

BA-51
Ulm (Samuel Owings House), site
100 Painters Mill Road
Owings Mills

c. 1767

Several mysteries surround the home of Samuel Owings II (1733-1803). It was a large brick house called "Ulm," an acronym meaning "Upper, Lower, and Middle" for the three merchant mills that provided Owings' major income. The third mill was not constructed until about 1793, thus the name would have been meaningless until then. Date of construction has been estimated at 1767, based on the time of Owings' marriage to Deborah Lynch. Twelve children would have made space imperative for the family. No mention of an Owings Mill has been found earlier than an advertisement in the Maryland Journal of February 27, 1781. Presumably, the lower mill, the one located directly in front of the mansion, would have come first, but Dennis Griffith's 1795 map of Maryland and Delaware showed only the one directly on Reisterstown Turnpike, the Middle Mill as it was later called. At first glance, the house looks Georgian, but with its six-bay width, it lacks a balanced design, and the three western bays (left) have a lower roof ridge and are really an appendage half the depth of the main block. Forman pointed out the modillion cornice (one decorated with a row of small brackets) and a "wall of Troy bed-mold," that is, a row of projecting bricks under the cornice itself. The house stands on a tract called Timbered Level. The 1798 tax list of Soldiers Delight Hundred showed three mills in existence and the two-story dwelling on Timbered Level owned and occupied by Samuel Owings was 40 by 40 feet with an addition of brick 20 by 20, plus a brick kitchen 30 by 26. The first known photograph appeared in the 1898 book The Garrison Church. Later studies and photographs were done in the 1930s by H. Chandlee Forman, Frances Benjamin Johnston, and the Historic American Buildings Survey.

Samuel Owings II was both a miller and farmer, but also served as a full colonel in the county militia during the Revolution and acted as vestryman at St. Thomas' Church. The lower mill and the brick mansion were acquired by William Painter in 1844 and the property remained in his family until 1944. The Painters were manufacturing ice cream at least as far back as the Civil War period. The house stood vacant from 1966 to 1973 during the development of Painter's Mill Industrial Park; it was then superbly restored by a partnership of Dr. David I. Miller and Francis E. Kennedy, converted to a restaurant. Architect was Calvin Kolb Kobasa, A.I.A. The restaurant operators have used a number of names, starting with "Samuel Owings--1767," "Maud's," "Le Petit Gourmet," and currently "Country Fare Inn." The only significant difference between the 1898 photograph and the present appearance is the loss of the dormers due to a roof fire during the Painter family tenure--they were missing in Forman's pre-1934 photograph. A small, white, one-room plantation office that stood just west of the main house is also gone. The lower mill, last used as a cattle barn, perished in the mid-1950s. (Clemens and Clemens, 1974, pp. 13-14. Forman, 1934, p. 111)

Ulm is a large, two-story brick house that presents a six-bay 60-foot wide facade, although it is composed of two distinct blocks. It dates from the Georgian period, although six bays do not permit a balanced design. The house once had three dormer windows with triangular pediments, but they were removed after the attic fire during the ownership of the Painter family. The dormers appear in a pre-1898 photo in The Garrison Church.

The main block is four bays deep (40 feet) and the gable ends contain two full-sized double-hung sash windows. The main block also has wide flush chimneys. The west wing is not quite as deep as the main block, measuring only twenty feet, in old records. The kitchen wing at the northeast corner of the house is 1 1/2 stories of brick in the tidewater style, three bays long; it measured 26 x 30 in 1798. On the west end is a small, one-story wing used as the Painter office.

A broad, one-story, hip-roofed, and metal-covered front porch runs across the full six-bay front of the house, its roof supported by square wooden posts, the cornice decorated with brackets.

Ulm was one of the first Baltimore County houses to attract the attention of Easton architectural writer, H. Chandlee Forman, who may have over-estimated the date (pushing it back before 1734) but made the following points:

ULM, over two hundred years old, was a self-contained plantation with a brick mansion, two Colonial stables of excellent design, a tenant house with great stone chimney rising to the second floor level where it changes to brick, a spring house with the ancient slats crossing each other to form a screen at the windows, and other outbuildings. The ULM mansion has a modillion cornice with a Wall-of-Troy bed mould; a double chimney with vertical trap door between; a great stone fireplace in the Kitchen and a man Hallway with a secondary stair Hall behind. [The term "modillion" suggests a cantilevered cornice, one supported by brackets; the "bed moulding" is a row of projecting bricks right under the cornice.]

