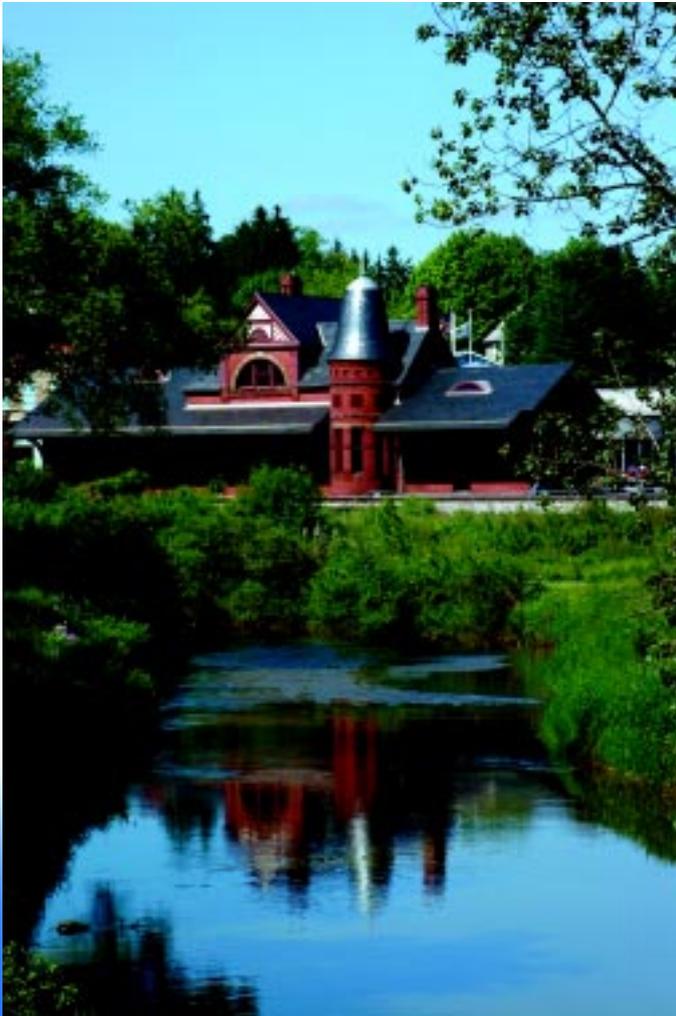


Oakland: The Little Town That Can!

written by: Titos Menchaca
photography by: Lance C. Bell



The newly remodeled Oakland Train Station and gift shop is open to visitors — call 301-334-2691 for hours/info.

*I*t seems more and more these days, people want to return to a simpler, safer, quieter way of life. And while no one can remain unaffected by the changes in these uncertain times, still there are pockets of tranquillity where we can go to rest... to let our guard down... to just breathe!

Far from the maddening big-city crowds, at the southern end of Garrett County in western Maryland, lies just such a place — the small but not-so-sleepy little town of Oakland. Its motto is “A Great Small Town”, and it holds true for many reasons, beginning with the peaceful, friendly attitude of its people — a reflection of the town’s mayor, Asa McCain, Jr.

“There’s a calm that comes over you from just being in these mountains,” he says from his courthouse office. “Maybe it’s the pine trees... the clean air. Or just the combination of different visual images.” Images from a bygone era. Sidewalked streets lined with old-growth oak trees in front of well-kept houses. Comfortable, modern structures sitting next to stately Victorian homes on whose porches family and friends might gather to talk, laugh and enjoy October’s Autumn Glory parade or in whose kitchens a church group might prepare a meal for an upcoming charity event. This is a place where community matters.





Shopping and old-fashioned service are but a few of the highlights of Oakland

Indeed, you'll quickly lose count of the number of "hellos" and friendly waves you get as you stroll down Alder Street in the center of town. You may stop to have a bite at a the family-owned Towne Restaurant before humoring your sweet tooth with an ice cream float from the old-fashioned soda fountain just down the street in the back of Englander's. Next, why not burn off those calories by indulging in one of Oakland's newest passions — antique-ing? Aside from the Alder Haus and the aforementioned Englander's, you might breeze into any of the many smaller shops on

Second Street to discover a corner of the building dedicated to rare or unusual finds which change constantly.

"I think we have a very unique and diverse retail environment here," says mayor McCain. "We've got not only the antiques but the Amish-made baked goods, jams, jellies and herbal remedies at the farmer's market as well as the Garrett County Arts Council gallery which features work by local artists." In fact, over 100 artists display their work there in every imaginable medium; from oil on canvas to jewelry, iron sculpture, paper mache and more.





Outside the Historical Society's new Museum is a replica of the old Deer Park Hotel and gazebo, lined by brick walks. The bricks are engraved with contributor's names and are part of a continuous 3-mile trail around the Oakland area.

If the auditory arts are more to your liking, perhaps you'll want to time your visit to Oakland to coincide with the Little Yough Summer Music Festival which runs late June through early August. To enjoy an eclectic mix of folk, rock and blues by such names as former *Lovin' Spoonful* frontman and harmonica virtuoso John Sebastian and the Emmy- and Clio Award winning Steve Chapin and his band (including "Big John" Wallace on bass), just bring a lawn chair and savor the free concerts presented every Friday night during the festival at the Mountain Fresh Pavilion — just on the edge of town amid the pine trees, fresh air and family atmosphere. Save Saturday night for reservations at the Our Town Theatre on Center Street, where local and imported talent are represented.



The town clock and brick paved walks are all part of the charm of Oakland and provide scenic, easy access to shopping. The Town Theatre and the pavilion are both centers of entertainment.



John Grant, Curator of the new Museum stands beside a working replica steam engine donated to the museum. John is an historian and expert on Garrett County history.

Once a favorite vacation destination for such luminaries as Albert Einstein and more than one US president who rode the train up from Washington D.C., the area saw hard times as railway travel gave way to the auto. However, since the mid 1950's, it has enjoyed a revitalization. As an *homage* to those times, the town of Oakland — along with local civic and business groups — has recently undertaken the erecting and restoring the upper level of the old Deer Park Hotel (including the dismantling/re-assembling of

The Farmers Market is seasonal, but antique-ing is year round. Many of the shops are not necessarily antique shops but have antiques in them for sale. Parking is ample and there is a public rest facility at the parking lot. Fall is a great time of year to visit Oakland—the Autumn Glory Festival is one of the biggest and best in the area.



Englander's old-fashioned soda fountain and lunch counter feature milk shakes like you haven't seen in a long time.



The Oakland Court House, right, is as beautiful as it is unique. Inside the court room (above photo), is round and on tiers like an amphitheater (referred to as "the pit"). It is the only one of its kind in Maryland. In the court room the jury faces the judge. When there is a trial without a jury, the witness faces the judge as shown above.



the underground gas cave to light it) and the projected restoration of the magnificent "Queen Anne"-style Oakland Railroad Station, both in the heart of downtown. Built in 1885 by the B&O Railroad from a design by Francis Baldwin, the railroad station also marks the beginning of a 3-mile walking/bike trail that follows an old Indian path through the woods and around part of the trout-stocked Little Youghioghney River.

Quiet streets, clean air, free concerts, unique shopping, live theater, engaging history and friendly people... Oakland truly is a Great Small Town!



The new Oakland Veterans Park is adjacent to the Court House. It features a beautiful water fountain, flags and benches in a circle.

