

Chase's Wharf Coming Back As Pillar of Maritime Park

The transformation of a round-cornered, nearly 200-year-old derelict warehouse at the west end of Thames Street into the premier attraction of Fell's Point is nearly complete. Living Classrooms expects its Frederick Douglass-Isaac Meyers Maritime Park to open in a June celebration at waterside. The site embraces Chase's Wharf and its thoroughly modern annex—serving both as museum and school—a pier that reaches into the harbor from the Promenade, and a maritime railway that offers dry dock for sailboats as big as the Lady Maryland.

Visitors will learn about the lives in Fell's Point of Emancipation's orator, Douglass, and the black owner of an early 'Point shipyard, Meyer. Living Classrooms' students will take hands-on training on the dock and in the working first floor that is vast enough to take in a life boat. The Maritime Park came about through City land swaps that allowed consolidation of the prime acreage.

The warehouse itself has a parallelogram footprint, and so does the brick, timber and glass annex. Chase's seemingly was of Dutch provenance. It stood empty for the last quarter century, except for the homeless—who nearly destroyed it with a second floor fire on Halloween night of 1993. Reconstruction began in 1999.



Photos by Lew Dinguid
Chase's Wharf to be Douglass-Myers museum.

Living Classrooms' superintendent of the park project, Doug Grinath, estimated the total outlay at \$13.8 million, with preservation credits contributing in large measure and assuring archaeological oversight. "But with all that, we don't know for sure why the corners are round," he said. The favored tale told by water taxi crews is that the four-story warehouse was built by Dutchmen who clung to the superstition that evil spirits lurk in corners. Architectural evidence does support a Dutch influence. A historian from the Netherlands noted that Dutch maritimers often measured their stock in trade—rope—by turns around a measured building, and the cornerless Chase's would have eased their task.

To replace bricks ravaged by fire, time and high tides, Grinath's team found matches at a downed cannery in Little Italy. "We recovered by hand 32,000 bricks out of 400 tons" from the demolition, he said. The challenge of matching the mortar, with its large component of oyster shells, was met with sand from a supplier in the Florida keys. It took 21 test batches to find the tone satisfying the eye of the credits gatekeeper. No structural steel is used and the yellow pine flooring was milled from original beams too damaged to bear up. The workforce includes teens from Living Classrooms' programs for at-risk youth. The principal architect is Joseph Seducci of Zigar Snead.

One concern for the public park site, that it would be cramped by an office building to be built on a pier to be resurrected just to the west on the Allied Chemical site, was allayed at last month's meeting of the Fell's Point Task Force. Larry While of Struever Bros. announced that construction of this initial Harbor Point building is imminent but will be on land only. The Army Engineers withheld approval of a non-maritime use of the pier.

Happenings

NAUTICAL TOUCH FOR THAMES PARK?

The Greenspace Action Partnership consulted enthusiasts of the Thames Street Park last month to present proposed improvements gleaned by landscape architect Amy Cooney from suggestions made at an initial session. Shown here is one of two alternatives, with a scale footprint of The Pride of Baltimore II. Youngsters could clamber on a low-slung hull and masts would provide the snap of flags on windy days. Pride II was commissioned in Fell's Point and inspired by the Chasseur schooner built here.



Both proposals retain the gazebo and the second would incorporate a stone-path maze at the Thames-Wolfe entrance. Only the fence around the play area would be retained and the tree-shaded area would be paved decoratively. Consultations are to continue with the City. As GAP was acting to spruce up the wooded half-block Thames site, Baltimore magazine published a chart comparing neighborhoods that declared Fell's to have no park whatever.

WATER TAXI COMMUTES ANEW

From now through October, the Water Taxi offers commuter runs starting at 8AM at Canton Waterfront Park, 8:15 at Fell's Point, 8:20 Tide Point, 8:25 Harbor View and 8:35 at Harbor Place. The return leaves at 8:45 and terminates in Fell's Point at 8.55. If weather cancels service, a notice will be recorded on 410.563.3901 by 7:30AM. Commuters must own a Frequent Floater Pass and pay an additional \$3 daily. Floater Pass costs \$80 or \$75 apiece for more than one and is good for 12 months. It can be purchased onboard or at 1735 Lancaster Street.

