

The Churches of Broadway—II St. Patrick's, Still Immigrants' Haven

By Tamara Nelson-Faulstich

In the early days of Fell's Point, most of its souls were immigrants and many were French and Irish, devout Roman Catholics who wanted a place to practice their faith. Thus began Saint Patrick's Parish 213 years ago in a house at Bond and Fleet Streets. It is the oldest parish in the Baltimore Archdiocese.

The stately stone church now at 321 South Broadway is the fifth St. Patrick's structure. An excited crowd of Fell's Pointers dedicated it in 1898. St. Patrick's and the neighborhood have both seen a lot of changes, but the church's dedication to immigrants remains.

The parish is now part of the Catholic Community of St. Michael and St. Patrick. Deacon Richard Novak explained that the churches twinned after both suffered dwindling attendance in the 1990s. St. Michael's is nearby at the corner of Wolfe and Lombard Streets. Both have transformed into spiritual homes for the area's Hispanic community.

The jovial Novak came as a student in 1939 to the school of what was a primarily Polish-speaking parish in 1939. He has been a deacon since 1977. Perusing a history of the church published for its 1992 bicentennial, he recalled his days at the school founded in 1815, one of the first parochial schools in the country. As with many other urban Catholic schools, St. Patrick's closed in 1987 for lack of enrollment.

August 16, 1983, became a trying day in St. Patrick's history, when painter's propane torch started a fire that destroyed the roof and five stained-glass windows as smoke damaged the sanctuary. Through efforts of a devoted parish, the church was restored by 1986. It accordingly caught the eye of Hollywood last year, used by "firefighters" Joaquin Phoenix and John Travolta in the Baltimore-based "Ladder 49" film. Look for Deacon Novak in the baptism scene!

This St. Patrick's Day found the spirit of the patron saint of Ireland still sprightly at the corner of Broadway and Bank. With the Redemptorists at the helm, weekend masses are held Saturdays at 5:30PM in English, and a mass in English and Spanish is on Sundays at 8:30AM. The social outreach program can be found at neighboring Assisi House under the direction of Jeanne Velez.

How did the first parishioner's decide on making St. Patrick their namesake. The obvious assumption is that they were Irish, but two other schools of thought are detailed in the bicentennial publication. One is that the French named the parish. They outnumbered the Irish then, but apparently shared a fondness for St. Pat, who they believed to be a native of Gaul. The other speculation is found in a 1791 newspaper report in the Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser, proving this festive neighborhood hasn't changed much. According to the article, during a St. Patrick's Day celebration the good saint made a "personal appearance."

While St. Patrick's may not have the number of parishioners it used to, newer members of the community have found a home within its doors, as well as at St. Michaels. Deacon Novak estimates there are about 815 between the two, more than 700 from the neighborhoods largely Mexican or Central American Hispanic community. About 40 people take part in the Saturday evening mass, with 50 to 60 on Sunday.



Photo by Michael Arida

St. Patrick's looms over a parish forever in flux.

A Modest Turnout Hears of Turns in Pier Hotel Project

At the first public meeting since the city chose a developer to redevelop Recreation Pier, about 45 people gathered on March 16 to hear leaders of Pier Hotel LLC describe an evolving project in which cost estimates to shore up the 1914 landmark have risen as has the number of proposed boutique hotel rooms—the latter to 176 from 145.

The team including local developer J.J. Clarke, HRI of New Orleans and the Kimpton hotel group is seeking \$3 million in state historic credits and \$4 million in federal funds to pay for up to 10 months of pile driving on the deteriorated east side of the pier. The Fell's Point Task Force committee consulting with the developers arranged the session at the Polish Home Club after the Task Force endorsed the application for credits.

Among new details noted:

* The street-level pier is to have 28 parking spaces, all but three of them accommodate Morgan Tug lease requirements. Although the tugs are to remain, they will dock elsewhere during much of the construction phase. A Water Taxi stop at the end of the pier is deemed untenable because of the potential for interference with the tugs.

* Negotiations continue for dockage of the *Pride of Baltimore II* but the favored spot, near Thames Street on the east side, is said to be too shallow. What is assured, say the hoteliers, is that visiting boaters will be able to pull up to the pier for lodging. Valet parking for drive-up customers is to be at the new city garage on Fleet and Eden Streets.

