

## Broadway Retains Traces Of Department Store Era

By Michael J. Lisicky

Even though the heart of downtown Baltimore's department store district was the intersection of Howard and Lexington Sts., Broadway between Eastern Ave. and Fleet St. was Fell's Point's department store epicenter. The building that once housed Hecht's Reliable Store there was the victim of two a disastrous fires last year. Hecht's operated it from 1879 to 1958. The store was a multi-level complete compact store whose business was geared toward shoppers purchasing on credit. Its buttressed facade may survive.

Perhaps Broadway's most imposing structure is at the southeast corner of Broadway and Eastern. In 1889, the dry goods firm B. Noah & Son opened a tall, ornate structure outfitted in copper windows, Potomac redstone, terra cotta panels and molded brick. It was outfitted with a 74-foot tower topped with Spanish glazed tiles and a 30-foot flagpole. The building acted as an entry into the heart of Fell's Point, and still does, now with commerce on the first floor and immense apartments upstairs.

One of the Baltimore's larger stores was S. Kann, Sons & Co. just south of the B. Noah store. The widely respected Kann's expanded many times after Solomon Kann established it in 1862. In 1893, the sons left the Baltimore business and took Kann's concept to Washington. Kann's catered to the lower-end shopper and their large stores carried "tremendous values which no sensible lady will be slow to jump at." Kann's was "the cheapest store in Baltimore" and its DC counterpart remained on the active shopping scene until 1975.

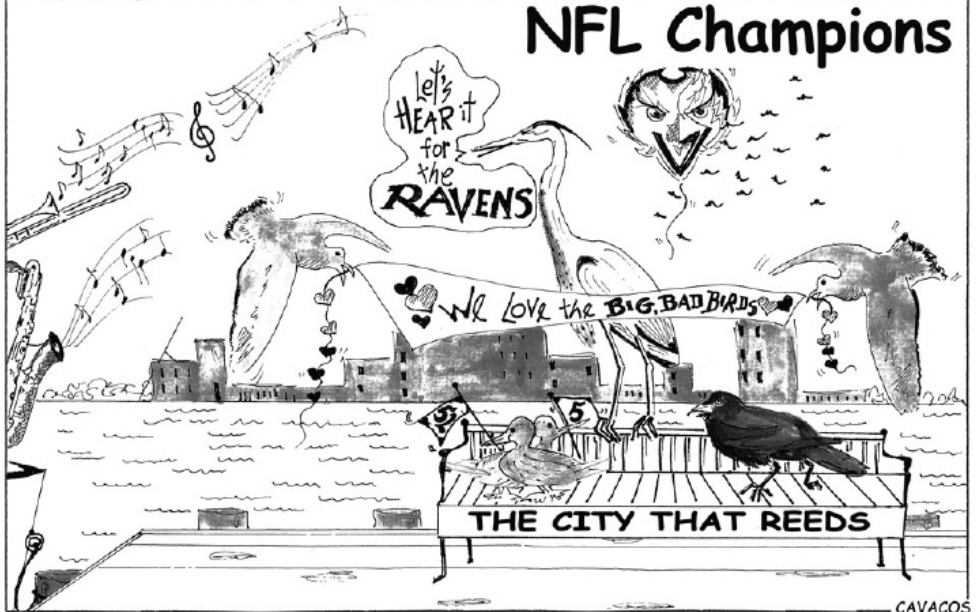
The landmark B. Noah & Son store was acquired in 1900 by Rosenstein Bros. The building still has the "Rosenstein's - The Big Store" label on its south side. For years, Rosenstein's operated small shoe stores along Broadway. In 1904, Rosenstein's purchased the S. Kann & Sons store for \$200,000. Rosenstein's "Greater Stores" perhaps expanded too quickly. In 1911, it announced a closing sale, with prices "slashed to atoms."

After Rosenstein's closed its landmark store, the dry goods firm Mirvis & Small operated it until at least 1930, specializing in home goods and appliances, not apparel. By 1940, Read's Drug had taken over the space, along with Hamburger's clothing, the Fashion Shop, and Arundel Ice Cream. Neighbor Bristol Cut-Rate Liquors traces to 1930s.

The department stores served East Baltimore while Hutzler's, Hochschild's, and the others on Howard Street served the region.

Lisicky, resident of Wolfe St. and Towne Crier, is author of "Baltimore's Bygone Department Stores," just published and available at The Visitor Center.

