

Fell's Point Out of Time

Introduction

Ed Kane

Fell's Point is an area. Some call it a neighborhood. I call it a state of mind. It is an area that for more than two hundred years has been in a state of transition. It still doesn't know what it wants to be when it grows up.

We've got a mile of waterfront out here ... oh I'd say about a mile and a half, that is perhaps historically some of the most significant waterfront in North America, in terms of the things that have been done here, the things that have been caused by the things that have been done here....

Bill Struever

We have this fantastic geography of our harbor kind of curling up into the bosom of our town, the intimacy of our waterfront from side to side, and kind of the idiosyncrasies of the curves of the waterfront, makes it so much more fun and interesting than just about any other urban waterfront you can think of anywhere in the world.

1. A Kinetic Environment

Frederick Douglass IV

I think that was one of the greatest influences on Fell's Point and Baltimore itself was that you had an area where people came in from all over the world, brought in different ideas and different values, so it was a very kinetic kind of environment in Fell's Point.

Halloween participant

I'm here for rockin' and rollin' and Quite Riot and all the 80's bands that got left behind. That's what I'm here for. Keepin' the scene alive. Keepin' the scene alive.

Steve Bunker

Baltimore was known for its mobs. That's why it was called "mob town." During the War of 1812, Robert E. Lee's father was almost killed in the streets of Baltimore because he opposed the War of 1812. Edgar Allen Poe was probably a victim of another mob during the elections in the late 1840's. So Baltimore had always been known for its unruly behavior. A tradition that I like to think we kept alive in Fell's Point.

Ed Kane

We had the riots after the Martin Luther King assassination in April '68, I guess. The city was down at the mouth. There seemed to be an accelerating white flight, middle class white flight.

Sandy Hillman

The portion of the Harbor along Pratt Street that's now the Inner Harbor, you know, that wasn't developed and there was no housing there, when I came here in '68. It was just this vacant land and rotting wharves and piers. And so, the only waterfront community in the city that existed in the late '60's was Fell's Point.

Dan Rodricks

The Fell's Point that I remember in the mid-70s to late-70 s was the place where the Baltimore renaissance started. It was at a time when Baltimore was kind of on the slide. The urban renaissance at the Inner Harbor hadn't quite started yet. And, it kind of happened here first.

Sandy Hillman

This neighborhood is enjoying an extraordinary renaissance from one end to the other. Everybody's looking for property down here. The gentrification, I think, is actually a wonderful and healthy thing.

Lisa Suit

You've definitely got your artsy type of person. Definitely have the artsy, creative people. And then we have the extreme opposite, too. We have the very conservative, button-down... Which is kind of funny. But it all blends. It all works, which is kind of a neat thing. I would say the overall feel, to me, for Fell's Point is that it's definitely an eclectic, kind of funky, fun, almost Soho kind of feel to it.

Lori Guess

Fell's Point is a village. I love it because it is a village. It's not a city. In Fell's Point, you see people all the time you know on the street. You say hello. You say more than hello. You actually become friends with these people. And, it's just such a warm, wonderful feeling.

Sharon Bondroff

Fell's Point has a spirit and a soul and a life that is apart from every other neighborhood in Baltimore. It is a wonderful mixture of the sacred and the profane, the funny and the sad. It's a very rich place with very interesting people who come there for all kinds of reasons. When I got down there, it was home. It was home. I could wander those streets and I could feel at home.

Dan Rodricks

Well, it's really what city life gives you, doesn't it? The opportunity to meet people in an informal way, casually, every day, at a regular meeting place. That's a social construct that is very old. This is like an awakening to some people. That when you live far out in the suburbs, and you have to drive everywhere, and you have to bring all your friends to a chain restaurant to have a friendly gathering, then it's foreign to them that you can just walk down the street, walk into a bar, and see three people. No one talks at first, then pretty soon they are all engaged in a conversation. That's the whole way of doing things. That's how people used to do it in coffee shops and inns, the corner taverns. And that's what you still have here.

