

Shipyard Again in 'Point

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Also, both were active members of African-American churches, which served as anchors in a tumultuous society that denied them basic rights. Exhibits illuminating their separate stories will revolve around these themes that tie Douglass and Myers together.

Without education, however, neither man could have achieved the stature and confidence needed to lead the struggle for fundamental social change. This thread of learning and knowledge will be woven throughout the visitor experience in actual, symbolic and interactive ways. After all, the Living Classrooms Foundation's experiential learning programs are designed to inspire new generations to greatness through education and maritime heritage. This continues the legacy that these men left for each of us, regardless of race.

The Foundation provides an array of students from its hands-on educational programs of the Crossroads charter school, visiting student groups and at-risk youths who don't thrive in traditional classroom settings. Its "learning-by-doing" programs are rooted in the rich maritime traditions of the Chesapeake region. The Maritime

Park will highlight the largely overlooked contributions made for centuries by African-Americans in the maritime trades.

In addition to the exhibit galleries, the new campus will feature a working shipyard and house expanded educational programs. Interpretation, hands-on activities and live demonstrations are to take place both inside and outside the historic Chase's Wharf warehouse and in a dynamic annex nearing completion. An operating marine railway will pull boats out of the harbor for repairs, only a stone's throw from the site of the one owned by Myers and his partners.

The Maritime Park will step outside of traditional museum strategies to engage the senses in surprising ways. One gallery will take visitors back in time to walk through settings suffused with artifacts that illustrate the stories being told. Another will invite participation. Visitors can fit together boats, use mechanical advantage to pull them out of the water, tie knots, shave wood and caulk seams. The third-floor Founders Room—a portrait gallery with space for contemplation—will recognize leaders of Baltimore's African-American community.

The Park's logo has the name sur-

rounding a harvest green circle with a sankofa bird image at its center. The West African bird, which was always mindful of the past as it walked ahead, has the Lady Maryland Sailing Ship—the Living Classrooms' symbol inside of it. It is hoped that the logo and the site will remind our public to remember the past while claiming the future.

Swann-Wright is historical consultant for the Park. She has interpreted and published extensively on African-American history and culture, including in her position at Jefferson's Monticello. Pennington is senior designer for Xibitz, the exhibit designer for the project.

May Tours of Green Mount

Historian and educator Wayne R. Schaumburg will guide four Saturday tours of Green Mount Cemetery on May 6, 13, 20, 27 at 9:30AM from the gate at Greenmount Avenue and East Oliver Street. Marylanders buried there include Johns Hopkins, Enoch Pratt, William and Henry Walters, Theodore McKeldin, Johns Wilkes Booth, Mary Elizabeth Garrett and Betsy Patterson. The two-hour tour costs \$10. Reservations are required and can be made by calling 410.256.2180 or e-mailing wschaumburg@earthlink.net.

BALTIMORE



CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

History to Come Easily at Douglass-Myers Museum, Park

By Dr. Dianne Swann-Wright and Parker D. Pennington

When the Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park joins Baltimore's community of museums and heritage sites in June, it will reopen the oldest standing Inner Harbor industrial building and explore a dynamic and largely unknown chapter of African-American history. The Maritime Park will use the lives of Frederick Douglass and Isaac Myers as windows into experiences of Maryland African American communities a century and a half ago. It will explore Douglass's formative years in Baltimore and consider the impact of his days on the Eastern Shore to talk about the lives of enslaved children in similar situations and how these experiences shaped the adult Douglass. And by exploring Isaac Myers and his associates who founded the country's first black shipyard, visitors will gain insight into the strengths of Baltimore's free black community.

While Marylanders have embraced Douglass over the decades as one of its most honored sons, visitors to the Maritime Park developed by Living Classrooms will come to know him in a new way—as a youngster playing on Fell's Point streets, learning to read on its sidewalks and mastering a trade in its maritime industry—the personal side of a very public life. Douglass's spiritual beginnings and faith, his social relationships and individual desires will be interpreted. His role as mentor and supporter of self-reliance will be gleaned through the story of his relationship with Myers and the other founders of the Chesapeake Maritime Railway and Dry Dock Company.

