNOCCUPIED
_ WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
_ YES: RESTRICTED
_ YES: UNRESTRICTED
_ NO
PRESENT USE
_ AGRICULTURE
_ COMMERCIAL
_ EDUCATIONAL
_ ENTERTAINMENT
_ GOVERNMENT
_ INDUSTRIAL
_ MILITARY
_ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY
NAME
Mr. and Mrs. John Lutz
STREET & NUMBER
1131 7th Street
CITY, TOWN
Parkersburg
STATE
West Virginia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Wood County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
Court Square
CITY, TOWN
Parkersburg
STATE
West Virginia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITLE
Historic American Buildings Survey
DATE
1937, W. Va. - 46
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division
CITY, TOWN
Washington
STATE
D.C.
Oakland is the traditional name of a historic house and grounds located north of the intersection of State Route 47 and U.S. Route 50 (7th Street) in a residential section of Parkersburg, Wood County, West Virginia. The L-shaped, red brick house was built c. 1840 for James McNeil Stephenson, an attorney, banker, and landlord of early Parkersburg. It is designed in a modified Greek Revival style, and is set on a knoll in the midst of a six-acre landscaped lawn.

Oakland derives its name from the oak trees on the estate that provided timber for the wooden fixtures of the house, including the interior finish and some furniture. Dozens of oaks still flourish on the property and shade the gravel-surfaced drive that approaches the house from 7th Street. Adjacent to the driveway's oval turn-a-round at the northeast corner of the house is a grove of oaks in which a small marker is seen. Its inscription reads: "In memory of the dogs of Oakland who now sleep in this grove they loved so well". Other trees and shrubbery including rhododendron, holly, beech, elm, evergreen, and boxwood grow on the grounds. A formal flower garden, now largely neglected, is located at the northwest elevation of the house.

Greek Revival themes are dominant in the architecture of Oakland. The plain, wide entablature and single bay, one-story portico are the chief classical features. The building is otherwise devoid of exterior detailing or ornamentation. A low, rectangular cupola surmounting the building's shallow hip roof is a distantly Italianate feature, though its probable original purpose was to reflect the spirit of attic story windows often present in the frieze of Greek Revival style buildings. The rectangular cupola is encircled with a band of single-pane lights that provide natural light for the attic and interior upper stairway.

The red brick mansion is two stories high with a shallow hip roof and rectangular cupola. The standing seam tin roof is very old, and is pierced on the northeast roof elevation by a gabled dormer that provides access to the roof from the cupola. A total of six interior chimneys (four in the main block and two in the ell) rise above the roof. Oakland, though L-shaped, is essentially a "four-over-four" with center hall. The eight rooms of the block and two of the ell form a total of ten spacious rooms in the building. The house rests upon a sandstone, ashlar block foundation whose hammered finish is spalling in places. The front elevation brickwork is coursed in a Flemish bonding, while the side and rear elevations are laid in a five-course American bonding. The window openings are filled with double hung, 6/6 light sash, and are fitted at the tops and bottoms with sandstone lintels and lugsills.

Two porches of the house are notable for their detail and proportion. The front elevation single-bay portico is carried by paired, fluted wooden Doric columns. It shelters a doorway with rectangular, multi-paned transom light and...
sidelights. A doorway above the portico is designed in the same fashion. Nineteenth century metal cresting has recently been removed from the portico's roof.

A two-tier porch forms a gallery within the L at the northeast elevation of the house. The first and second levels at the northeast end of this structure were enclosed with weatherboarding c.1900. A doorway leading from the center hall landing of the interior stairway opens onto this porch.

Curiously, the first floor rooms of Oakland are fourteen feet high, while those on the second are sixteen feet high. The interior throughout, though deteriorating in part, is unchanged. A four-flight, open-well stair rises from the rear of the center hall to the cupola. The open-string stair is very delicate, is designed with two slender square spindles per tread, and features a rail of native cherry.

Fireplaces of the four first floor rooms (dining room, smoking room, two sitting rooms) have classically styled mantels and overmantels. The overmantels feature panels with ribbed borders and broken pediments. The upper floor bedrooms were appointed with simple woodwork.

Oakland is a large house by early nineteenth century Western Virginia standards; it measures fifty feet across the front and seventy-five feet along the west side, and thirty-two feet from ground to eaves. No additions and only several minor alterations have left the building and its dimensions almost intact. The enclosure of the northern half of the rear two-tier porch (c1900) and the remodeling of the kitchen in the ell (c1918), are the only important changes apparent in the building's fabric.

The interior requires some restoration work, particularly regarding ceiling plaster that is cracking and falling in places. Spalling evident in the sandstone foundation and porch floor and steps of the exterior is a significant problem. The owners, direct descendants of the first owner, express interest in the future preservation of the building.
Oakland is a well-preserved brick mansion in Parkersburg, West Virginia, whose setting, architecture and furnishings reveal much about the life style of an important Western Virginia family in the mid-nineteenth century. The house was built c. 1840 for James McNeil Stephenson, a locally prominent attorney, landholder, banker and public servant.