* A third floor of rooms will protrude through the upper deck but will be set back for a surrounding 16-foot public promenade.

Work could begin by fall, with completion anticipated in 2008.

Happenings

Kraft Bills Encourage A More Accessible City

City Councilman Jim Kraft introduced bills to require the Planning Commission and the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals to have at least one meeting per month that begins at 6PM rather than at the usual earlier workday hours so that affected residents can attend without job or sitter conflicts. Kraft, recently elected to represent southeast Baltimore, said he responded to complaints of residents and he encouraged them to make their support for the bills known to Council members.

Patterson Park Recruiting: The Tree Team of the Friends of Patterson Park will be planting 50 trees on April 23 if enough volunteers turn out at the White House, 27 S. Patterson Park Avenue at 10AM. Indeed, the Tree Team will dig in on the fourth Saturday of each month from April to October to mulch, take, water and inventory as well as plant trees.

A Boat Lake Team will remove trash, identify invasive plants or educate visitors to the lake; a Pagoda Team will help maintain the tower and greet visitors; and a Detail Detail is to garden, paint benches and edge sidewalks. Perks from donuts to parties. Contact Lesley Gardiner at 410.276.3676 or leley@patterson-park.com

House Tour May 8: The Preservation Society's 34th annual Historic Harbor House Tour of Fell's Point will be held on Mothers' Day, May 8, from 11AM until 5PM, with tickets available at the Visitor Center, 808 S. Ann St., and Long & Foster Realtors, 701 S. Broadway. Tickets are \$12 in advance and \$15 on the day. Four perennial favorites plus eight other sites will be open, including two styles of residences in the recently constructed housing on S. Bond and Thames Sts. near the water.

Water Taxi: The now single fleet of Water Taxis under Cameron Kane signed a seven-year agreement with the city for provision of services that will include early-hour commuter service stopping in Canton, Fell's Point, Tide Point and the Inner Harbor. Sparse winter service gave way April 1 to runs about every 15 minutes from 10AM to 8PM Sunday through Thursday and until midnight on Friday and Saturday.

Commuter runs start at 7AM and run till the regular service starts. The shuttle to Tide Point ended March 31. The base fee is \$8 with annual passes still available for \$50.

Bob Keith, the Salt of Bond Street, Looks Anew at Harbor

The Fell's Pointer asked local author Bob Keith to tell what's new about the revised edition of his Baltimore Harbor book, just published. by Johns Hopkins University Press:

When I brought out the first edition of Baltimore Harbor in 1982, I could marvel at the banks of rail cars parked in front of my home on Bond Street, lined up to discharge their mysterious contents at Allied Chemical's busy Baltimore Chrome Works around the corner—on the site where we now ice skate and enjoy the visits of Cirque du Soleil while awaiting the ultimate transformation of the true “point” of Fell's Point.

A half block down Bond Street, on the waterfront, the brick and timber Terminal Warehouse, and it's intriguing neighbor, the so-called zig-zag building, stood sturdy but empty in 1982, oblivious to the fate that would befall them (I use that expression literally) once they caught the eye of the unregulated real estate arm of the Baltimore Gas & Electric Co. and became BGE stockholders' property.

A more spectacular demise awaited the nearby Atlantic Lumber Co. This building was stuffed to the rafters with priceless seasoned planking when the big fire came. It was but one of a succession of traumatic burnings that beset the neighborhood over the last 22 years, including the gutting of the magnificent warehouses at Chase's and Henderson's Wharves.

The demolitions and burnings narrowed or severely challenged the Fell's Point footprint. The quest to preserve what remains is a story of give and take among developers, city planners and community leaders that

continues to unfold.

To the east, the Boston Street waterfront was pretty shabby in 1982. As in Fell's Point, houses were in disrepair in the wake of the road fight. The canning industry was gone but the nondescript buildings that housed it remained. American Can was a deserted industrial complex that had seen its day. Tugs and barges moved in and out of decrepit piers on land that now serves as a popular waterfront park with a sweeping view of Fort McHenry.