Douglass and Myers had certain parallel experiences that provide a basis for interpreting their lives in the same venue. First, there was the 19th century Fell's Point community, in which African-Americans had frequent contact with each other and with white native-born and immigrant populations. Their work as skilled ship caulkers provided both men a springboard to better prospects. *(Cont. on Page 4)*



Chase's Wharf, well into its second century, is returning to its prime at harbor side.
Photo by Lew Diuguidd

Striking Brick Survivor

The heart of Baltimore's new Maritime Park is a parallelogram of a building with round corners, seemingly of Dutch provenance. Although nearly 200 years old, it has inspired a thoroughly modern annex nearing completion. Chase's Wharf at the western end of Thames Street in Fell's Point 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.

Living Classrooms' superintendent of the park project, Douglass 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 that water taxi crews tell tourists is that the three-story warehouse was built by Dutchmen who clung to the superstition that evil spirits lurk in corners. Architectural evidence does suggest a Dutch influence. A historian from the Netherlands noted that Dutch mariners often measured their stock in trade—rope—by turns around a measured building, and the cornerless Chase's eased their task.

To replace bricks ravaged by fire, time and high tides, Grinath's team found matches at a cannery coming down in Little Italy. "We recovered 32,000 bricks out of 400 tons" from the demolition, he said. The workforce includes teens from Living Classrooms. The principal architect is Joseph Seducci of Zigar Sned.

Upcoming: Symposium on 19th Century Women and Workshop on Bunkum

The City's history takes a lively turn in its immediate future with a symposium at the Garrett Jacobs Mansion on Women of 19th Century Baltimore on April 21-3 and the second annual Workshop for Baltimore Historians, titled "Lies Historians Tell: Baltimore Bunkum and Maryland Myths," on May 12 from 9AM to 1PM in Westminster Hall. BCHS is a sponsor of both.

Subtitled "Rich in Vision, Catalysts of Change," the symposium features 13 speakers: from *Unsung Heroes* by Carolyn Stegman of Salisbury University to *Two Waves of Jewish Immigrants* by Deborah Weiner of the Jewish Museum of Maryland, and *Ladies of Reform* by Jean H. Baker of Goucher. Keynote speaker at the 6PM dinner on Friday is Virginia Beauchamp, associate professor emeritus at the University of Maryland, on *Reading Between the Lines of Women's History*. Saturday tours are available to the Women's Industrial Exchange and on African American Leaders, among others.

Fees are \$85 for the dinner, \$180 for the Saturday-Sunday programs, including lunches, or \$75 for one day. For more information, contact Karen Footner, 410.433.0354 or kmfootner@aol.com. Tickets also are available through the Engineers Club, resident of the mansion at 11 W. Mt. Vernon Place.

As for the Workshop on bunkum, Professor Garrett Power of the University of Maryland School of Law and a member of BCHS, is again the organizer. He lay down this challenge: "History is an account of the past and the task of the historian is to search for the truth of what actually happened, and why. Each new generation of researchers seeks to correct the misstatements of fact in the historical record and to better explain the human motivation behind historical events. Through this iterative process the study of history seeks to discount falsehoods and misunderstanding and to reveal *(Cont. on Page 3)*

To Join or Renew as BCHS Member

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A Seasonal Message From the President

Spring for the Baltimore City Historical Society is the time of renewal—membership renewal. We are a very young, all volunteer organization devoted to Baltimore City's history—the stories of citizens' lives, the stories of our cultural, artistic, economic, religious, ethnic and social heritage. We celebrate the rich diversity of all aspects of our urban past.

As a volunteer organization in its early years, we depend on membership renewals, grants and other contributions to produce our annual educational programs, advance the revival of the Peale building, increase the book collection, publish this Newsletter and accomplish similar vital work. This year we are planning an exciting Historians' Workshop with the University of Maryland School of Law, an annual meeting at the Carroll Mansion, the Mayor's Reception at Marburg House with a tour of the School for the Arts, and a program in the Morgan University Chapel with Taylor Branch. We encourage all of our members to renew early and generously to take advantage of these programs.

In addition to essential financial support, we invite your expression of interest in committee work for BCHS. The opportunities for volunteering time and talent are included with membership renewal materials. Consider ways that you can become more involved. While you have this Newsletter in hand, you can take up the form on Page 4. If you don't want to rip the page, make a copy!