SUNRISE SERVICE

The Rev. Jack Trautwein will offer Easter Sunrise Service on April 16 at 6AM at the end of the Broadway Pier. For further information, call (410) 746.7494.



Photo by Lew Dinguid

TO SAVE ST. STAN'S

Mark Walker as the property-selling archbishop and Barbara Cromwell carrying a sign plead the cause of saving the St. Stanislaus Church at the corner of Aliceanna and Ann streets. The church is to be converted into a school for Mother Seton and other buildings are to be razed for town houses.

POINT'S PRIME CHARACTERS-VIII

The Bar Tender Who Landed Skylab on Thames St.

By Mark Walker, Marketing Analyst, Puppeteer, Conjuror

In at least the latest golden era of Fell's Point characters, say 1975-95, Jeff Knapp was their patron saint: a barkeep and chronic customer, an Abe Lincoln look-alike and on occasion the embodiment of St. Patrick. He lived for the hoax, the practical jokes.

As a warm-up before moving to Baltimore in the early '70s, Jeff ran a diner in Cape May whose motto was "World's Best Chow, World's Worse Service."

He practiced his pranks on John and Alicia Horn at Birds of a Feather. One day he showed up with poster boards, lettering stencils, and black magic markers. His subject was the vacant lot in the 1700 block of Lancaster, the street where he lived.

Pricey town houses stand there now, but then it was all weeds and trash—with a chain-link fence to fend off the homeless. It took Jeff, John, and Alicia the better part of a day to stencil Jeff's masterpiece: "On Or About This Date A Putt-putt Golf Course Will Be Erected On This Site . . ." Jeff secured it to the fence at a wee hour and by breakfast the preservationists were on the scene.

Another time Jeff built a mock cemetery behind the Cat's Eye Pub, where he tended bar. Barbie & Ken were buried side-by-side after a suicide pact, along with G.I. Joe, who succumbed to Agent Orange. Interred next to them were the Cabbage



Photo by John Horn
Jeff Knapp takes a shot at breakfast.

The Bar Tender... *Continued from page 1*

patch dolls, accidentally dispatched by a cole slaw shredder.

Jeff basked in absurdity. In 1979, when Skylab was going to fall, he and a fellow bartender built their version of it and enticed a TV reporter to film the crash scene outside the Cat's Eye—in time for the evening news. Jeff also had a way with words. He nicknamed the lighthouse beacon at HarborView the "Bug Zapper." He irritated William Donald Schaefer, who said Jeff was in the news more than his mayorship. One of their issues was the time when Jeff dressed as Abe Lincoln and dedicated an ungainly clump of monumental stone then decorating the square as the Tomb of the Unknown Wino. Also as Abe, Jeff went to Ford's Theater in Washington and sat where Lincoln did.

For a St. Patrick's Day parade Jeff dressed in a saintly costume, with a long white beard, a miter and staff. Driving a battery-powered kiddie car adorned with plastic snakes, he hid on a downtown side street. As Baltimore's most famous ethnic procession passed by, his tiny car snuck in for a three-block romp until his masquerade ended with a request to leave. He then drove the mini with V.T.N.F. license plates (more on that later) through the streets of Fell's Point offering his blessing and banishing all serpents.

Immigration Site Dedicated—With 'Point as Backdrop

A handful of Fell's Pointers crossed the harbor on March 15 to help dedicate the Baltimore Immigration Memorial's Liberty Garden on Locust Point. It was a day of cold wind and not many took the Water Taxi that was laid on for the occasion. The site is at the foot of Hull Street on land donated by Tide Point developer Bill Struever that once housed tanks used by Procter and Gamble for making soap. Immediately to the east, just beyond a tank farm for industrial molasses, was the B&O Railroad's immigration pier that received hundreds of thousands of mostly European arrivals during several decades before the First World War.

