

Lectures at Learning Center

Last season's seven-lecture series at the Village Learning Center ended on July 16 with W. Edward Orser's "Restoring Natural Heritage Along the Gwynns Falls." BCHS is planning a second season at the Charles Village venue under the leadership of President Mike Franch. The schedule is to be announced on www.historicbaltimore.org.

Volunteers: Museum Yard Sale

The Greater Baltimore History Alliance seeks volunteers to assist with its second Heritage and Museum Yard Sale on November 7 from 8AM to 2PM at the Museum of Industry, 1415 Key Highway. Volunteers and the general public can purchase exhibit panels and graphics, artifact reproductions, books, gift shop items, posters and holiday decorations donated by museums including the Babe Ruth Birthplace, Sports Legends at Camden Yards, B&O Railroad Museum and the Museum of Industry.

Volunteers also are needed on November 6 to set up the sale. Free parking. For more information, 410.837.3262. All proceeds will benefit the education and outreach programs of the History Alliance, www.baltimoremuseums.org.

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members and other interested parties with cards, letters, calls and e-mails seeking action on a strategy to revive the shuttered Peale, bedraggled and lacking handicapped access, and alternately warning against fiscally imprudent commitment of scarce Society funds. His mantra was "due diligence." Presidents came and went complaining that the issue distracted the organization from its historical focus. This led to creation of a Friends of the Peale alternative as Byrnes sought and eventually obtained support of Mayor Sheila Dixon for his approach.

In a late-August mailing to potential users of space in the History Center-Peale, newly Chairman Byrnes listed numerous participants in the new approach, including Courtney Wilson of the B&O Railroad Museum and BCHS members Romaine Somerville, John Sondheim and Buzzy Cuzack, and added: "It is unlikely that this effort will succeed in the long run without the strong support or endorsement of the entire history community as envisioned by our Mayor." A constant of his approach is that capital expenses of a revived Peale would remain with the City.

Poe's Legacy Endures in City That Buried Him

By Jeffrey A. Savoye

The name of Edgar Allan Poe conjures images of dark shadows hiding supernatural mysteries, not least of which is an ominous raven bearing the mournful message of "nevermore." Many forget, however, that in addition to his sad and lyrical poetry and tales of terror, Poe wrote humorous stories, dabbled in science fiction, and was the father of the modern detective story. He was also a fearless critic determined to raise the standard of American literature. That he achieved this goal in his own writings, at least, is evidenced by the fact that his more notable works have never been out of print in the 150 years since his death in Baltimore on October 7, 1849.

Indeed, while Baltimore shares its claim to Poe with Richmond, Philadelphia, and New York, this city is guardian of his tomb. Thus, in this bicentennial year of his birth, the city is celebrating Poe with a festival called Nevermore 2009. The festivities began in January to mark Poe's birthday on the 18th. Audiences enjoyed related relics and "The Tell-Tale Heart," read by local actor Tony Tsendeas, "Hop-Frog" produced by Mark Redfield with life-sized puppets, and "Some Words with a Mummy" produced by John Spitzer.

A large cake in the shape of the Poe Monument, designed by Duff Goldman of Food Network's "Ace of Cakes," was given away. But the highlight was when actor John

Astin, remembered as Gomez on "The Addams Family" TV show, delivered his "Tribute to Poe," and closed with a heartfelt toast.

A "Cask of Amontillado" wine-tasting was held at Westminster Hall, Fayette and Greene Streets, on March 28, sponsored by Woodhall Wine Cellars. Local actor David Keltz recited the story and Laurie Forster, "The Wine Coach," talked about the properties of amontillado. "The Fall of the House of Usher," produced by Spitzer, was performed on June 13 in the cemetery where Poe is buried. Mount Vernon Place's Artscape July 17-19 and Book Festival September 25-27 included tributes to Poe. The Baltimore Museum of Art is presenting works inspired by Poe, including a portrait by Henri Matisse and illustrations for "The Raven" by Manet. And now Poe's proper funeral on October 11.

