

BALTIMORE

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Immigration Era, Part I: Port of Pleasant Landings

By Pennington Parker
The "Great Wave"

of mass migrations to the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries is one of history's more compelling stories. These events resonate powerfully in this "Nation of Immigrants," touching virtually every life. The focus on

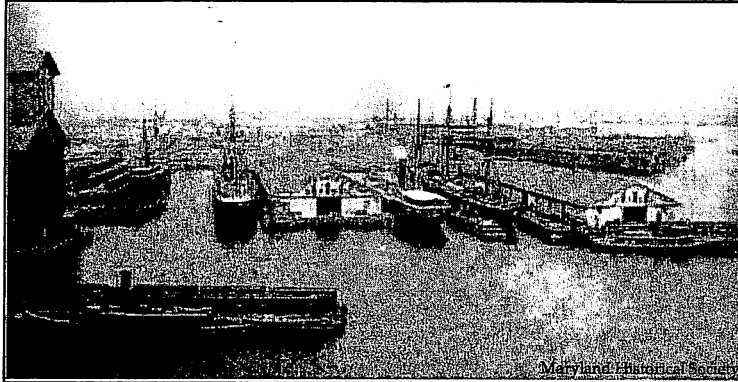


Photo taken about 1870 shows original B & O immigration facilities built in Locust Point in 1868.

New York's Ellis Island as a point of entry weighs so heavily in the public consciousness that it has, in effect, been accepted as "America's immigration story." Yet, for tens of millions whose American family history originated in Baltimore, a less celebrated port of entry, the story remains largely untold.

While Baltimore ranked among the nation's leading recipient ports, welcoming as many as 2 million immigrants, this history has received such scant popular and scholarly attention that even many Baltimoreans are unaware of the city's key contribution to the process by which the continent was populated.

The Baltimore Immigration Project was founded by local businessman Ron

Zimmerman to explore, preserve and present to the public this rich heritage as an immigration gateway. Activities include funding original research; collecting and conserving historic documents, artifacts and oral histories, and offering public programs to interpret local immigration history. Honoring the memory and courage of every immigrant who first touched American soil in Baltimore also is a key element of the organization's agenda. Today, there are tens of millions of Americans who could trace their roots to a Baltimore dock.

Such personal connections, along with the city's strong historic ties to major European ports of embarkation, make our immigration heritage a major *(Cont. on Page 3)*

For Bolton Hill, History Is Up Close and Personal

By Frank R. Shivers, Jr.

I'm busy updating my 1978 illustrated history, *Bolton Hill: Baltimore's Classic*. It tells an important urban story about a rich Victorian past and what some may view as a strikingly heroic last 75 years. About the last 50 years I can write with the confidence of a veteran. For that much of my now 79 years I have lived in the same Bolton Street house.

Most recently I have led a pro bono group in placing plaques on Bolton Hill houses where past luminaries lived and worked. In this project I'm copying London. For nearly 140 years London's street scenes have been adorned with blue ceramic discs affixed where great men and women have lived and worked. "London residences of the ornaments of our history could not but be precious to all thinking Englishmen," said a

member of Parliament.

"Plaques not only honor the great figures who have helped to shape today's world," say the English Heritage sponsors. "They also draw attention to buildings with special associations, ones that forge a link between our environment and the day to day physical surroundings of famous figures of the past."

Reading blue plaques on Bolton Hill, as in London, reminds us that great work often takes place in comparatively modest surroundings, and our appreciation of great figures of the past is enriched. Like London's, Bolton Hill's blue plaques honor achievers of national standing. They chose to live in this Baltimore neighborhood amidst diversity of a special kind. And their memorial plaques bring distinction *(Cont. on Page 2)*

Hipp Theater Jaunt: May 8

By Richard W. Flint
Spring Program Chair

Baltimore's newly restored Hippodrome Theater, constructed as a palace for vaudeville in 1914, will take the leading role in a free exclusive for BCHS on Saturday, May 8, at 10 AM. An all-star revue will provide first-person recollections, including two veteran vaudevillians whose soft-shoe routine will enjoy a brief reprise under the lights.

To attend this two-hour program, simply reserve using the form on the last page of this Newsletter. The Baron Twin Brothers of Baltimore, who began as child stars at the Hippodrome in 1930 and then spent many years on the road, will tell all.

The visit to the ornate Hippodrome is the first of this year's programs on the theme, "The Old Made New." Now the focal point of the France-Merrick Performing Arts Center, the theater was designed by Thomas W. Lamb—who was responsible for over 500 theaters. When it opened in 1914, with a bill featuring a foot juggler, singers, dancers, and elephants, the \$225,000 theater was the city's largest. By 1931 the Hippodrome was deeply in debt and briefly closed, reviving under Philadelphia showman Isidor Rappaport. His son Robert will recall for BCHS his years with the theater as it evolved into a motion-picture house. The Hippodrome's last vaudeville show was in 1951.

