

The War We Commemorate - III 5'Point-Built Ships Buoyed Navy

By Geoffrey M. Footner

Fell's Point Maritime History Consortium

A compact United States Navy with a highly experienced officer corps fought two wars that consumed most of the presidencies of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. The fleet had returned in 1807 to a nation deeply immersed in controversy once again with the Royal Navy. The seemingly endless war with the Barbary Coast state of Tripoli had been particularly demanding, with more than six years for the Navy's warships of sailing tens of thousands of miles to engage. The force was not in condition to fight another war when it returned from the Mediterranean Sea.

The Frigate Philadelphia was lost at Tripoli and the Navy added the brig-sloop of war Hornet, built in Fell's Point in 1805, and a sister ship, USS Wasp, in 1807. The Baltimore schooner USS Revenge, built by William Price in Fell's Point, was added to the fleet in 1809 but was lost at sea in New England's coastal waters in 1811. The Navy court-martialed Captain Oliver Hazard Perry, who survived the trauma to become a favored but controversial commander. The Navy's fleet of warships in 1812 totaled 17 warships, plus several supporting vessels and a large fleet of coastal gunboats, sarcastically referred to by officers with braided hats as Jefferson's Navy. Loss of the Revenge had an indirect effect on the Navy's success when war arrived in June. That will be in another article.

Two immigrant Englishmen, Commandant Thomas Tingey and Constructor Josiah Fox controlled the architectural decisions at the Washington Navy Yard, where most Navy ships were repaired. They didn't like each other, but they did agree to rid the Navy of its too-small schooners. Hence all of the smaller warships the Navy sent to sea when war was declared in 1812 were brigs, except Hornet and Wasp, which had been redesigned as small ships with three masts and rated sloops of war. Several of the fleet required repairs that included the unlucky, badly designed frigate Chesapeake, plus the Constellation, built in what is now Canton, and the Adams. The latter two warships underwent rebuilds that included modifications of their design.

When Madison declared war on June 18, the Navy had three large frigates, rated to carry 44 cannon: the President, United States, and (Continued)



Jean Hepner, who had a house that kept her.

Hepner, 88, Retires from Fell St.

By Romaine Sumerville

Former director of the Preservation Society

It was a happy day for Fell's Point when in September 1959 Ray Hepner drove down the then green and orderly Reisterstown Road to Baltimore with his wife Jean and their four children. Dr. Hepner was coming from the University of Missouri to accept an appointment as professor of pediatrics at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

The family first lived in a house in the Pinehurst section, but Dr. Hepner found the 45-minute commute to Lombard and Green Sts. onerous and they knew they needed a house closer. It took them nine years to find it, on Fell St., and now, 44 years later, the longtime widow Jean has retired to Oakcrest Village in Parkville. She is missed.

In 1968, when the Hepner's two oldest children were in college and the two youngest were boarders at McDonogh School, the adventure had begun, the search for a new home. Jean remembers that they looked at 40-some houses in traditional neighborhoods such as Tuscany and Roland Park but nothing worked until Jack Gleason, the administrator for Dr. Hepner's outreach clinic at the University of Maryland, introduced the Hepners to Lu Fisher. She owned property in Fell's (Continued)

A Factory of Hidden Hits

By David M. Johnson

From the outside it looks like the nondescript warehouse it once was. Inside, it's a 6,000-sq. ft., ultramodern, live-in recording studio. And the music it creates has graced indie-rock charts all over the planet. It's called Salad Days. And, out of respect for the privacy of the eight or so bands that each year come from as far away as Japan to record and live there, we will just say it's in Fell's Point. But we won't tell you where.

"There used to be a pickle factory on this site," says studio owner Brian McTernan. "But it was demolished." In the '70s somebody built a warehouse there and stored paint in it. Eventually it was abandoned and an eyesore on the block. "My neighbors love that it's a studio now," says McTernan. "Since it was zoned commercially, it could have easily been an auto body shop instead." And even the next-door neighbors attest you can't hear music from the outside because the studio is a cinder-block house built within the main house. No interior walls touch outer walls so vibration and noise neither escape nor enter.

McTernan, who is also a recording engineer, producer and songwriter, started his Salad Days company in 1994, and moved it to Fell's Point in 2005. He has produced 22 records that have debuted in the Billboard top 200, four (Continued)

Happenings

Water Taxi Fare Now \$12-- Year Pass Afloat in Options

The Water Taxi this spring is more expensive, more flexible but more complicated. With a full year now at the wheel, owner Michael MacDaniel said he is "still enthusiastic" as commander of the Fell's Point fleet and he is gradually measuring the ridership with the intent to make schedules and fares ever more forthcoming for residents, tourists and, newly, commuters. As for the latter, the City hires Baltimore Water Taxi to carry them free on routes that align with free buses yet do not compete with traditional Water Taxi service. Hours are 7AM-7PM Monday-Friday.