Legions of scholars, journalists and Poe devotees have tried to capture the man's complex personality and enshrine it forever in paper and ink. They have chased every letter or note he jotted, every newspaper or magazine article, every building with a Poe association catalogued—but Poe has fooled us all and remains an elusive quarry.

Savoye is secretary of the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore and maintains its website www.eapoe.org, where most of what Poe wrote is available. Savoye has written for the Edgar Allan Poe Review and Poe Studies.

The Baltimore City Historical Society Inc.
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201 West Monument Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

BALTIMORE GASLIGHT

Newsletter of the Baltimore City Historical Society

Two Mansions, Two Outcomes



Photo by Lew Diuguid
Proud Sellers estate crumbles.

Lafayette Square Lament

By Andrea Houseman

Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation

Sellers Mansion was built in 1868 for Kentucky natives Matthew Bacon Sellers Sr. and his second wife Angelina Leathers Lewis. They relocated to Baltimore from Oakland Plantation in Louisiana. They made about \$50,000 on the sale of the plantation and used it to purchase the unusually large lot on the newly established Lafayette Square and to construct the grand home designed by architect Edward Davis. In 1874, Sellers was appointed director of the Northern Central Railroad, serving until his death in 1880 at age 85. The Northern Central Railroad had become a strong economic force in Baltimore with the rise of other industries and improvement of rail connections. His son would add national esteem for his work in aeronautics, anticipating NASA.

Lafayette Square is a small section of the former Harlem Estate owned by Dr. Thomas Edmondson. After Edmondson's death in 1856 his heirs sold it to the City for \$15,000 and an ordinance in 1857 officially created the square and the Lafayette Square Association was created to promote development. The surrounding streets were graded in 1859: Lanvale, Arlington, Townsend and Republican, now Carrollton and Lafayette.

Development halted during the Civil War when Camp Hoffman, home to the 3rd Maryland Calvary, (Continued on Page 3)



Photo from www.cylburnassociation.org
Cylburn had a chrome base.

From Estate to Arboretum

By Don Torres

Who is Mary Imwold? And what is her connection to Jesse Tyson, Richard Hook, Edyth Johns, and Bruce Cotten? Their link is the Cylburn estate, now the Cylburn Arboretum—trees, plants, greenhouses and the 19th century mansion on Greenspring Avenue in northwest Baltimore.

Baltimore was wealthy in the 1800s. Many names of its businessmen still are well known: Hopkins, Pratt, Carroll, Peabody, Garrett, Winans. Perhaps less known were the chrome-plated Tysons. By 1827, America's first chrome ore was discovered—on land belonging to Jesse Tyson, a Quaker merchant, in an area known as Bare Hills, north of the City. With this discovery, and other sources of chrome-rich serpentine ore found in Maryland and Pennsylvania by Jesse's son, Isaac (1792-1861), the Tysons' chrome mining operations produced in 1829-50 most of the chrome ore consumed worldwide. Their processing plant, the Baltimore Chrome Works, was on 20 acres on the west side of Fell's Point from 1844 to 1985. By then it was part of the Allied Chemical Corp., which, now as Honeywell, has capped the resultant brownfields. Redevelopment is underway.

Although Isaac's technical knowledge and entrepreneurship propelled the Tyson family to wealth, his two sons James (1828-1900) and Jesse (1826-1906), form the Cylburn story. After (Continued on Page 3)

Judge Byrnes Quits Chair And Takes Up a New One

By Lewis H. Diuguid

John Carroll Byrnes, principal creator of The Baltimore City Historical Society in 1988 and its first president, presented "my final report as board chairman" at the Society's June 20 membership meeting in Fell's Point. He had held the chair since 2003. The Circuit Court judge emeritus then listed dozens of other members, many recruited by him, who share the goal to "save and tell all of the history" of their City. He wished them well in the pursuit.

Judge Byrnes made clear that in retiring he has rededicated himself to transforming the historic Peale Museum, but from a different platform—the Baltimore History Center at the Peale. He is now chair of that independent body designed to be interlocutor between the Peale's owner, the City, and history-minded organizations, perhaps including BCHS, that are to occupy it. The Peale had served as the municipal historical society, only to close with other City Life Museums in a 1997 budget squeeze. That trauma set the judge in motion to create BCHS.