Many embarked immediately on the B&O for points west but large numbers, too, took boats to Fell's Point. It formed the backdrop for the ceremony led by the president of the Memorial board, Ellen VonKarajan, who also is executive director of the 'Point's Preservation Society. Although the Immigration Pier building is reduced to rotting pilings, the railroad's floating dock for barging rail cars to Fell Street is still on the scene. Eventually murals on the molasses tanks will depict scenes of the immigrant experience and a building shown

One Thanksgiving, Jeff's girlfriend asked if he would bring a turkey. He showed up with a live bird. Since she wouldn't accept his offering, Jeff kept it at the Pub. The turkey became a bar pet, munching on peanuts and prancing around the back room to live Irish music. During a Halloween, Jeff came to Birds of a Feather as the latest hero—Buttman—with a large plastic derriere attached to his Batman costume.

Jeff's calling card was embossed with V.T.N.F. for Vodka Tonic, No Fruit, his favorite drink. It came as a dash of bitters that he died a week before the 1992 Fell's Point Fun Festival officially banned public drinking. He had wanted a Viking's funeral, on a boat set afire and cast into the harbor. But when he fell to a heart attack at 63, his many friends flew in an eight-piece brass band from New Orleans. It led a funeral procession of several hundred people and a lone bagpiper through Fell's Point. A wake followed at the Whistling Oyster. At the foot of Broadway his name is chiseled on a Promenade brick—which friends spray-painted gold.



Schedules

Garbage Bags Are No Longer Allowed

TRASH

Place trash outside in cans or after 6AM on Mondays and Thursdays. All Trash must go in cans!

RECYCLING

Place outside by 7AM on collection day. Glass, metal and plastic in blue plastic bags on the second and fourth Monday of each month.

Paper and cardboard in paper bags, cardboard boxes or tied with string on the second and fourth Fridays of each month.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

Douglass Place: Third Wednesday of every other month at the Polish National Alliance, 1637 Eastern Avenue, (410) 563-1297.

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.: meets at 8AM on the first and third Tuesdays at True in the Admiral Fell Inn. Open to all. (410) 675-8900.

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

Greenspace Action Partnership: Second Tuesdays, 6PM, Visitor Center, 410.675.6750 ext 10.

Society for the Preservation of Fell's Point and Federal Hill: Call (410) 675-6750.

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. E-mail fpcop@verizon.net. Online www.fpcop.com. Write to P.O. Box 6137, Baltimore, MD 21231



Photo by Lew Diuguid

On a day too windy for a kayak, Immigration Memorial President Ellen VonKarajan hears Bill Struever tell of his Baltimore immigration roots in ceremony at Tide Point.

in an evocative model will house facilities for descendants to seek out data on their forbears who crossed the Atlantic.

The inspiration for the project came from businessman and now board member Ronald Zimmerman Sr., a life-long Locust Pointer. His neighbors turned out in force to watch him hoist a memorial flag. Struever alluded to his own immigrant heritage and that of Locust Point and asked attendees "not to let current fears of the world turn our backs" on immigrants.

Celebrate Promenade On Harbor Point April 30

The Waterfront Promenade Partnership and the Baltimore Harbor Watershed Association invite fans of the seven-mile Promenade to a party on Harbor Point (at the foot of South Caroline Street) from 4PM until sunset on Sunday, April 30. That is the last day of the Inner Harbor's week-long Waterfront Festival, which highlights the visiting boats of the Volvo world sailing race. The party is to celebrate recent enhancements of the Promenade, to help underwrite further improvements and

to contribute to a cleaner harbor through efforts of the BHWA.

For \$25, attendees are offered parking—come early and walk the new section of Promenade west through Harbor Point and on to the Inner Harbor—as well as food, drink and music. A guided tour at 4 will take the Promenade east by Living Classrooms' nearly finished Maritime Park, past Rec Pier and through former barriers at Thames Point and North Shore, and on to Harris Creek for a look at the City's newly installed trash interceptor. The bagging system was an initiative of BHWA, which is to maintain it after an initial year under the City.

For tickets, call Cristin Bieretz at Living Classrooms, (410) 396-3453 or email her at cristin@baltomaritimemuseum.org.



Photo by Lew Diuguid

Trash interceptor is installed at Harris Creek.

thanks!

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