BRICK BANTER



## The War We Commemorate-X Blockade Surprises Fell's Point

By Geoffrey M. Footner

The U.S. Frigate Constellation was extensively repaired at the Washington Navy Yard in 1812. The yard under Commandant Thomas Tingey gave it an extreme rebuild that included a significant increase in the hull's beam. Tingey's report to the secretary of the navy reads in part: "The frigate Constellation was brought to the wharf in February 1812, and some of her floor timbers replaced with new, and thence rebuilt up entirely new; being much improved by an extension of 14 inches more beam at the main breadth. Her hull being finished, she was masted and careened out on both sides; new copper bolts, which had been driven through her bottom all ring riveted." The increase in her breadth occurred in response to complaints by Capt. Thomas Truxtun and the commanders following him, who claimed that the frigate was unstable under certain sailing conditions.

Capt. Charles Stewart sailed the rebuilt frigate to Annapolis in weather so violent in January 1813 that it was unsafe to anchor. He proceeded down Chesapeake Bay in search of a safe haven. When he reached Willoughby Point on the south shore of Hampton Roads on Feb. 3, Stewart received information that a Royal Navy squadron was anchored off Cape Henry, so Constellation had to flee into the Elisabeth River to avoid detection. The squadron was the vanguard of Rear Adm. George Cockburn's blockading fleet, so Constellation was not freed up until 1815.

But more important than the loss of a frigate, the Royal Navy's blockade altered life on Chesapeake Bay for the remainder of the war, and affected no place more than Fell's Point, Baltimore's harbor district. The heavy guard at the bay entrance forced Baltimore owners of privateers and cargo vessels to avoid the Chesapeake and utilize more accessible ports. Prize ships captured by privateers were similarly affected, and all maritime traffic on the bay declined radically for the duration.

Construction of new offshore pilot schooners inside Chesapeake Bay practically ceased. Investors up and down the coast funded construction of Chesapeake Bay-type schooners in South Carolina, New York, Massachusetts and other New England states. Unemployment in Fell's Point was severe for the remainder of the war. Particularly (Continued)

## Happenings

### Talks on Revising Fun Festival

With the Preservation Society's prime source of funding, the annual Fun Festival now in its 46th year, the group is negotiating with its business-oriented Main Street counterpart on a plan that could result in shifting administration of the festival and sharing its profits. The two-day street party in October draws dozens of fee-paying purveyors selling goods and foods in tents, thousands of attendees and several sponsors. Musical beer gardens generate much of the revenue, which can exceed \$100,000 if the weather accommodates.

Several factors have come together to suggest the restructuring. The Society itself is in flux. It initiated the festival almost half a century ago to help finance the successful campaign against putting an Interstate interchange here. Then the festival made possible hiring of staffers, including Denise Whitman, who brought its complex pieces together each fall for more than 15 years. She is no longer with the Society. It is dealing with reduced income for reasons ranging from rainy festival days to upkeep of donated historic properties.

Bar owners form a strong bloc within Main Street and some have suggested they could run it more effectively. Councilman Jim Kraft has encouraged the current dialogue, which continues under Presidents Kay Hogan of the Society and Juliette Richter of Main Street.

### Raising Frosty Mug for Max's

Max's Taphouse at Broadway and Lancaster St. is one of only two City saloons to make Draft Magazine's list of the country's top 100 beer bars of 2013, according to the Business Journal. The magazine noted Max's for having more than 100 taps and 1,200 bottles. The other Baltimore bistro cited was Brewer's Art, brewers of Resurrection on Charles St. The survey covered 2011-2.