Lisa Suit

The people are awesome. I can't tell you how awesome the people have been to me with all that I've been through. When I was going through chemo, they totally supported me, worked in my store for me, fed me. They put together a fundraiser for me. We actually had about 200 people that came to this party and 30 people shaved their heads for me. So that it was a head-shaving party for my birthday to raise money for my medical bills while I was going through the chemo. It was amazing to see all these people... It was overwhelming. It was the most awesome thing anyone's ever done for me.

Dan Rodricks

The Latino community that's moved into Upper Fell's Point is a really significant development, because not far away is Johns Hopkins up the road where things are going like crazy with development, redevelopment, urban revitalization. And in between, you have the Latino community that seems to be coming here and claiming their part of this little dream here. And it's kind of a neat thing to see.

2. Challenging Times

Officer Starr

Crime is really low in this particular area.

Neighbor discussion on street

Lisa Foard

I think overall, Starr's statement was fairly accurate.

Paris Niesterowicz

I think it's changing

Katy Greene Davis

For the worse or for the better?

Paris Niesterowicz

For the worse. I'm a little ... One of our neighbors was attacked last Sunday night.

Lisa Foard

Did they try and rob him?

Paris Niesterowicz

They tried to rob him. They robbed him and then they beat him... Mugging is bad enough, but when they put a gun in your face...

Officer Starr

We really don't have any major crime. We have a lot of malicious destructions that happen on the weekend.

Back to neighbor discussion

Katy Greene Davis

And they do irritating stuff like turn over your pots.

Officer Starr

Very few of the people that are here on a Friday and Saturday night are from this area. It's mostly the college kids.

Back to neighbor discussion

Katy Greene Davis

The college kids can do some serious damage because they beat that guy Matt up badly.

Lisa Foard

Well that's who beat me up that time. Remember how they were peeing against Jimmie Mack's house and I said something.

Katy Greene Davis

You don't expect some white college kid to beat the shit out of you because asked him not to pee on your house. A friend of mine parked in a parking space that some other guy was trying to get in and they were pre-meds from Hopkins and they got out and beat Ted, to the point where he had to go to the hospital, with a tire iron.

Officer Starr

My panhandlers are a little on the shady side. Not all of them, but some of them are, you know, very, very shady.

Back to neighbor discussion

Lisa Foard

We had a lady today, I'm sure you've seen her...

Katy Greene Davis

That crazy lady? She's nasty.

Lisa Foard

Yeah, the crazy lady. She was on all the stoops up and down the street today MF'in and scaring people to death. Then once in a while chase people, call them "skinny white bitches" and go back and sit down again.

Officer Starr

My homeless people are truly, truly homeless. They need a place to sleep at night. They are sleeping out here. They do not like to go to the shelters.

Butch Romig

A lot of people around here know me and stuff. They call me Captain Butch. I had a boat down here for a while. I had it tied up on the other side of the tugboat pier. Well, when I lived on the pier, I enjoyed myself. I come home, eat, sleep. Get up the next morning, go out and help somebody.

Dan Rodricks

It's amazing about Baltimore – you have such separate neighborhoods that are right near each other. And it's kind of a paradox. We have terribly violent crime in some sections of the city, but it's not everywhere. So, you can come to Fell's Point and feel safe, drive a few blocks – only a few blocks – and drive through an area that feels totally desolate, bleak, and scary, and where the drug dealers roam.

Back to neighbor discussion

Paris Niesterowicz

Fell's Point is such a cute kind of an enclave of itself.

Katy Greene Davis

But it's 3 blocks that way or 4 blocks that way and it's the ghetto. It's the projects.

Paris Niesterowicz

Sure. Sure.

Frederick Douglass IV

I think that one thing that has to be understood by everybody is, what happens in the black community is an indicator of what's going to happen in the white community. So, if it's a musical trend, if it's a crime, if it's education, you know, don't think that you can just push people off into a corner and isolate yourself from what you see as their problems. Whatever, good or bad, it's going to become something that's going to have an impact on you.

Bill Struever

Hopefully there is a starting point where there is universal agreement – the city needs reinvestment. It needs new jobs. It needs new population. If it continues to lose jobs and population, losing tax base, the future is a desolate one indeed.