If we are successful in reaching our goals for the Society, there will come a time when we have a permanent headquarters, a Baltimore History Center at the Peale of which we all can be proud. We will have an executive director and staff who produce high-quality historical programs to advance the appreciation and understanding of our City's history among all of our citizens. And we will build an endowment to ensure the future. —Robert Kershaw

EDITORIAL: City Often Honors Its History, Sometimes Not - - A Call for Due Vigilance

As this Society celebrates the gradual convergence of the many components of our history toward a cooperative whole, we commend the persistent strength of our close allies, Baltimore Heritage and the Baltimore Architecture Foundation, in that effort and offer a tentative score card on recent issues this historic City must address. First the negative:

We lament the continued languishing of the vacant Peale Museum, whose revival is a prime cause for BCHS. There is an active willingness to work with the City in financing needed improvements for reoccupation of the important building, but the City needs to make the fundamental commitment to its operating budget. For the history community to attempt taking on that task would risk repeating the collapse of the over-extended City Life Museums complex in 1997—a body blow to Baltimore history. Similarly, there is a private willingness to support the restoration of Mencken House, but where is the City?

The revision of the City's Commission on Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) provided it a strong new composition. But CHAP's envelopment by the Department of Planning leaves many wary—and the limitation of public involvement in hearings, a decision made without participation of CHAP, is a poor one.

Alarms about threats to the integrity of Mt. Vernon continue to sound. Will a single developer be allowed to denigrate this beautiful community through a proposed "compromise"? We should heed visiting Charleston Mayor Joseph Riley's emphasis on the importance of *consistent*, non-political rules for historic preservation.

Finally in the negative ledger, will we continue to suffer the presence of that ill-placed sculpture in front of our renovated Pennsylvania Station? Will Carroll Mansion on Lombard Street continue to starve for funds?

On the positive side, the City and many others have been active and cre-

ative on establishing a Heritage Trail, on improvements at Fort McHenry, early planning for the War of 1812 commemorative, reopening of the Hippodrome, adaptive reuse of Thurgood Marshall's Upton school building, rejuvenated City Hall Plaza and refurbished City Council Chamber, the exciting new Sports Museum at Camden Yards, recovery of the B&O Railroad Museum from a nearly fatal Roundhouse collapse, the impressive Lewis Museum of African American History and Culture, the wonderful illuminated Stars and Stripes at the growing Flag House, the \$250,000 commitment to the Clifton Mansion roof repair, and the Maritime Museum of the Maryland Historical Society in Fell's Point. We continue to be enthusiastic about our suggested "Baltimore Day."

Somewhere between negative and positive lie such projects as the dramatic restoration of the Roman Catholic Basilica to its architectural origins roots, which to some is problematic itself. But this raised the reasonable complaint that the Church has wrongly removed from the City all of the historic stained glass windows.

Many cannot justify the threatened loss of the Rochambeau building just north of the Basilica, but others see advantage in some Charles Street open space for an intended prayer garden. The loss of the Odorite building was disturbing to many preservationists, even though its modernistic successor has many redeeming qualities.

With great trepidation because of the many deserving of recognition, we single out a few who have done so much affirmative: Mt. Vernon advocate Lance Humphries, Baltimore Heritage's Johns Hopkins, the redoubtable lawyer-advocate for historic preservation John C. Murphy, Esq., the Mayor's Heritage Officer William Pencek, and our former president Romaine S. Somerville, chairperson of the Peale planning process.

The future? Who can tell? But without a continued cooperative effort by the history community, including perhaps a political action committee for history and a publicly funded, independent advocate for historic preservation, it may be bleak.



Maryland Historical Society
The Peale Museum

Bonnie View: A Golf Club With Peripatetic Players

The course of Jewish settlement in East Baltimore in the 1840s and subsequent migration northwest through Bolton Hill, Eutaw Place and Druid Hill Park to Pikesville and surrounding areas is well known to local historians. The role of the Bonnie View Country Club and Golf Course in the latter stages of that trek, both geographic and social, affords a new perspective on the story, as highlighted through an application to qualify the club property—straddling the City's northern boundary at Pikesville—for the National Register of Historic Places. Here are excerpts of the research for that application, as conducted and written by Karen F. Stuhler, who served as a student intern with the City's Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) in 2003.

— — — "Acquired by well-known attorney and community activist I. William Schimmel in 1950, the clubhouse and golf course marks the widespread adoption of suburban life and the pursuit of recreational activity that had largely been restricted to only the wealthiest members of Baltimore's Jewish community."