To cut to the gut, as watermen say, the traditional Taxi adult day pass price is now \$12, child's \$6. Last year was \$10/\$5. A new one-way adult pass, a saving for a single destination, is \$7. The fares relate closely to increased fuel costs. Current hours are 10AM-8PM Sunday-Thursday, extended to 11PM on Friday-Saturday. On May 1, closing hour will shift to 11 all nights but Sunday, at 9. A boat will still be waiting a half-hour after Oriole night games end. Routes are similar to last season, with some tweaks, and the Ft. McHenry coverage is nonstop from Fell's Point.

The complications come with the revamped frequent floater year passes, still designed largely to serve the home port's residents. The annual Individual Pass is now \$150. It comes with a pair of day vouchers. An alternative for couples, called a Buddy Pass, costs \$200 but the primary cardholder can bring a guest cardholder, too, and there are 4 vouchers. A Family Pass costs \$250 and covers two primary cardholders plus two guests. These passes can be bought from crew members but require registration on a 15-line form. The floater receives a temporary card for use until a permanent card arrives by mail within 10 days. It has an embedded stamp that crews will check electronically.

Clearly this is designed in part to thwart free-loaders, but MacDaniel pointed out that the system allows more effective tracking of customers' travel patterns so that schedules and routes can respond. Commuters, although traveling free, must show a pass as well, having registered their place of employ. He said the number of commuters has steadily grown and the City has bought two new boats, larger than the typical Water Taxi, for the Maritime Park-Tide Point and Canton-Tide Point runs. The office is at 1735 Lancaster St., 410.563.3900.

Pick a Crab, Win a Prize

The Art Gallery at 1716 Thames St. invites the public to pick the perkier crab in its 2nd Annual Members Contest, running through April. Fourteen members of the collective have submitted crabby works. Winners will receive a prize and so will ALL the voters. Sponsors include Thames Street Oyster House, Just Extreme Graphix, Sophia's Place in the Market and Tochterman's.

BRICK BANTER



Hepner - cont. from front

Point. The Hepners visited and were immediately attracted to the house at 931 Fell St. However, Lu was very protective of her grand 18th-century Captain Steele House and interviewed the Hepners twice before letting them see the interior.

Jean and Ray first entered Lu's property one night at 9:30, using a flashlight for lack of connected electricity. They saw past the damp vacant hallway and the crumbling wallpaper to the magnificent arch at the foot of the stairs and knew this was the house for them. Smaller 'Point houses were selling for \$1,000 to \$3,000. The proposed 14-lane Interstate highway that was to run along the Fell's Point waterfront was already on the drawing board and the city was beginning to acquire property within "the taking line."

Two weeks after the Hepners made their purchase, Gleason and his friend Bob Eney bought two small houses on Thames St., around the corner from Jean and Ray, and restored them as a comfortable single-family house. The four friends became stalwarts of the community and played major roles in its fight to survive the highway threat. Camping out first at 918 Wolfe St., the rear addition of 931 Fell, and later at 931, the Hepners took three years to get the house livable.

The Hepners became increasingly active in the "Road Fight" and in restoration of the Robert Long House, contributing funds toward its purchase. The Steele House is a perennial on the Preservation Society's spring house tour.

Jean has a special gift for horticulture and designed an 18th century garden for the Robert Long House, planting it with "descendants" of plants brought from Europe by early settlers. These plants came from the gardens of neighbors and friends throughout the area. With the help of members of the Perennial Garden Club, Jean maintained the garden for over 20 years.

While Jean, 88, misses her house, she said, "I am enjoying Oakcrest," and she welcomes mail from old friends, at 8820 Walther Blvd., Apt. 4205, Parkville, MD 21234. A young man, Nicolas Jabko, who is an associate professor of political science at Johns Hopkins University, is the new occupant of the grand three-and-one-half story brick house with the magnificent harbor view. He promises to treat it with care.

Hidden Hits - cont. from front

in the top 20. He was voted one of the 50 Most Influential Marylanders in the Maryland Daily Record in April, 2009. Brian says bands come from all over the world for six-week stays. They usually hear about Salad Days through word of mouth. "There are only a handful of studios that offer everything I can here," so it's a pretty limited pool.

"When I first moved Salad Days here, the music business was crashing," Brian explains. "There wasn't as much money around as there had been. That was actually terrific because it made us a good value versus recording in New York or L.A." He says the bands love Baltimore and Fell's Point. "And they're happy they don't even have to rent a car. They can come here with just a book bag and their instruments," he says. "Take a cab from the airport and everything they need is here."