The Crowdaddies singing "Take that Bottle"

Just when I think that everything's OK, well I find myself out drinkin' 'bout every day. Well, I'm doin' it all night, yeah I'm doin' it up real nice. Leave it up to me to make the same mistake twice. Take that bottle, drink that bottle down... Yeah, take that bottle, drink that bottle down...

Bill Struever

So it's our hope that Fell's Point can continue doing what it is doing – keep its very special spirit, its crankiness, and individualism, and yet at the same time, balance that with the big picture and a sense of obligation to the city as a whole in terms of what Fell's Point and its waterfront can contribute.

Sandy Hillman

There is nothing wrong bringing in affluent people who can afford to pay the taxes to keep the city going. You gotta be a little bit pragmatic as well as philosophical. Fell's Point is one of those neighborhoods that has the opportunity to help the city accomplish that, and I think it's their responsibility to stand up to Council and say "OK. It may not be like it was 50 years ago, but life isn't like it was 50 years ago."

PJ Trautwein

In many respects though, throughout the ages, Fell's Point has become and has been a sort of an independent community ... very much so. Independent thinking. Even to today. Fell's Point, I think, could very well secede from the City and be happy.

A lot that held Fell's Point together were the battles that we had. That's helped to keep the spirit alive. I think the thing that we have is the battle now to keep our history alive [pounds on table to emphasize]. That is the battle I think we're in now. We need to educate our people here [pounds on table] so that they don't destroy... we don't destroy what we have.

3. Early Times - 1731-1800

Steve Bunker

One of Fell's Point's earliest and best-known citizens, and indeed the fellow who really ultimately gave Fell's Point its name, William Fell, was a shipbuilder in England. When he came to the new world and saw this deep water harbor, he immediately set up shipbuilding operations. And that was the mainstay of Fell's Point for a long time to come.

Bob Eney

William Fell settled in Fell's Point about 1731. One of his kids, he named Edward Fell, after his brother. And so he grew up, and I guess there still weren't too many people because he married his mother's niece, Ann Bond. So they were keeping it in the family. [Laughs] Anyway, Edward Fell the son had inherited his father's property, William Fell's property, when William Fell died in 1741. And if you could picture that little town of Fell's Point ... it wasn't a town, it was just a big farm. And Edward and his wife lived there and improved it. And they built it into a mansion. And everybody wanted to buy a piece of his land. So in 1763, Edward and his wife Ann laid out a town. Once they started selling off the land in lots, Edward dropped dead. And so Ann Bond Fell, it was up to her. And she went out, and she sold Fell's Point.

Now, Baltimore Town, further up the harbor, Baltimore Town was still selling off lots. And Ann just went right ahead of them... And people in Baltimore Town started saying bad things about Fell's Point and about Ann being crooked and not giving good titles and had bad water and all this stuff. But her father, John Bond, he advertised in the *Gazette and Daily Advertiser* that everything that Ann Bond said about Fell's Point, he was staking his reputation on it because it was true, and that it was good. And sure enough, by 1773, in 10 years she had sold off all the land in Fell's Point. Baltimore Town still had lots for sale from 1752. So she was a good promoter.

Steve Bunker

The glorious time for Fell's Point in shipbuilding was the time between the Revolutionary War and some time just before the Civil War. Fell's Point began building its famous privateers at that time. A couple of hundred privateers came out of the Baltimore area during the American revolution. And when you consider the size of Baltimore at that time and the size of Fell's Point, then that's pretty remarkable. Privateers and Letters of Marque were vessels, private armed vessels, merchant ships, but they were licensed to prey on enemy shipping. They were legal pirates.

Geoffrey Footner

And as Fell's Point grew as the deep water port for the region, the population grew and it became more and more of a separate town, and a town with some power because there were a great number of merchants here in Fell's Point.