The BCHS tour will begin with a preview of a documentary-in-the-making about the Hippodrome's revival, introduced by producer Robert Whiteford, whose film work won an Academy Award in 2000. Mark Sissman, executive director of the Hippodrome Foundation, will lead a tour of the facility, discussing the work accomplished in the 20-month-long rejuvenation of the now 2,286-seat hall as centerpiece for west-side economic redevelopment.

Required advance reservations can also be made at 410.685.3750. ext. 379. Admission will be through the green stage door on the north side of Baltimore Street near Eutaw. Be aware that the Preakness Parade also is May 8 so parking buildings should be approached from the west side. Further information @ france-merrick.pac.com.

EDITORIAL: *Let the Bells Peal For a Revived Peale*

Thanks to the initiative of the city's Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation and the Planning, Housing and Public Works Departments, there is now an exciting opportunity to revive the slumbering Baltimore Municipal Museum Building, affectionately known as The Peale.

A financial crisis in 1997 closed the museum, built in 1813 by painter Rembrandt Peale, as it did all of the Baltimore City Life Museums. The Baltimore City Historical Society has a major priority to see it reopen and did so, albeit for only one day, when we held our Second Annual Mayor's Reception there in 2002. Attendees found the building in good condition, thanks to the past care of the Schmoke and Schaefer Administrations and the continuing care and interest of Mayor Martin O'Malley.

Now, with the help of Blaine Lipski of DPW's General Services, BCHS has a stately bookcase on the floor of the Peale—a gift of trustee Julian L. Lapidés—awaiting the Baltimore Book Collection.

Because the crisis of 1997 required the Maryland Historical Society to rescue the valuable City Life/Peale collections, all of the City's historical materials are now at MdHS for future reference and research. Consequently the reuse of The Peale as a museum is not a reasonable prospect. What is, though, is the recent proposal that it become The Baltimore City History Center.

The History Center would include: CHAP headquarters; liaisons with the city and state archives; loaned pictures and historical objects that were property of The Peale; Baltimore-related art loaned or donated by existing collections; a restored Municipal Museum Garden; the Schmoke Conference Room; the offices (and book collection) of BCHS, and those of Baltimore Heritage Inc. and the Mayor's Heritage Area Information Center. Contributor "naming" opportunities could help finance this venture, making it possible to recognize contributions of the mayor and other leaders to a re-awakened Peale. We support this concept, with fervor.

Hill's History Rings With Calls to Rally Residents

(Continued from Page 1)

to the place:

- Gen. Robert E. Lee's aide-de-camp in the surrender at Appomattox Court House, Virginia.
- Dr. Claribel and Etta Cone, early collectors of modern art now in the Cone Wing of the Baltimore Museum of Art.
- Pioneering physicians of the Johns Hopkins Medical School, such as surgeon William S. Halsted and gynecologist Howard A. Kelly.
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, author of *Tender Is the Night* and *The Great Gatsby*,
- John Waters, author and film director/producer.
- Edith Hamilton, classicist author of *The Greek Way*.
- Drs. Alice Hamilton, pioneer in industrial medicine, and Jesse Lazear, medical martyr who fatally proved that mosquitoes transmit yellow fever.
- The Morley brothers: Christopher (author), Frank (author and cofounder of publishing house Faber & Faber), and Felix (president of Hamilton College, Pulitzer Prize-winning editor of *The Washington Post*).
- William H. Howell, discoverer of the anticoagulant heparin.
- Gertrude Stein, innovative stylist in literature and early promoter of Picasso's and Matisse's art.
- Jacob Epstein, art collector, philanthropist, inaugurator of matching grants for charities.

Such luminaries make it easy to romanticize Bolton Hill. For some the neighborhood is a state of mind as much as a patch of 150-year-old housing stock near downtown. Past images lie just below the surface where residents struggle with urgent urban issues. Since 1914, leaders have fought for the district's survival with iron fists sheathed in kid gloves. They became notorious in the 1960s and '70s for brazen tactics. They rallied at City Hall and in the State House. They even convinced each other that the surgery of federal urban renewal could save the patient.

