

History of the Site

In 1694 the first land patents were recorded on the tract of land where Strathmore is currently located. Little is known of the early ownership and usage of the land until the early 1800s, when a turnpike, completed in 1823, connected Georgetown with points northwest, terminating at Frederick Town. The Rockville and Georgetown Pike, as the turnpike was known, was a toll road. One of the tollgates was placed near the intersection of the turnpike and New Port Mill Road (Strathmore Avenue). At this location, as shown by an 1878 map, Frank Ball operated a stagecoach station and a blacksmith shop on his farm, no doubt taking advantage of the constant traffic to and from Georgetown.



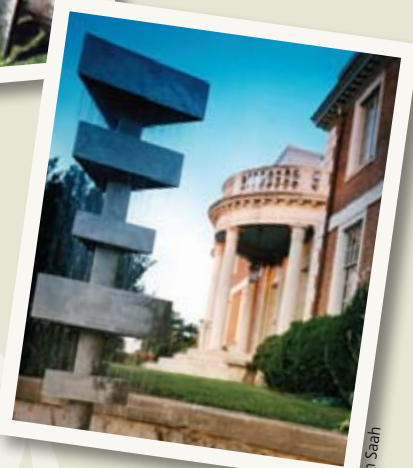
A view of the Mansion from what used to be its front entrance; this columned entry now serves as the rear entrance.



The Mansion at Strathmore History & Architecture



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Mansion at Strathmore

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The Oyster Years

On August 14, 1899, prominent Washingtonian Captain James Frederick Oyster and his wife, the former Emma Jane Detweiler, purchased The New Port Mill Tract and some time thereafter, on the highest promontory on the tract, began excavating the white quartzite rocks that form the foundation of the mansion we see today.

Working under the guidance of architect Appleton P. Clark, Jr., the Oyster's nine-bedroom summer home was constructed in a Colonial Revival style, featuring the formal south portico and a thirty-foot wide hall that ran the entire breadth of the house. A *Washington Evening Star* article on September 6, 1902 called the country home "one of the handsomest summer homes near Washington," and "a conspicuous ornament to the landscape in the vicinity of Kensington and Garrett Park."

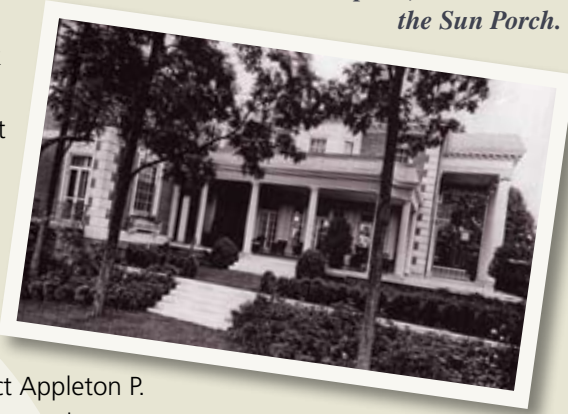
The Corby Years

The Oysters and their three children enjoyed their summer residence until August 1908, when they sold the house and 99 acres to Charles I. Corby and his wife, Hattie. At the time he purchased the mansion, Charles Corby, working together with his brother William, had patented machinery and techniques that would revolutionize the baking industry. Corby Brothers Bakery, located on 12th Street in Washington, D.C., was later sold to Continental Baking Company, makers of Wonder Bread.

Charles & Hattie Corby



The West Entrance of the Mansion showing an outdoor patio, which is now the Sun Porch.



The Corby's also enjoyed the house as a summer retreat until 1912, when they contracted Charles Barton Keen to make extensive modifications and additions to the original house. In 1914, the mansion, newly wrapped in its brick English Georgian façade, with a pleasant mix of Federal Period elements, became the permanent residence of the Corby family.

Through the years, the Corby's acquired adjoining parcels of land until the mansion was surrounded by 2,560 acres, comprising those areas now occupied by Garrett Park Estates, Grosvenor Condominiums, Grosvenor-Strathmore Metro Station, and Holy Cross Academy. The Mansion and property, known to local residents as the "Corby Farm," was a modern, fully operational dairy farm, complete with no less than 22 barns, stables, and outbuildings—as well as the largest greenhouse complex in the area and a private golf course.

After Charles Corby's death in 1926, Hattie Corby remained in the residence until her death in October 1941. Persistent rumors suggest that during the period between late 1941 and 1944 the mansion was used by Manuel L. Quezon, President of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, for use as a residence and temporary governmental headquarters during World War II. As interesting as this story may be, no firm evidence of this occupation has been substantiated.



The Music Room of the Corby Mansion, showing the original organ.

A School and an Office

Land records show that on July 23, 1943 two parcels of the original Corby estate, including the mansion, were conveyed to St. Mary's Academy. The Academy's sisters purchased the mansion fully furnished, even down to the china tableware. Evidently, the only furnishing the Corby family retained was their silver service.

The period between 1945 and 1946 was a busy one for the sisters as they removed the household furnishings and converted the house into a convent and school, which they named Saint Angela Hall. And so it remained until April 1977, when the sisters, having completed a new academy and residence nearby, sold the mansion and remaining 30 acres to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) for use as its headquarters.

Becoming Strathmore

In 1979, ASHA relinquished the mansion and ten acres of land to Montgomery County, Maryland. Shortly thereafter, the house was renamed Strathmore and an agreement was made with the newly created 501 (c)(3) non-profit Strathmore Hall Foundation, Incorporated to develop the mansion and grounds as Montgomery County's first center for the arts.

After major restoration of the facility, including professional interior design from 1981 when the Mansion was used as the site for the National Symphony Orchestra Decorators' Show House, The Mansion at Strathmore opened its doors to the public as an arts center on June 21, 1983. Its first art exhibition was the Montgomery County Juried Art Show.

The Music Room in the late '70s as the ASHA offices.



Strathmore Transforms into a Campus for the Arts

In 1988 Strathmore opened the Gudelsky Concert Gazebo, an outdoor space for music. The classically-styled, six-column, copper-roofed structure, was dedicated on Strathmore's fifth anniversary. The University of Maryland School of Architecture and the Potomac Chapter of the American Institute of Architects held a design competition, which provided Strathmore with the architectural drawings. Local merchants helped supply materials; the Montgomery County Conservation Corps helped with landscaping; and Natelli Associates installed the stone paving as a gift.

In the fall of 1996, the Mansion closed for a \$3.2 million renovation, which would add 30% more space to the building and create the new, state-of-the-art four-room Gudelsky Gallery Suite. The new four-story wing also housed the Lockheed Martin Conference Room, the expanded Gift Shop, and new administrative offices. Outside, the façade was improved, and the Strathmore Sculpture Garden was created, siting sculptures along a path winding through 11 acres of landscaped grounds. The renovations, designed by architect Quinn/Evans to match the Mansion's Georgian architecture, were completed in 1997.

In February 2005, Strathmore opened the Music Center at Strathmore, a 1,976-seat Concert Hall and Music Education Center, down the hill from the Mansion, becoming a comprehensive arts campus for the region.

Today, Strathmore attracts visitors from Montgomery County and the Washington metropolitan area, as well as from all over the U.S. and the world, to its varied exhibitions of art, its musical performances, and still lovely setting on Captain Oyster's hill.

Visit www.strathmore.org to learn more about the History of Music and Fine Art at Strathmore, to become a member of Strathmore and to learn about our many other programs and performances in art, music, dance and education.