

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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| RECEIVED         | MAR 28 1979 |
| DATE ENTERED     | MAY 29 1979 |

**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

--- NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
VICINITY OF  
First  
CODE  
COUNTY  
Wood  
CODE  
107

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

| CATEGORY                                     | OWNERSHIP                                   | STATUS                                       | PRESENT USE   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED          | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE           | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH               | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS    | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE                | <b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>                   | <b>ACCESSIBLE</b>                            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT              | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS         | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED     | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT                |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED   | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED   | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT                   |
|  |   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO       | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL                   |
|  |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY                     |
|  |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM                       |
|  |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> PARK                         |
|  |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS                    |
|  |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC                   |
|  |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION               |
|  |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:                       |

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Mr. and Mrs. John Lutz

STREET & NUMBER  
1131 7th Street

CITY, TOWN  
Parkersburg

STATE  
West Virginia 26101

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Wood County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER  
Court Square

CITY, TOWN  
Parkersburg

STATE  
West Virginia 26101

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE  
1937, W. Va.-46

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

CITY, TOWN  
Washington

STATE  
D.C.

# 7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION                                |                                       | CHECK ONE                                   | CHECK ONE   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT       | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR            | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED    |   |   |

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

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 landholder 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

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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 (c.1900) and the remodeling of the kitchen in the ell (c.1918), 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.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD  | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW |  |   |  |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC          | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC  | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING                | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC     | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION                      | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW                    | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS                         | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION                         | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY               | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> ART                     | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING                       | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                  | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900-                | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY                          | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT    | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)           |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION                         |   |  |

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1840

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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,

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Gibbens, Alvaro J. and Geo. W. Atkinson. Prominent Men of West Virginia. Wheeling, W. Va.: W.L. Callin, 1890, pp. 444-49.

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

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 6

QUADRANGLE NAME Parkersburg

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1,24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,7 4,5,3 1,2,0 4,3 4,6 0,6,0

B                              

C                              

D                              

E                              

F                              

G                              

H                              

### 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

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

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|       |      |        |      |
|       |      |        |      |

running north

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Rodney S. Collins, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

West Virginia Department of Culture and History

DATE

January 8, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex

TELEPHONE

304-348-0240

CITY OR TOWN

Charleston

STATE

West Virginia

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE

LOCAL

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

*Clarence Alloran*

3/26/79

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*William L. Brown*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

May 29, 1979

ATTEST

*Christine Jane Saxe*  
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION  
Regional Review Coordinator

DATE

5-29-79

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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.

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Miller, Thomas Condit and Hu Maxwell. West Virginia and Its People, Vol. 3, New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1913, pp. 1218-21.

West Virginia, A Guide to the Mountain State. American Guide Series, New York: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 266.

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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).