In June, Chairman Byrnes, as simultaneous head of the Society's nominations committee, presented a new slate of officers, with Michael Franch replacing Sally Johnston as president and Judith Arnold as president-elect. The newly elected board chair is preservation-minded lawyer John C. Murphy. The judge's self-described "retirement" is not complete. He remains as chairman emeritus and he also vowed to enliven the little-noted advisory Trustee Board.

Still, his redirection is an historic turn for the fledgling Historical Society. For a decade he has beseeched (Continued on Page 4)



Judge Byrnes stood for his points as chair.

**From the President:
 Take Your Turn
 At Pursuing History**

By Michael Franch
 There was an amusing but sad "Talk of the Town" piece in a recent New Yorker magazine about a feud between Brooklyn historians over which one knew more about their borough—and how much of the other's information was erroneous. It was nasty in a maliciously enjoyable way.

Baltimore historians, in my experience, are more mellow than the two Brooklyn combatants but no less curious about their city's history. They are joined in the pursuit of Baltimore history by enthusiastic people who don't consider themselves historians but who share that curiosity. Both groups want to know "what happened here?" and "what does it mean?" (More properly, "what did it mean then and what does it mean now?")

Both groups need each other. Historians enjoy researching, if not always the writing, but the labor is even more rewarding when the results find an audience. People who like to read or hear about history need people willing to do the hard work of producing the material. Furthermore, as I've seen a time or two at our Baltimore History Evenings at the Village Learning Place, the "non-historian" audience can bring helpful insight and experience to the historian.

One of the jobs of the Baltimore City Historical Society is to help keep this wheel turning. Public events such as the Historians' Workshop and the Baltimore History Evenings offer an incentive to research and opportunities to enjoy the fruits of research. We plan to make more use of our excellent website and other electronic possibilities to make research more accessible. In the multiple meanings of the phrase, we invite you to join us in making history.



Photo from www.lovelylane.net
 An Etruscan reach for the stars.

White's Famed Church

By Laura Gamble
 Lovely Lane United Methodist Church is a lesser-known example of Baltimore's historical "firsts," named for its original location, the 1774 Meeting House built on the lane to John Lovely's property. It was there in 1784, at what is now 206 East Redwood Street, that Methodists held the historic Christmas Conference and created the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. Today we know Lovely Lane as the Mother Church of American Methodism.

The church moved to three other locations before building in the present one to mark the centennial of the Christmas Conference. The building at 2200 St. Paul Street is an example of ecclesiastical Etruscan architecture, with the tower modeled after a church in Ravenna, Italy. The large, domed sanctuary and tower are visible from much of the City. Renowned architect Stanford White led the design project. Dr. John F. Goucher was minister--the two buildings north of the church on St. Paul Street were built later to house the college that bears his name.

The painting on the interior of the dome is a recreation of the sky at 3AM on November 6, 1887, when the church was dedicated. Some practical aspects of the design were novel for the day. Under the individual upholstered seats were wire racks for gentlemen to stow their hats and coat hangers attached to the seats in front. An early form of air conditioning vents under the seats, pulling cool air up from the basement when a trap door is opened in the dome.

A painstaking restoration of the sanctuary was completed in 2003 and included the removal of a canvas replica of the mural on the dome and restoration of the original, new Wilton carpets and upholstery in the original patterns, as well as gold leafing of the organ pipes. The chapel, with its Louis Comfort Tiffany windows, is still in need of restoration.

For 225 years this steadfast congregation has lived on in Baltimore and continues to

**Mayor's Reception, Honors At
 Lovely Lane on Nov. 14**

The Baltimore City Historical Society's Ninth Annual Mayor's Reception will be held on Saturday, November 14, from noon to 2 at the Lovely Lane United Methodist Church, 2200 St. Paul Street and will honor eight Baltimoreans who have added luster to the City. The site is the mother church of American Methodism and the building designed by Stanford White is on the National Register of Historic Places (see story at left). Attendees will be offered a light lunch and are invited to a docent-led tour.