The relentless development along the Southeast waterfront over the last two decades, along with similar changes in the shore profiles in Federal Hill and Locust Point, and the waxing and waning of tourism in the Inner Harbor, provide much fodder for the new edition of the book. Controversial developments at the mouth of Jones Falls (think hotel) necessitated a new chapter. Substantial changes have come to the commercial port in recent years, most to the good, and these are covered in the revised edition. The African-American contribution to the port has gained much recognition—including Living Classrooms Foundation's current creation of a new waterfront park and marine railway at the foot of Thames Street dedicated to Frederick Douglass and Isaac Myers—and this is chronicled as well. The many positive aspects of all these changes made the revision fun to do.

Baltimore Harbor, A Pictorial History, third edition, is on sale at the Ann Street Visitor Center and the Maritime Museum on Thames Street; 240 pages, 216 halftones, 13 line drawings, \$24.95.



Photo by Lew Diuguid

Dredgers shape up the channel in front of Tide Point. At the grain pier, changes are underway

An Eyeful for Channel Gazers

Usually a slow month on the waterfront, March offered a veritable torment of daily activity as a giant dredge, a lesser one, and accompanying silt-bearing barges cleared the shipping channel running to the Inner Harbor and a turn around basin between Fell's and Locust Points. Frank Hamons of the Maryland Port Administrations Harbor Development team said the dredging is part of year-round maintenance that usually finds the heavy equipment working farther at bay. The last actual deepening of the channel was in 1990, he said. The Army Corps of Engineers let the current contract with a Great Lakes dredger for about \$6.2 million, with the silt going to build up Hart-Miller Island near Back River in Baltimore County. Accompanying the waterborne clatter of cranes was that of another, on land at the grain pier in Locust Point. Swinging a major medicine ball, it demolished a four-story ancillary build-

ing to the abandoned grain silos tower—which is to be reborn as a tower of condos, with view. The actual grain pier, also abandoned after damage in a storm three years

How Green Is My Alley--Possibilities Multiply

Determined walkers, including thieves, the simply curious and scurrying rats, soon discover a little noted attribute of Fell's Point: its often haphazard grid of mini-alleys that run within more or less square blocks of row houses. Most are too narrow for any vehicles, let alone trash trucks, yet wide enough for refuse to collect between the yard fences. Residents backing up to these cement pathways often cite them as a main security concern and want locked gates at their entries. The City generally discouraged that, but help is coming.

Delegate Pete Hammen, who heads the Fell's Point Task Force of community groups, authored legislation in Annapolis enabling jurisdictions in effect to lease

inner alleys to surrounding owners who agree on their greening or other reuse. An accompanying ordinance is now before City Council. One hope is that the runoff-inducing concrete can be replaced by swaths of grass, trees, maybe even a neighborly barbecue grill. The Bay will benefit, too. Locked gates are a possibility

At a recent Task Force meeting, Kate Herrod of Community Greens described her group's wish to work with groups interested in greening their environs. It is supported by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The website is www.communitygreens.org and she is reachable at 703.527.8300 x255 or info@communitygreens.org

Schedules

Trash

Place trash outside in cans or, after 6AM on collection day, in plastic bags. Mondays and Thursdays but no holidays.

Recycling

Place outside by 7AM on collection day. Glass, metal and plastic in blue plastic bags. Mondays, April; 11, 25.

Paper and cardboard in paper bags, cardboard boxes or tied with string. Fridays, April 8, 22.

Neighborhood Meetings

Douglass Place: Third Wednesday of every other month at the Polish National Alliance, 1637 Eastern Avenue, 410.563.297.

Fell's Point Antique Dealers' Association: Call 410.675.4776.

Fell's Point Community Organization: Second Mondays, 7PM, Fell's Point Visitor Center, 410.276.5471.

Fell's Point Development Corp.: 9AM every Tuesday, Max's on Broadway. Open to all. 410.675.8900.

Fell's Point Homeowners' Association: First Wednesdays, 7PM, Bertha's 2nd Floor.

Greenspace Action Partnership: Second Tuesdays, 5:30PM, Visitor Center, 410.675.6750 ext 10.

Society for the Preservation of Fell's Point and Federal Hill: Call 410.675.6750.


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The Fell's Pointer is published monthly by volunteers of Fell's Point Citizens on Patrol, Inc. Questions, input and participation in patrols and this newsletter are welcome.

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