513 BROADWAY | ROSENSTEIN'S GREATER BROADWAY STORES | 509, 511, 513 SOUTH BROADWAY

### GREAT BIG DEPARTMENT STORE

## GOING OUT OF BUSINESS

THIS BIG BUILDING CONTAINS \$150,000 WORTH OF GOODS THAT MUST BE CLEARED OUT

### PRICES SLASHED TO ATOMS!

IN COME DOWN BROADWAY AND GET GOODS AT YOUR OWN PRICE

<p><b>ARROW BRAND COLLARS</b> 9c SOUTHWESTERN 10c <b>REGALIA PATTERNS</b> 7c THE 10c KING OF 10c REGALIA PATTERNS 10c</p>	<p><b>BLANKETS and Comforts Slaughtered</b> 40c 45c 50c 55c 60c 65c 70c 75c 80c 85c 90c 95c 1.00 1.05 1.10 1.15 1.20 1.25 1.30 1.35 1.40 1.45 1.50 1.55 1.60 1.65 1.70 1.75 1.80 1.85 1.90 1.95 2.00 2.05 2.10 2.15 2.20 2.25 2.30 2.35 2.40 2.45 2.50 2.55 2.60 2.65 2.70 2.75 2.80 2.85 2.90 2.95 3.00 3.05 3.10 3.15 3.20 3.25 3.30 3.35 3.40 3.45 3.50 3.55 3.60 3.65 3.70 3.75 3.80 3.85 3.90 3.95 4.00 4.05 4.10 4.15 4.20 4.25 4.30 4.35 4.40 4.45 4.50 4.55 4.60 4.65 4.70 4.75 4.80 4.85 4.90 4.95 5.00</p>	<p><b>64.50 BROADCLOTH JACKETS</b> \$2.95 Ladies' and Misses' Black Broadcloth Jackets, stylish lined and patterned, \$2.95 Ladies' and Misses' Black Broadcloth Jackets, stylish lined and patterned, \$2.95</p>	<p><b>TOYS!</b> XMAS TOYS Ladies' Neckwear Slaughtered</p>
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**ROSENSTEIN'S GREATER BROADWAY STORES**

## Mullers Took to 'Point

Steven Muller, the widely acclaimed former president of Johns Hopkins University and Hospital who died last month in Washington at 85, spent the first nine years after his semi-retirement in 1990 with his wife Margie in a Fell St. townhouse overlooking the Promenade and harbor. They were both active in the Homeowners' (now Residents') Association until her death in 1999, when he moved to Washington.

Charles Norton of Sheeps' Clothing on Shakespeare St. recalls: *Steve and Margie moved in as Belt's Landing--their next door neighbor-to-be--was in development stages where public hearings were being held. I met Steve at one of those Planning Department meetings on the height and massing of the project and preservation of buildings on the site. Part of the discussion was about FAR, floor area ratios. Steve turned to Ben Carlson, a Shakespeare St. neighbor, sitting beside him and asked, "What is FAR?" Ben gave Steve a quick explanation and minutes later Steve stood up and with great authority questioned whether the developer had the needed FAR for the massing and height proposed.*

*Ben, himself with a Ph.D in psychology from Hopkins, recalls that the discussion became heated, with the developer concluding, "I don't tell you how to run your university, don't tell me how to run my business." The developer ultimately ended up coming back to the City to request a height variance.*

*Steve said he and Margie, former Maryland Banking Commissioner, had moved to Fell's Point to retire quietly, but they got involved in community issues sooner than expected. They had major input on joining the Homeowners. He was doing a lot of consulting and said that he was probably as busy in retirement as he was at Hopkins.*

## Blockade - cont. from front

hard hit were ships' masters and mates, who resided in Baltimore, and were isolated here after local ship owners found it necessary to sign-on officers at the open ports they were using. Seamen drifted off in search of berths.

The Embargo of 1807 had created a similar problem of idle mariners. Sen. Samuel Smith of Maryland sponsored and Congress passed an act that established a federalized naval militia unit, The 1st Marine Artillery of the Union, that provisioned and otherwise supported the unemployed mariners. The legislation called for creation of a Corps of Masters and Mates for the "purpose of raising a uniform marine corps, on economic principals, which need exceed 20 dollars . . . expense." And so it was at that early period of its independence, the United States created the first unemployment legislation, and evidently without the controversy that splits our republic today on issues relating to economic assistance to citizens. Yet it was in fact make-work legislation not unlike the Work Projects Administration of the New Deal in 1939. George Stiles was its first and only administrator.

Smith and Stiles resurrected the dormant congressional act just days after the Royal Navy set its blockade of the Bay in 1813. Unemployed masters and mates who desired to serve in a Corps of Seamen could sign up at Pamphilon's Hotel in Fell's Point on Feb. 5, 1813 as preparations to fortify Baltimore got underway. Two hundred unemployed mariners were the original volunteers for the corps. Stiles formed them into two companies. The Corps of Mariners as it was popularly named, was then assigned the restoration of Fort McHenry, which had been virtually deserted by the Army two decades earlier.

The Corps of Mariners included officers and mariners as well as ship owners and artisans. The town's Committee of Public Safety and its successor Committee of Vigilance & Safety, assigned defense projects to the Corps. Costs were paid by bank loans and donations. A significant project was reconstruction of The Lazaretto Battery at the mouth of the Patapsco River opposite Fort McHenry, which the

## Cool Jazz, Steaming Mussels

About 50 jazz enthusiasts, some old, some young, gathered upstairs at Bertha's on Jan. 31 to hear sets by two engaging pianists, one semi-retired at 72 and the other not half his age--Billy Colucci and Lafayette Gilchrist. Colucci lives upstairs at the Ann St. residence of Tony and Laura Norris, the owners of Bertha's, who also provided mussels and wine at the break for the \$20 admission.