Steve Bunker

In the 1790's and early 1800's, there were a lot of very well-to-do people living in Fell's Point. A series of plagues swept through. In this case, we know it was yellow fever and malaria from the fens and from the bogs, from the mosquitoes living in the low grounds by the shipyards. People didn't know that at the time. So the well-to-do families fled. And what was left was sailors and immigrants and poor folks.

Geoffrey Footner

The well-to-do merchants of Baltimore, led by the Smith family, became quite jealous of the growing Fell's Point, and the growing independence of Fell's Point.

Ed Kane

Back in 1794, the legislature authorized the incorporation of Baltimore City. But it didn't happen until 1797. Now, why was that? Well the reason for that is Fell's Point didn't want any part of it.

Bob Keith

Just across the street from me, the founding fathers of Fell's Point met at the London Coffee House and decided whether to join Baltimore City. And I guess they were correct in doing so, but I think Fell's Point would actually, if it had just stayed a separate incorporated city, things might be different. Even now, now it's seen as kind of the engine of Baltimore but it's very capable of sustaining itself and was then.

Geoffrey Footner

And so in January the 1st of 1797, the City of Baltimore came to exist. Even today, there's this animosity of Fell's Point towards the City of Baltimore. And one of the bases of it is that it's always been treated as sort of just another district or minor part of Baltimore without much political stature or power whatsoever.

4. Glorious Times - 1800-1840

Geoffrey Footner

There was a tremendous amount of money made here in Baltimore. And this we call the Golden Age of Fell's Point. And it's a very simple trade – you take flour down to the West Indies, which you could get almost any price for because the people were starving, and you brought back coffee and sugar and carried it to Europe, where you could get very high prices because people needed coffee and sugar.

Fell's Point became a very, very important port at that time, of course part of Baltimore. It had established itself as one of the leading shipbuilding areas in the nation. So naturally when George

Washington who was President, decided to establish a Navy, one of the first ships built for the Navy, was built just east of here on the Patapsco. It was the USS Constellation.

PJ Trautwein

Now, let me explain first that the War of 1812 was over the northern boundaries, an independent Indian nation, and also became the trade, free trade and the rights of sailors. Because our sailors were being taken by the British on the high seas and impressed. So places like Fell's Point were very up in arms. Trade, free trade – we could not trade with other countries except through England. Therefore, Congress on June the 17 in the year 1812 declared war on Great Britain.

So United States at war with Great Britain. We did a terrible job in fighting the British. In the north, along the boundary with Canada, we lost every major battle.

Our Navy, which was very small, was all bottled up by British blockades, so the only navy that we had were the privateers. Fell's Point had 56 privateers out on the high seas and in that short duration of time, two years, these privateers from Fell's Point captured or destroyed over 500 British vessels.

On August the 24th, the British had defeated the Americans at the Battle of Bladensburg and then went on to burn Washington.

Now, in 3 weeks, 3 weeks, Baltimore, Fell's Point, built, dug an entrenchment from right over here in Harris Creek on up through Patterson Park all the way up past the Pagoda. In 3 weeks, they gathered over 15,000 troops here. There were 12,000 troops along that entrenchment. 3,000 troops over on the south side of the river. You had Fort McHenry. You had Camp Lookout. You had Fort Babcock and Fort Covington. Most of those forts, except for Fort McHenry, were finished or completed in those 3 weeks.

The 12th, British landed, started to come up. And their aim was right here in Fell's Point. The British saw Fell's Point as such a threat to them at sea that they wanted to destroy Fell's Point more than any other place in the country. So you can imagine that the people in Fell's Point ... what they felt like when they heard the cannon announcing that the British had landed.

At about 2:00, everything broke loose because Fort Babcock and Fort Covington spotted this flotilla of British. And they said at that time that South Baltimore just shook like one big earthquake for a couple of hours because of all the cannon fire that was going on. Because the cannons erupted not only in Fort Covington, Fort Babcock, but the Lookout, Fort McHenry, and Lazaretto Point ... Everybody responded. It was just one big boom, plus it was a terrible thunderstorm. So you had lightening, thunder and booms. And the people living in Fell's Point, South Baltimore, and especially Fell's Point, didn't know what was going on. They didn't know if the British had really made a breakthrough or not, so they were living in total fear.