The studio has two bedrooms, a modern kitchen, several sitting areas plus a terrace. And a pool table downstairs with punk art on the walls. Last summer, a Japanese band was in residence. Salad Days also recently housed bands from Scotland, Australia, Mexico and England. "Their working styles can be different," Brian recounts. "The Japanese band wanted to start every day at 10AM promptly. The English bands I have to go wake them up at 1PM. Then they play for maybe 15 minutes and decide it's time for lunch and a pint.



'Pointers masqueraded at the March 31 Harbor Ball, put on by the Residents' Association in the Polish Home Hall on Broadway. One-Eyed Mike Maraziti staged it and was a major sponsor, serving endless raw Bay oysters and Grand Marnier. Beneficiaries: Preservation Society and Thames Street Park, to share almost \$13,000 profit.

5 'Point-Built Ships - cont. from front

Constitution, and the smaller ship-frigates Essex and John Adams. Frigate Congress, the dull-sailing sister of the Constellation, was ready soon after. USS Hornet and Wasp were ready to sail, as also were US Brigs Argus, Syren, Viper, and three others built here: Nautilus, Vixen and the lucky Enterprise.

Alarmed by the small number of ships ready, political voices in Washington wailed their fear that if these few were ordered to sea they would be quickly destroyed by the much larger Royal fleet already cruising and in control of the north and south Atlantic Ocean. Navy supporters, led by senior officers, descended on Washington and silenced the ultimately timid politicians.

Navy Captains John Rodgers, Charles Stewart, Isaac Hull and Stephen Decatur Jr., who hung around Washington pushing for commands of specific ships, launched a lobbying campaign for new ships. They succeeded in getting Congress to fund three battleships of the line, four frigates of the Constitution class and a squadron of ship-sloops, similar to Hornet. Several of the smaller sloop-ships saw service during the war, but none of the ships of the line and heavy frigates was completed in time. Yet, it is worth noting that of the 17 ships on the Navy Register in 1812, eight were built on Chesapeake Bay and five of those by Fell's Pointers. *NEXT: A third force, Treasury's Revenue Service*

"American bands don't want anyone else there when they are working. No friends, no hangers-on, nobody," he says. "I worked with a Mexican band who actually wanted all their family and friends around them as they recorded."

Originally from Bethesda, McTernan dropped out of high school in his senior year. He was playing guitar and singing in a punk band that got booked during the school year for a tour of newly liberated Eastern Europe. "The Iron Curtain had just fallen. It was an exciting time. There was a new freedom. These kids had never set eyes on an American band. They were stoked. We played in squats, old warehouses and one club that was even an old bomb shelter."

Now he has moved his Salad Days studio here. He agrees to interviews on condition that his address be withheld, to protect the bands' privacy. His approach on security differs from that of the Point's other sound studio, belonging to Jacquie and pianist-Crawdaddies leader Kraig Greff. The name of their business, Tonal Vision, is on their Lancaster St. home--which, however, they share with two Doberman pinschers and a grand piano.

At Salad Days, you may not hear the music from out in the street. Or know exactly where it is. But if you're into global indie rock, it has already blown you away.

Lady Maryland Relaunch

After months of restoration at Living Classrooms' Maritime Park, Lady Maryland went back in the water in March for her 27th season of sailing students in the harbor where she was built in 1986. Shipwrights and trainees replaced 4,000 fasteners, replaced the stem, caulked and painted her. Living Classrooms said contributions and events raised \$100,000 of the \$180,000 needed. Those giving \$1,000 can join the newly created Lady Maryland Club that offers sunset sails. Call Kara at 410.685.0295.

'Home of the Brave' House Tour

The Preservation Society offers its 41st Historic Harbor House Tour on May 13, Mothers' Day, 11AM-5PM. The "Home of the Brave" tour fetes War of 1812, when some houses were at risk. Tickets \$15, \$20 on day, at 410.675.6750 Ext. 16, preservationsociety.com or Visitor Center, 1724 Thames St.

Schedules

Trash and Recycling

Current days for trash pickup are Tuesdays and for recycling are Thursdays. Residents are limited to setting out three 32-gallon cans of waste between 6PM on Mondays and 6AM on Tuesdays.

Neighborhood Meetings

Douglass Place: Third Tuesday of each month at Bertha's, dlh411@gmail.com.

Antique Dealers' Association: Call 410.675.4776.

Community Organization: Second Tuesdays at 606 South Ann St., 443.791.1717.

Main Street: office, 1730 Bank St. 410.675.8900.

Preservation Society: 410.675.6750 ext.16 or preservationsociety.com.

Residents' Association: First Wednesdays, 7PM, Bertha's.

thanks!

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Editor Lew Diuguid

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