Oakland is an L-shaped, two-story brick residence with hipped roof and cupola. Its styling, though largely Greek Revival in spirit, reflects distant Italianate and Georgian elements. The eight principal rooms of the main unit of the house feature original hand-carved classical mantels and pedimented overmantels. An openwell, four-flight stair that is finished in native cherry rises from a centerhall that bisects the house on the first and second floors from front to rear. Materials used in the construction of Oakland were all locally produced from resources taken from the large acreage of the original estate. Roughly one-half of the furniture and paintings are from the nineteenth century. Preservation of the mansion's history and furnishings has been possible because the present owners are direct descendants of the first owner.

The history of Oakland is a capsule reference to many events associated with the growth of Parkersburg, West Virginia's second city in population throughout most of the nineteenth century. Prior to the Civil War, Oakland was surrounded by one thousand acres, though the Stephenson family holdings totaled over ten thousand acres in Wood County. The estate was actually a Western Virginia plantation farmed with the assistance of twenty slaves. Situated at the confluence of the two major roads that opened up the area (and were major East-West corridors), the Northwestern Turnpike (opened in 1838), and the Staunton and Parkersburg Turnpike (opened in 1847), Oakland witnessed much traffic, an increase in trade, the coming of the railroad, the growth of the Parkersburg city limits, the emancipation of her slaves, and West Virginia's emergence as a state during the Civil War. During the Civil War, "there was always a splendid bivouac in Stephenson's grove where transient soldiers nearly always encamped".

As Parkersburg grew, Oakland shrank. Division of the property occurred in 1877 when James M. Stephenson died. He gave the house and 111 acres to his eldest son, James, and divided the rest between his other two sons,
Kenner and Andrew. Land was subsequently sold, with all but six acres remaining. Although protected from busy U.S. Route 50 and W.V. Route 47 by lawn and trees, Oakland is visible to passing motorists and pedestrians. The house survives as one of the principal landmarks of Wood County.

James M. Stephenson (1796-1877), for whom Oakland was built, was born in Green County, Pennsylvania, and came to Parkersburg (after the family settled in other mid-Ohio Valley areas) at an early age. Parkersburg was then only a frontier settlement and so it was necessary for Stephenson, while yet only a boy, to acquire a skill to sustain him after his father died. Eventually he secured a tannery and began to study law on his own, "currying leather many times with his law book in front of him...". After passing the bar exam, Stephenson became active in community and state affairs. He represented Tyler County (where he lived for several years) for three successive terms in the Virginia House of Delegates in 1838, 1839 and 1840. For a number of years he represented Wood County in the Virginia House of Delegates. Stephenson actually declined nomination to Congress to serve as a delegate in the Virginia House of Delegates where his influence helped bring the railroad to Parkersburg. It was largely to Stephenson's credit that the Northwest branch of the B & O Railroad was built. Stephenson was also regarded as the father of the Northwestern Turnpike and was active in promotion of other internal improvements for Western Virginia, including work on the James River and Kanawha Canal. In a gathering of January 1, 1861, at Parkersburg, Stephenson attended one of the earliest Union meetings in Western Virginia "disclaiming secession of states". In the local business sector, Stephenson was one of the most successful of the early presidents of the Parkersburg National Bank (still operating today). He was married to Agnes Boreman, the sister of West Virginia's first governor, Arthur I. Boreman, of Parkersburg.

Oakland's significance is measured by its excellent state of preservation and by its surviving furnishings (including Stephenson's diary) that reflect upon the social condition of the mid-nineteenth century West. Its owner, James M. Stephenson, was more than a local gentleman; he was an important mover in the development of northwestern West Virginia.
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Heritage and Horizons. The Parkersburg Art Center, Parkersburg, West Virginia, 1972, 10-11.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY

QUADRANGLE NAME Parkersburg

UTM REFERENCE

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
A [1, 1, 7] [6, 5, 3] [1, 2, 0] [4, 3, 4, 6] [0, 6, 0]
C
D
E
F
G
H

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1, 24000

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION
The nominated property includes Oakland and its six-acre parcel (the house is approximately centered on the parcel) fronting upon 7th Street (near the intersection of Route 47 and U.S. Route 50) on the south; and is bound on the east by a property line running north.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Rodney S. Collins, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION
West Virginia Department of Culture and History

STREET & NUMBER
The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex

CITY OR TOWN
Charleston

STATE
West Virginia

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE X LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

GPO 921-803

and northwest along the rear lot lines of a commercial car dealer, and intersects with Charles Street. The boundary runs west along Charles Street to the rear lot lines of properties on the east side of Laird Avenue to the approximate center of the fourth lot, and runs southeast (adjacent to a shallow ravine) to 7th Street at a point approximately opposite the intersection of Route 47 with 7th street (see sketch map attached).