Next morning, of course, they found out that the forts had held and the British were in retreat.

Geoffrey Footner

These marvelous schooners ... because they had become so sharp as they say, so sleek, so inefficient as far as hauling cargos, large cargos, that they fell into disuse for most trades.

But on the other hand, two other trades developed after the War of 1812. And one of them was the illicit slave trade in Africa, which the schooners were used very, very successfully. And then, they were used widely in the opium trade between India and China.

Frederick Douglass IV

The Fell's Point area has a considerable history in slavery. Austin Woolfolk of course, was one of the most notorious slavers. And in the area where you have the Inner Harbor he had his slave pens. Baltimore was schizophrenic about slavery, so sometimes they would even hide the slaves in buckboards and cover them over with quilts so that they wouldn't offend the more gentle citizens of the town. The trail of tears was a path that the slaves followed as they proceeded to the slave

markets where they would be roped. Being sold was a very indelicate kind of situation, because people came up and examined you as they would a horse. They would put their hands into your mouth or your private parts or whatever in order to examine their potential investment.

Steve Bunker

Probably one of the most distinguished citizens to come out of Fell's Point in historic times was a young man by the name of Fred Bailey. Fred Bailey was born on Eastern Shore and was brought as a slave to Baltimore. He came to Fell's Point as a young man, was apprenticed as a ship caulker in the Gardner & Kemp Shipyard and several of the shipyards in Fell's Point.

Fred Bailey was the top of his trade. But he didn't like the idea of being a slave. So Fred Bailey dressed himself as a sailor, and sailors were fairly common on the trains in those days, going from one place to another. If you were dressed as a sailor, no one questioned whether you were a slave or not. So no one questioned him. He took the train North. He ended up in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and changed his name to Frederick Douglass.

Frederick Douglass IV

There are number of things that people know about Fell's Point, but one is that my great, great grandfather lived here and escaped from here. September 3, 1838...

Geoffrey Footner

After the War of 1812, immigration became a big industry. And where we tend to now to give it a sort of an aura of emotion or sentimentality, actually the owners of vessels considered immigrants as cargo. The trade was a very harsh business. An Alexander Brown ship could take tobacco or some other product to England, as an example, to Liverpool, and in Liverpool he had one of his sons there and the son would have agents in Germany and they would corral a cargo of people and they'd transfer them up to Liverpool. And not by coercion so much as PR and other tactics, these people would immigrate. More often than not, they didn't have any money, so the ship owner would say you can pay on the other side. Well that meant that they had to serve out a sort of period as slaves. The white people, black, whatever they were, were auctioned on arrival at Fell's Point.

5. Troubling Times - 1840-1860

Steve Bunker

The 1840's, 50's and 60's were a very, very troubling time for Fell's Point and for Baltimore generally. Maryland was a slave state, but Fell's Point was also home to what may have been the largest free black community in the United States outside of New York maybe. About half the African-American folks in Baltimore and in Maryland generally were free.

Frederick Douglass IV

In Fell's Point you had a greater sense of equality because you had working people and so you had blacks working along side of whites. I think this is one of the areas where it was more of a melting pot and where people really got to know each other despite their race, creed, or color.

Steve Bunker

Maryland was caught up in the war very early. And Baltimore was very much in danger of being a divided city. It all calmed down eventually. Baltimore went under martial law. A number of the leading citizens of Baltimore who had Southern sympathies were imprisoned in Ft. McHenry until things calmed down. But the Civil War was a very cruel time for Baltimore. It was hard on families because there were many families who were divided.

Also, areas like Fell's Point suffered badly in the Civil War because there was an embargo on shipping and many of the products that used to sail out of Jackson's Wharf and Brown's Wharf and the various wharves that lined the Fell's Point waterfront couldn't be shipped out of there. Instead,

Baltimore merchants were having to send their cargo North to Philadelphia or Wilmington or New York or even Boston.