Others prevailed on the Sunpapers to picture handsome streets peopled with artists and bankers, matrons and eccentrics, block fairs and garden tours. Young newcomers bought houses and raised their families. They too acquired the peculiar mindset of Bolton Hill, that here was a special community. It was so special as to become the first Baltimore City-designated historic district, and the first in the city to

be nationally recognized as well. This was in 1973, with the threat of a bulldozing for a connector road from I-83 to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

What was threatened was the unity of a carefully stitched patchwork quilt. Its squares show a good deal of green because shade trees outline 24 blocks of red houses, and nine parks punctuate the whole. The quilt stretches over 170 acres and covers two hills. North Avenue binds the north, Eutaw Place the west and Mount Royal Avenue the east. The southern hem dips down to Howard Street, the Fifth Regiment Armory and Mount Royal Station.

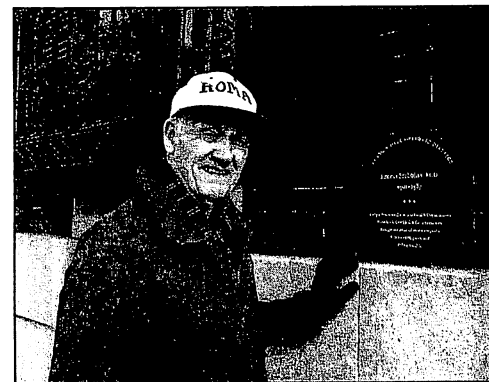


Photo by Hunter Alfriend of BCHS
Frank Shivers and plaques vivify history.

History gives these blocks their cachet. The place had tone from the beginning. Development began with a Tiffany. An offshoot of the famous family bought part of the country estate Rose Hill and in 1854 laid out a boulevard on the European model. Eutaw Place attracted the well-heeled with garden squares and fountains. Side streets filled with row houses, in the Baltimore model. Later, garden squares on Park Avenue added lungs. At the end of the 19th Century, median gardens along Mount Royal made a green ribbon connecting Mt. Vernon to Druid Hill Park.

In the early 20th Century, Bolton Hill took on a Bohemian air, with newspaper writers, artists, musicians, authors and professors. Some came for cheap rents on third-floor or basement apartments. It didn't hurt that the Hill offered about the same walkable access that closer-in Mt. Vernon did to the city's cultural institutions, from its own Maryland Institute of Art to the Peabody Conservatory or Enoch Pratt Free Library.

This spring's first Maryland House and Garden Pilgrimage is to Bolton Hill, 10AM to 5 PM on April 24. Tickets are \$25. Call 410.821.6933, email mhgp@aol.com or see www.mhgp.org.

After Civil War, Immigration Was a Busy Enterprise in Easy-Going Baltimore

(Contd. from Page 1) potential generator of national and international tourism and economic development activity. Creation of an online database of Baltimore immigrants is expected



Maryland Historical Society

Steamship Line, built immigration piers 8 and 9 in Locust Point to accommodate the bigger ships.

As the purpose was to profit from the growing immigrant trade, the partners were not content to wait for emigrants to come to them. Their agents fanned out across Europe to recruit passengers. Single tickets were sold for passage from Bremerhaven — Bremen's port — as well as domestic rail travel from Baltimore for those whose destination was elsewhere in the United States.

The arrangement between the railroad and shipping line grew out of long-standing trade relations between Bremen and Baltimore. It was facilitated by Baltimore businessman Albert Schumacher, a German immigrant and son of a Bremen councilman, who served as a director of the B&O. Ultimately, the railroad developed similar arrangements with steamship lines from ports including Hamburg and Liverpool.

Despite the role played by private enterprise, the federal government was involved in processing immigrants destined for Baltimore. Customs and medical inspectors routinely examined those bound for these shores. However, whereas processing at Ellis Island may have seemed akin to being herded through an intimidating bureaucratic maze, people arriving in Baltimore were subjected to a less dehumanizing experience. Although approximately a million immigrants arrived at Locust Point, the manageable number disembarking at any given time made the experience seem far less daunting.

Furthermore, geography played a role, as the inspectors boarded vessels at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. Often they completed their on-board examinations by the time ships docked in Baltimore. Unless irregularities were discovered, this allowed most immigrants to proceed with their new lives in Baltimore or to board trains for other destinations. Even for the small percentage of those temporarily detained for further scrutiny, the experience may have seemed more an inconvenience than an imprisonment. There are stories of detainees passing the hours fishing from a pier at the facilities.

As the influx of foreigners continued to accelerate toward its peak in 1907, the 1868 immigration facilities became outmoded. Indeed, 2004 marks the centennial of the B&O's rebuilding and expansion of what the company would proudly bill as "the nation's largest immigration piers." Today, wood pilings that are the only remnants of the 1904 piers can be seen from the water along Lo-

cust Point's north shore.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 effectively ended the "Great Wave" of immigration but not before continuing growth in Baltimore's trade finally prompted the federal government to take control of local immigration operations. A federal processing facility was constructed in 1913. The building, adjacent to Fort McHenry, is now occupied by the Naval Reserve Center. Ironically, it is unknown whether the facility ever actually welcomed a single immigrant. Perhaps further research will shed light on this and many of the other unknowns that still obscure Baltimore's rich immigration heritage.