Tickets are \$30 and can be obtained through BCHS, c/o The Maryland Historical Society, 201 West Monument Street, Baltimore MD 21201. Parking is available at the Geological Society lot immediately north of the church.

History honors are accorded in three categories: professional historians, living history, and in memorial. Those recognized as professionals in the field include **Dr. Robert I. Cottom**, a Johns Hopkins historian who has written, edited and told stories about Baltimore and Maryland; also **Louis S. Diggs**, who researches and writes local African American history, including three books on communities in Baltimore County.

Honored in the broader category of living history are **Laura Lippman**, whose crime novels, mostly set in this City, have won prizes including the Edgar, Anthony, Shamus, Nero Wolfe, Gumshoe and Barry; **Kevin "KAL" Kallaughter**, cartoonist of The Sun for 18 years of skewering world leaders and Baltimore pols; **Eva Slezak**, born in Czechoslovakia but a librarian at the Pratt Library, where she has helped develop the African-American collection; and **Marc Steiner**, who started in Baltimore public radio on WJHU in 1993 and in 2000 led the creation of WYPR, where he was vice president and show host. He now is on WEAA at Morgan State University.

The remembrances are for **Wilbur Harvey Hunter Jr.** (1916-81), director of the Peale Museum from 1946 to 1978; **Frances L. Murphy II** (1922-2007), reporter, columnist and publisher of the Afro-American newspapers; and sculptor **Ralph McGuire** (1917-2005), whose works expressed a devotion to bustling industrial Baltimore.

draw members from many neighborhoods, including its own Old Goucher. Visitors come from all over the world, drawn by the Church's religious significance or to its architecture. For more information, visit www.lovelylane.net.

Cylburn - Continued from Page 1
 the death of their grandfather in 1861, the brothers purchased hundreds of acres of hilly, wooded land along the west bank of Jones Falls and north of what is now Cold Spring Lane. One of Jesse's purchases was the property of farmer and businessman Richard Hook, known as Spring Wood, with its large stone home built around 1833. James, on his property south of Jesse's, went on to build his own home, Ruscombe, in 1868--still standing as a private school.

In 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, Jesse Tyson began a grand four-story Italianate Victorian mansion, designed by George A. Frederick, the architect of City Hall. He used gneiss, granite-like, mined at Bare Hills. How Jesse came to the name Cylburn is a mystery. Cylburn Arboretum Association historian Patricia Draisey, whose research is reflected here as well as my own, has pieced together one possibility: "Cyl" could be a variant of "sylvan," and "burn" is Scottish for "small stream." Together, they reflect the estate.

Jesse intended Cylburn to be a summer home for himself and his mother, Hannah Wood Tyson, their town home being at 6 East Franklin Street, but she died two years before completion in 1868. In 1888, he married a beautiful Baltimore debutante, Edyth Johns, and brought her to Cylburn. In 1906, Jesse died. They had no children.

Edyth was about 37. Four years later, she met Major Bruce Cotten, from North Carolina, who had fought in the Boxer Rebellion (1900) and in the Philippines. He was stationed at Ft. McHenry and in 1910 he followed Edyth to England and they married there. She

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 was constructed there. By the late 1860s the square returned to its intended purpose as a recreation area, hemmed by a cast-iron fence and other features later removed by the City. In 1867, Church of the Ascension, now St. James, was the first church on the square. Sellers Mansion followed a year later as the first residence on its east side. The shaded square's tulip poplar might date to then.

The Sellers Mansion is architecturally significant for its late-High Victorian styling, an opulent residence of the affluent in post-Civil War Baltimore--often compared with the Mt. Vernon mansion at 105 West Monument Street, which has a similar proportion and styling. On a sandstone base the three-story brick structure is topped with a patterned slate tile mansard roof. Lost elements include a cupola and two porches.