Frederick Douglass IV

Well, I think Baltimore went through what many other cities went through, in terms of your slave population, you know. During the Civil War and previously a lot of people don't understand there was an emerging black intelligentsia, an emerging black middle class, but the overwhelming majority of blacks were living in poverty while trying to find a way to survive.

Steve Bunker

After the Civil War, there was a tremendous competition for jobs in Fell's Point, particularly along the waterfront. The shipbuilding trade had been badly hit by the Civil War. The embargoes early in the Civil War had hurt Fell's Point. And Fell's Point, even with Government contracts and the railroads and all coming through, Fell's Point had never really recovered.

It was people like Isaac Myers who created opportunities for African-Americans, that opened things up and really helped bring a certain amount of social justice and diversity to Fell's Point.

6. Hard Times - 1860-1900

PJ Trautwein

Wooden ships were becoming obsolete by 1850. They were building the larger metal, steel steamships. And that operation moved across the river.

Steve Bunker

Ships were being built a lot larger. They were a lot more technically complex. They were building ships now in iron with big steam plants in them, and Fell's Point was largely bypassed.

PJ Trautwein

But it's interesting to note that the shipbuilding area, when that stopped, what picked up was canneries. We were right on the water, so we could get produce and seafood from eastern shore and the counties. And there was a series of canneries along this waterfront here.

Bob Eney

The boats would come up from the Eastern shore and bring all the produce up. And they'd ring a bell over there. And the ladies would get their aprons and their knives together, and they'd go down to the cannery. And if they had a couple of little kids they couldn't leave at home, they'd take them and they'd have knives for the kids. 'Cause the kids could sit there and peel the stuff, too.

These people worked, and they saved and worked. It didn't cost all that much money to buy a house. You could buy houses in Fell's Point for several hundred dollars. It wasn't like it was up town, or some place where houses were a grand price.

In the instance of the Polish people, when they came, they into the neighborhood to get rooms to live in. And first, people would, if they had an extra room they'd rent it. But if they didn't, they'd rent them their attic. They lived in the attic. And then the next thing you know, they tore the attic off and they built an extra floor up there. And because, when they built it on up, they didn't match, the brick bond didn't match, they put running bond brick up there, and then they put Victorian cornices on it because this was Victorian times. So you have that with an 18th Century first floor and a Victorian top floor.

7. Industrial times - 1900-1960

Rich Milovicz

The harbor lent itself to being a great benefit to business. Domino Sugar, which was adjacent to us on Locust Point, absolutely required boat traffic to remain competitive. Fell's Point, with its manufacturing facilities, also depended upon the harbor as both a source for boat traffic, barge traffic, and the water itself was a significant benefit to the manufacturing facilities. We used harbor water to condense steam, to provide cooling water.

Because of the nature of manufacturing, and in those days before there was a significant environmental movement in the United States, the quality of the aquatic environment in the Inner Harbor was pretty desperate. The harbor itself was filthy. The amount of waste that floated on the water, the pollution that was readily evident to the eye was pretty significant. It was not at all uncommon to see large oil spills, floating foam stretching all the way down the Patapsco down towards Fort McHenry.

PJ Trautwein

The environmental thing wasn't really too big at all.

Rich Milovicz

Odor was the most significant negative environmental impact. In the fall and the winter time, the wind would typically come out of the northwest and blow all of the odors from Dominos Sugar manufacturing and the Procter and Gamble soap plant right straight into Fell's Point. Even though it was very offensive, it also put paychecks in peoples' wallets and allowed them to live a more prosperous life.

PJ Trautwein

They earned their money off of that waterfront or that industry or whatever or that cannery ... that was their living.

Rich Milovicz

Some people would smell the soap plant and think that it smelled like money.

8. A Time to Fight - 1960-1977

Bob Eney

I came to Fell's Point because when I was a kid living in Baltimore, I went to art appreciation classes at the Baltimore Museum every Saturday morning. One day they brought us down to Fell's Point. They were telling us that these had been sea captains houses. And I was very impressed by it and it stuck in my mind. So later, when I was working in New York, and I got an opportunity to come back to Baltimore to work, I said "I'm going to go back to Fell's Point and find one of those old sea captain's houses and fix it up."