Parker D. Pennington is senior project designer with Xibitz, Inc., a Baltimore exhibiting firm. He has been assisting the Immigration Project almost from its inception.

Remembering Brown '54

A three-day program beginning Thursday, April 29 will commemorate the Brown vs. Board Supreme Court decision 50 years ago finding segregated schools unconstitutional. Opening at 7 PM at Coppin State College, presider Dr. Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, a professor at Coppin and board member of the BCHS, will present Walter Leonard, former president of Fisk University, on the theme of Placing Brown in a National Perspective. A reception will follow at 7:45, sponsored by BCHS.

On April 30 at 9 AM, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton will offer the keynote address. A panel will follow on the historical and legal perspectives and the lunch speaker will be Chinh Quang Le of the NAACP. Personal accounts will be heard at 3:30, with dinner at 5:30 at the Maryland Historical Society. Author Juan Williams will discuss his *Thurgood Marshal: American Revolutionary* at 7:30.

Morning panel discussions at Coppin on May 1 will be followed by a lunch address by Associate Provost Alvin Thornton of Howard University and chair of the state Education Commission bearing his name. The closing address, taking place at 2:30 PM, is "Don't Shout Too Soon," on the status of desegregation in Maryland. Morgan State University and the University of Maryland Law School are sponsors with Coppin of the symposium.

For more information, and to register, visit www.coppin.edu.

Society Programs:

From the Old, New

Other BCHS programs this year in addition to that on May 8 at the Hippodrome include this summer's annual meeting, to be held June 18 and to include election of officers and board members. It will be held at the Fells Point Maritime Museum, which will open to members from 5 to 6 PM. The Maryland Historical Society opened the museum last year in a building that once served as a horse-drawn trolley barn, with the animals stabled upstairs. The business meeting will be in the contiguous Preservation Society Visitor Center. Following the meeting, there will be a guided tour of Fells Point.

The fall program, featuring the Mayor's Reception and History Honors presentation, and commemorating the centennial of the Baltimore Fire, will be at the newly expanded campus of the MdHS in October. Members will see, perhaps even feel the glow of, up-close exhibits of the fire. The winter program in December will be amid poinsettias at the newly restored conservatory in Druid Hill Park that started out as Maryland's pavilion at the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876.

Lectures: How Wars Singed Fells Point

The Preservation Society of Federal Hill and Fells Point offers a lecture series, detailing Fells Point's role in the War of Independence and the War of 1812, on four Thursdays in April at 7:30PM.

Revolution! On April 8, with maritime historian Geoffrey M. Footner and naval historian Donald Shomette at the Polish National Alliance, 1627 Eastern Avenue.

The Schooner Trade around 1812. On April 15, with historian Fred Hopkins and author Christopher T. George, at Polish National Alliance.

Patterson Park in the War of 1812. On April 22, with Footner and National Park

Service historian Scott Sheads, at the Creative Alliance, 3134 Eastern Avenue.

At Home in Fells Point, Architecture, Restoration and Furnishings. On April 29, with architectural historian Robert Eney, architect Worthington P. Pearre and Homewood House curator Catherine Rogers Arthur, at Polish National Alliance.

Tickets are \$30 for the full set of lectures or \$10 per lecture (\$8 for members of the Preservation Society or Creative Alliance). Refreshments and cash bar.

Preservation Society membership and tickets are available at its Visitor Center, 812 S. Ann Street, 410.675.6750.

Society Ups Amperage of Electronic Database

A grant from The William C. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund, through the Baltimore Community Foundation, allows BCHS to enhance its electronic database of members, contributors and friends. A new approach was designed to allow even those unsophisticated with database operations to maintain the necessary records.

The grant supports the consulting services of Aaron M. Glazer and the data entry work of Jason Seitz.

The new Membership Committee chair, Pamela Kelly, said: "I am greatly relieved to have this program in place. It will make the work of my committee, and all other committees, much more efficient."

President Romaine Somerville expressed her thanks to the Baker Fund and Baltimore Community Foundation's Melissa Warlow for their support of this work, critical to a nonprofit organization without a paid staff.

To Join or Renew as BCHS Member

Please complete this form and mail with payment to the address at the right.

Name (Please print)

Address

City, State and Zip Code

Home/Office Phone

Email Address

Please reserve ___ places in my name for the Hippodrome Program on May 8 (*notice is due by May 5*).

BCHS Membership Dues

- \$100 Charter Member
- \$50 Sustaining
- \$20 Family
- \$15 Individual
- \$10 Student/Senior

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