— — — "Over time the terms 'uptown' and 'downtown' were used to delineate between German Jews and Eastern European Jews, respectively. While the classifications are rooted in geography, they were also used to imply certain characteristics with respect to social class and economic wealth."

— — — "Bonnie View Country Club was founded to provide Eastern European Jewish families with the same amenities that

existed at clubs such as Suburban but with less formality and restrictions. The distinction between 'uptown' and 'downtown' persisted despite the success and movement of the Eastern European Jewish community north and west; therefore, Bonnie View served not only as a club but as one of the area's crucial centers of community life for newly located Eastern European Jews."

— — — "The development of the club exemplifies the efforts of the community's residents to realize the postwar 'American Dream' while cultivating an active, involved community in Northwest Baltimore."

— — — "[Schimmel] also helped found a home for the Beth Am congregation in Reservoir Hill. He even sang in the choir when he was in his 90s. Schimmel was a member of the Jewish Educational Alliance and continued to provide legal counsel to Jewish organizations until his death in 2000. Schimmel's legacy as one of Jewish Baltimore's most influential leaders during the 20th century is significant to the historicity of the Bonnie View Country Club...."

Before the clubhouse and course reached the Registry, they were demolished to make room for houses. The Club is to rebuild, farther out to the northwest. CHAP files are available to by appointment, 410.396.4866, and at the Enoch Pratt Free Library. Other titles in the CHAP file include "A Survey of Baltimore Car Dealerships" and "Frank Kelly, City Boss or Hero of West Baltimore?" - Jay G. Merwin, Jr.

Immigration Site Dedicated Hard By Where Ships Came In

Fifty or so hardy souls in a major March 15 wind dedicated the Baltimore Immigration Memorial's Liberty Garden on Locust Point in the first stage of the project detailed in the 2004 spring and fall Newsletters. The site is at the foot of Hull Street on land donated by Tide Point developer C. William Struever that once contained 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.

Memorial board President Ellen Vonkarajan, who also is executive director of the Preservation Society for Federal Hill and Fell's Point, introduced attendees from throughout the City. Although the Immigra-

tion 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 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 board member Ronald Zimmerman Sr., a life-long Locust Pointer, who hoisted a memorial flag. Struever alluded to his own immigrant heritage and that of Locust Point asking attendees "not to let current fears of the world turn our backs" on immigrants. A community leader likened Struever to an intrepid modern-day immigrant, seeing an opportunity on the harbor's south shore and kayaking over to take up the cudgel.



National Park Service
Symposium Site, Westminster Hall, is a topic.

Baltimore's Bunkum

(Continued from Page 1)

truth about the past. But this aggrandized view of history 'just ain't so.' Long after they have been discredited by unquestioned research, misstatements of fact, mischaracterizations of motive, exaggerations as to consequence, and perhaps even lies continue to be included in the storied history of Baltimore and Maryland."

Four speakers will provide examples and an open discussion will ponder why. The speakers:

* Professor Larry Gibson, University of Maryland School of Law, "Thurgood Marshall Myths, Things Written About Him that Ain't So."

* Dr. Edward C. Papenfuse, Maryland State Archivist, "Revisiting the First Plot to Assassinate Lincoln in 1861: Was there one?"

* Dr. David Taft Terry, Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African-American History & Culture Director of Collections and Exhibitions, "Exploring the Plantation Underground: Fugitives and Families and Friends in Antebellum Maryland."

* Dr. Michael S. Franch, Historian, "Burials, Builders, and Burgeoning Baltimore: The True Story Behind the Fable of Westminster Burial Ground."

The Workshop at historic Westminster Hall, "apparent" burial site of Edgar Allan Poe, at Fayette and Greene Streets, will also include the announcement of the winner of the 2005 Joseph Arnold Prize for Outstanding Writing on Baltimore History and the award of the prize provided by Thomas C. and Nancy B. Martel. The Workshop fee is \$25 and those wishing to attend should inquire through Marie Schwartz at 410.706.3838 or e-mail baltimorehistory@law.umaryland.edu.

Also on the Society agenda is the annual meeting, to be held at the Caton Carroll Mansion, Lombard east of President Street, on Saturday, June 24 from 10AM to noon. Attendees can tour this 1823 City home of Charles Carroll of Carrollton.