Forman provided other analysis in a photo caption:

The entrance at ULM is by an English-style gateway set in a brick wall with rounded brick top, now covered with ivy. Although unsymmetrical, the facade has a break on the front like that of "Kingston Hall" in Somerset County. The outbuildings of "Ulm" are extensive, there being two colonial barns of excellent proportions, a tenant house with a great stone chimney, a milk house, and a spring house with slats across the windows.

Ulm's small west wing was a plantation office. The various structures were apparently in a cluster and there was a fairly narrow space between the mill and the dwelling for Painter's Mill Road before the laying out of the industrial

park. According to Rowland Fox, a native of Owings Mills, the mill site was north of the present Painters Mill Road (as relocated) and more or less face to face with the mansion.

Ulm now survives in the midst of intense development but handsomely refurbished. It still retained most of the outward features of a dwelling when restoration work started. The Clements' paper was written while the work was in progress and various structural features open for inspection:

Care has been taken in the restoration and rebuilding to preserve the beautiful brick walls, both exterior and interior, which were still in excellent condition in 1973. Dividing walls between the rooms have been left exposed in several places, especially the unusually high arched doorways. The original beams and pegged wood construction is also visible in two places. The huge fireplace in Samuel Owings' kitchen, now the brick-floored dining room, is the original; needing only minor repair work after two centuries.

[The above is an excerpt from: Architectural History of Baltimore County, by John McGrain and Ruth Mascari.]

In June, 1995, the Baltimore Sun announced that the house had made the Baltimore County Landmarks list, a development which was hoped would delay plans to move the house and build offices on the site. The inclusion in the list was preliminary, however, and had yet to be confirmed by the County Council. At the time, the building was used as the Fiori Restaurant and Wine Cellar Pub, run by Richard Pirone. The owners (Painter's Mill Associates, No. 1) wished to move the building to an undisclosed location and build a nine-story, \$20 million office tower on the site, at Dolfield and Painters Mill Roads. On July 10, the Fiori Restaurant closed. On July 18, it was disclosed that the owners wished to move the house to a 7-acre rustic site in Reisterstown, in the Valley of David section of Nicodemus Road, to become a private home. It would be restored and become the home of Dr. David Miller, one of the owners.

In November, however, the owners' latest proposal was simply to demolish the building. At the same time, the owners of Henry and Jeff's, a Baltimore restaurant, signed a contract to buy the bankrupt Fiori restaurant at the Owings house, assuming the remaining eight years of its lease. Their intent was to open it as a second Henry and Jeff's. The building's owners anticipated the necessity of having to convince the County Council to let them demolish the building, rather than confirm it in the Landmarks list.

By February 15, 1996, the plan was once again to move the building, which preservationists feared would not withstand dismantling. The project's developer, Howard S. Brown, made an agreement with County Executive C.A. "Dutch" Ruppensberger III. Ruppensberger had chosen not to submit the recommendation to the County Council that the house be protected, insisting that the economic development benefits of the office tower were more important

to the county. In February, a real estate broker was negotiating with a prospective buyer, who would have the home moved to a 50-acre parcel near Garrison Forest and Caves Roads. The owners of Henry and Jeff's had decided not to use the building, when the renovation estimates rose to over \$200,000. They then decided to lease space in the office tower for a new restaurant.

A week after this news, a minor scandal erupted with the news that Howard S. Brown, the project's developer, was now raising money for Ruppertsberger's re-election campaign, selling tickets to a fund-raiser. The next day, an attempt to block the restaurant, Henry and Jeff's, from moving their prospective site to the office tower was defeated in court, despite the Judge's apparent disapproval of the idea of dismantling the building. The next day, February 24th, the owners received a permit to dismantle and move the building. On February 25th, problems blocking a gas line delayed the demolition. Preservationists at the time said that even rebuilding the house at a different location would not preserve its historic significance. Architect Jeffery A. Lees, who sits on the Baltimore County Landmarks Preservation Commission, was quoted as saying, "It will have been totally eviscerated at that point. It will not be the same house. It will be a new house with the same bricks." The article of that date noted that the two-story Georgian house was built with the Flemish bond brick pattern. Julius W. Lichter, the lawyer for the developer, claimed that the house had been so renovated that the bricks themselves were the only thing original about the building, and that, "The building, as it now stands, is not a historic building."

On February 28, demolition began with modern additions. Demolition was completed on March 1. The house was bulldozed hours before a judge was scheduled to consider a last-ditch attempt to halt the project. No attempt was made to dismantle the house carefully, numbering the bricks for reassembly. And it was clear that no effort was made to ensure that the house would be authentically restored. No preservationists were consulted about the method of demolition, which was termed "barbaric" by Councilman T. Bryan McIntyre, who represents the district.