Billy reminds a listener of his mentor, Bill Evans, but all of the songs were his own, notably including "South Philly Blues," for his home town, and "When Will I See You Again?" the question his mother used to ask him in his touring days. Gilchrist, born in Washington but schooled at U of Md. Baltimore County, saluted a city jazz classic of the early-1900s, Chick Webb, playing his "Stomp'n' at the Savoy." And, sounding much like Thelonius Monk, he closed with the latter's "Aronel," noting it is Lenora spelled backwards. --Lew Diuguid

## Appreciation: Vagabond Players

Those who missed the month-long run of Agatha Christie's "The Mousetrap" passed up a pleasing performance. It closed Feb. 3. The previous Sunday's matinee, with no Ravens game to compete with, drew a full house to the theater on Broadway Square. A cast of nine, four of them new to the company, brought the 60-year-old mystery up to date with a lilt and a lovely leading lady, Ann Turiano. The officious police sergeant, turned villain, Adam Blodorn, might have walked on stage from the Southeast Police Headquarters. LD.

Next is "Cemetery Club," Feb. 22-March 24, Fri.-Sat. at 8, Sun. at 2. \$18. [vagabondplayers.org](http://vagabondplayers.org).

## State's Attorney Follows Up

State's Attorney Gregg Bernstein, invited by Councilman Jim Kraft to follow up a heavily attended session two months ago with the SE police commander on street crime, spoke to residents on Jan. 30 about his prosecution of cases that make it to trial. The former U.S. prosecutor said that in his first two years on the job he has worked to improve relations between his prosecutors and City police, and he termed it "a big success," with increasing numbers of well-prepared cases reaching trial.

While the Nov. 28 session with Maj. Bill Davis drew about 140 animated residents upstairs at Max's Taphouse after recent muggings and a rape charge, Bernstein came on a cold, windy night and only 30 showed up--at an ornate meeting room in the Admiral Fell Inn. Bernstein said he addresses similar meetings often around the City "and this is the nicest setting yet." He indicated in a response that he shares concerns about overall police performance.

Corps of Mariners converted into its fort.

According to Scott Sheads, who has written about the defenses extensively, the Corps' most important project was construction of batteries and "placing of the French 36-pounders along Fort McHenry's face, complete with hot-shot furnaces." It also constructed a barrier of ships' booms connected by chains that blocked entrance to the Inner Harbor.

Stiles' control over the Corps altered after formation of the Navy's Chesapeake Flotilla--commanded by Commodore Joshua Barney. Most of the operations of the Corps, except ongoing construction projects, were transferred to the Navy and Army, jointly commanded by Capt. John Rodgers and Gen. Smith, after Barney was mortally wounded at the Battle of Bladensburg.

So when the British fleet arrived at the mouth of the Patapsco, almost all of the town's defenses--including those of the Corps--were under Capt. Rodgers. The one exception was Gen. Smith's control over the Maryland militia, which included the battery of the Corps, manned by the 1st Marine Artillery, on Hampstead Ridge on the Philadelphia Turnpike, and Rodgers' Navy batteries in Patterson Park, now marked with cannon.

## Birds With Southern Accent

Southern Living magazine named Birds of a Feather one of the top three whiskey bars in the South, according to The Sun. The mass-circulation monthly sized the citation to a shot glass: "Hole-in-the-wall Scotch bar with 120 single malts," recommending a Lagavulin neat, for \$15. The Sun added that Alicia Horn and her late husband John opened the bar at 1712 Aliceanna St. nearly 30 years ago.

## 'Laundry & Bourbon' at Corner

Opening Feb. 15 at the Corner Theater, 251 S. Ann St., at the upstairs Sokal Theater are two one-act comedies, "Lone Star" and "Laundry & Bourbon" by James McLure, running Fri.-Sat. at 8 and Sun. at 2 for 3 weeks. Tickets \$12 for first, fpcop.org.

## 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](mailto:dlh411@gmail.com).

Antique Dealers' Association: Call 410.675.4776.

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

Main Street: [info@fellspointmainstreet.org](mailto:info@fellspointmainstreet.org) or 410.675.8900.

Preservation Society: 410.675.6750 ext.16 or [preservationsociety.com](http://preservationsociety.com).

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

## thanks!

The all-voluntary Fell's Pointer thanks its four sustaining sponsors, One-Eyed Mike's Tavern, 708 S. Bond St., 410.327.0445; Duda's Tavern, Thames and Bond Sts., 410.276.9719; Howie B Properties, commercial and residential real estate in Fell's Point and throughout Baltimore, 410.375.4200; and Jimmy's Restaurant, 801 S. Broadway, 410.327.3273.

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*Editor Lew Diuguid*

## PRINTER AD

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