Matthew Sellers Jr., born in the house

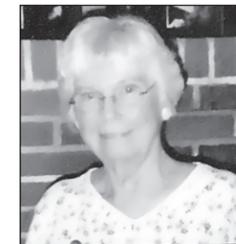


Photo by Don Torres
 Mary Imwold

traveled to Europe every summer to buy antiques for the mansion. In 1942, Edyth died at 73. Bruce Cotten sold the property to the City for \$42,300 and moved to a small home on Hamilton Street. He died in 1954. The hardships of World War II introduced neglect to Cylburn. The Department of Public Welfare used the mansion for homeless children. There is more to tell of Cylburn's transformation, but first to Mary Imwold--the last person with memories of Cylburn under the Cottens.

Historian Draisey and I met with Mary at her Linthicum home. Spry at 84, she took us back in time. She was about 3 when her family moved into a small frame house down the hill from the mansion. Her father, James Vincent Poe, was hired as a caretaker. As the family grew, and Mary was 10 or 11, Mrs. Cotten relocated them to a larger stone house, the one originally belonging to Richard Hook. It had been divided, the other half housing the estate overseer who was Poe's boss. The stone home no longer exists, but Mary has a painting that shows a solid, three-story of simple design. "It even had pocket doors."

James Vincent Poe worked until Edyth's death in 1942. Mary says her brothers and sisters truly felt they were living in the country, with spring water piped into the house, heating and cooking by coal stoves, an outhouse, a large vegetable garden, and

in 1869, a year after its completion. He was a pioneer in aeronautical experimentation and his leadership laid the ground for what we know as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. He was educated by tutors and studied in Germany and France, then received his LL.B. from Harvard Law School in 1892 and attended the Lawrence Scientific School of Harvard.

In 1888, Sellers' widowed mother bought land once owned by her family near Grahn, Kentucky, and named it Blakemore. Matthew Jr. built a large farm house and, in 1897, a miniature wind tunnel. His experiments led to his invention, the "Quadra Plane." In 1912, he was appointed by President Taft to the Aerodynamical Laboratory Commission. It led to formation of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, now NASA.

The younger Sellers died in 1932 in Irvington, N.Y. In 1967, aviation historian Ed-

woods to roam. Of course, school pulled the children from this rural life--a walk up the hill to Pimlico Elementary School #223. For shopping, movies and exploring, there was the longer trek down a dirt road past the vinegar works--which still operates along Jones Falls--to Hampden. Shortly before Mrs. Cotten died, Mary left Cylburn to marry and her family soon moved to Hampden. Mary sums up times at Cylburn, "We had great fun!"

In the 1940s, while the now City-owned property was under the Department of Public Welfare, a citizens' group under the leadership of Elizabeth Clark approached the Board of Recreation and Parks to create an arboretum. Work began in 1954, much of it by the children living on the grounds. By 1957, they were all relocated, and Cylburn Park and Arboretum was becoming the City's center for environmental education and horticulture. In 1982, Cylburn Park became Cylburn Arboretum, with volunteers of the Cylburn Arboretum Association Inc.

With the teamwork of CAA and the City, much has been accomplished at the 207-acre Cylburn Arboretum at 4915 Greenspring Avenue: 2-1/2 miles of trails, a nature museum, and bogs with wetland plants. The mansion offers ornate plaster work and tapestries.

The park is temporarily closed for construction of a 10,000-square-foot, "green" Visitors' Orientation and Education Center, a team effort by the CAA, Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland, Horticultural Society of Maryland and the Department of Recreation and Parks. A grand opening is expected this fall. Consult www.cylburnassociation.org or 410.367.2217.

ward Peck learned of his achievements and began collecting artifacts. Blakemore burned in 1974 during restoration, and his workshop that survived at the New England Aviation Museum was destroyed by a '79 tornado.

Sellers decedents remained in the home on the square until the late 1950s, when it became headquarters of the City Commission on Urban Renewal. In the late 1960s the home was threatened with demolition to make way for a parking lot for the St. James Terrace apartments. Other arrangements were made for parking and the structure survived as a community center until the early 1990s. Entities related to the St. James Church have owned it since the 1960s.

Despite repeated efforts by the Gaslight and CHAP, no response from church authorities has been forthcoming. A CHAP official, however, expressed "cautious optimism" that the mansion could be saved.