On March 19, County Executive Ruppertsberger announced that, prompted by his unhappiness with the way the house was demolished, he will assemble a committee to ensure that it is rebuilt. In late April, Ruppertsberger reiterated his position that he and Councilman McIntyre thought they had an agreement with Howard Brown to have the building moved "the proper way." Ruppertsberger said the developer would have built around the house had it not been moved. In June, however, Brown said in an interview that he still intended to rebuild the house, whose bricks were in storage, though he was frustrated with the pressure from preservationists.

On August 13, a letter to the editor of the Baltimore Sun mentioned that Ruppertsberger had appointed new members and fired the old members of the Baltimore County Landmarks Commission. The new members for the most part did not fulfill the requirement to have knowledge of historic preservation as a component of their education or experience.

In September the developers received a building permit to proceed with the construction of the office block. The permit had been suspended in August after a project engineer deleted language pertaining to historic preservation from the project's formal plans. In September, county officials approved a 'refinement' to allow the language to be deleted from the project's official plat.

Preservationists complained that county officials should do more to require Brown to keep his promise to rebuild the house. Ruth B. Mascari, chairwoman of the county's Landmarks Preservation Commission, said the commission should play a role in the reconstruction of the house--a suggestion Brown rejected. It was decided by the county's Development Review Committee that the note attached to the plans saying that the house was on the preliminary landmarks list should be removed, and that this removal was a "minor refinement" rather than a major change, which would have required a full-scale review.

Finally, in October, developer Howard Brown announced plans to rebuild the house, whose bricks had been stored in dumpsters for the past eight months, near the future site of a Jewish day school in Owings Mills, within a mile of the house's original site. Construction was expected to begin in late summer, 1998.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND PHOTOGRAPHS MAY BE ADDED ON SHEET OF SAME SIZE

<p>1. STATE Maryland COUNTY Baltimore TOWN Owings Mills VICINITY STREET NO. Painters Mill Road, 1/4 mile west of Reisterstown Road (U.S. Rt. 140) ORIGINAL OWNER Samuel Owings ORIGINAL USE dwelling PRESENT OWNER Owings Mills Industrial Park PRESENT USE vacant WALL CONSTRUCTION brick NO. OF STORIES 2 1/2</p>	<p>HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY INVENTORY BA-51</p>
<p>2. NAME "ULM" DATE OR PERIOD c. 1760 STYLE Georgian ARCHITECT BUILDER</p>	<p>3. FOR LIBRARY OF CONGRESS USE</p>
<p>4. NOTABLE FEATURES, HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND DESCRIPTION OPEN TO PUBLIC no</p> <p style="text-indent: 40px;">Ulm is a very large Georgian brick structure, six bays long and four bays deep with one story wings on the north and west sides of the building. The walls are laid in Flemish bond and are structurally sound. The two center bays are located on an area projecting about four to six inches from the plane of the main wall. A large and fine modillion cornice crowns the otherwise stark brick wall. The roof over the two westernmost bays covers the depth of only one room and is thus lower than the rest of the roof, which covers a depth of two rooms. Huge chimneys are located on the gables of the latter portion of the building. Most of the sash and snuffers have been broken or removed. A recent one story porch covers the entire facade and two recent dormers light the attic rooms on the north side of the house.</p> <p style="text-indent: 40px;">Most of the interior is structurally sound but the mantels and portions of the woodwork have been removed or vandalized. The lower portion of the delicate stair has been badly vandalized but enough remains for an accurate restoration. On the first floor are five large rooms plus the two one story wings, already mentioned. From the appearance of the interior, the home was remodeled in the 20th century and appears to have been a very comfortable home.</p>	
<p>5. PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE Endangered yes Interior poor Exterior poor</p>	
<p>6. LOCATION MAP (Plan Optional)</p>	<p>7. PHOTOGRAPH</p>
<p>8. PUBLISHED SOURCES (Author, Title, Pages) INTERVIEWS, RECORDS, PHOTOS, ETC.</p> <p>Forman, H.C., Early Manor and Plantation Houses of Maryland, 1934, privately printed, P. 107, 111.</p>	<p>9. NAME, ADDRESS AND TITLE OF RECORDER</p> <p>Michael Bourne Maryland Historical Trust</p> <p>DATE OF RECORD July 31, 1968</p>



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ULM

(SAMUEL OWINGS HOUSE)

ULM, BALTIMORE CO.



TBA-51

Ulm (Samuel Owings
House)

ULM, BALTIMORE CO