And I got down there and I saw Lu Fisher was already in, looking for houses down there.

Lu Fisher

So, we saw this house we liked very much, and it was a fine looking house. We finally found the real estate office, and oh they said "Yes, it's for sale." And it turned out it was for sale at such a low price that we were sort of astounded! And, so right away we put some money down and said "We want it."

Bob Eney

And then they said, it's all going to be destroyed for an expressway.

Eisenhower had been impressed by the Autobahn System in Germany that Hitler had built.

Diana Hyde

He realized that if we had either a catastrophe or worse still, horrors, an invasion or something like that happening, we did not have the road structure.

Romaine Somerville

Government and the population in general was very much in favor of the interstate. They didn't really care where they put it, they just wanted the interstate because it was ninety percent federal and state funding and only ten percent local, and it meant a lot of jobs and a lot of derelict property purchased for this road.

Bob Eney

Urban renewal money was hard to get, but 90/10 money was easy to get. And so that's what they did. They were going for the big lump.

Bill Struever

It was going to be an elevated road right where the Aquarium is. The three roads, 83, 70 and 95, were going to meet in the worlds largest clover leaf where Pier Six and the Marriott Waterfront are and then head up, blasting through the Fell's Point and Canton waterfront and on up to New York.

Lu Fisher

I heard the councilmen told their constituents, "You're so lucky the City wants to buy your houses because you are living in a slum."

When I thought of Europe and all of the old places there that go way, way back. And here, here we are with the few things we have, just destroying 'em all! So, I thought, "Well, I'm just going to see what I can do."

Everything we tried to do was hard to do, because the city, the state, and the Federal government were all strongly behind this plan, and they really wanted it in a big way. And finally I had this person that got interested. His name was Tom Ward. He was the only member of the City Council who voted against it. I guess without him, we couldn't have done it.

Bob Eney

So, everybody got together in February of '67, about 20 people from Federal Hill and Fell's Point got together at Lu's and we formed the Preservation Society.

Romaine Somerville

I think the real thing that brought people down to Fell's Point, and again was an idea put forth by Lu Fisher, was the Fell's Point Fun Festival. She started that immediately, with the idea of showing people a good time, but at the same time making them aware of Fells Point. And that attracts over half a million people now.

Lu Fisher

That's the way, actually, we have been able to survive, because we had enough money to make our group work.

Romaine Somerville

And then, they also did the house tours, which brought potential home buyers down.

Bob Eney

Philadelphia had a strange situation. Philadelphia was a city with more 18th century houses than London. And when the politicians in Philadelphia, crooked from the Mayor on down, they decided that they were going to get rid of all that old slummy waterfront, which was loaded with 18th century buildings, taverns, and what-not. And once they did, people all over the country who knew about

Philadelphia were crying "Halt." And so the government then came up with the National Register. And what its purpose was, it was to stop Federal money from demolishing places like that area of Philadelphia.

And Dr. Murtaugh who had been named keeper of the National Register, he came to Fell's Point and explained to us how we get on the National Register and what we could do, and what it could do for us. Because you cannot spend any Federal money to destroy anything listed on the National Register.

Steve Bunker

Bob was the architectural and historical genius who put all this information together. For the community to be appreciated in its historical context, it really took somebody like Bob Eney. And Bob worked long and hard on that.

Bob Eney

We did manage to get on the National Register. Anne Parrish, who worked for Agnew, she took the forms that we had filled out, to Agnew and he sent them over to Dr. Garvey at the Department of the Interior. And in 3 days, we were on the National Register. And the City of Baltimore went crazy.

The contractors were furious with Agnew. Because ... he was so dumb. He had no idea what he had done. He didn't know that he had put us on the National Register for a community that's blocking his highway that he wanted to build.

Lu Fisher

Then Tom Ward said, "We've got to sue the Federal government." [Laughs] Not just the city, we're gonna sue the Federal government!

Bob Eney

So we needed a lawyer. And so we went out and we searched all kinds of lawyers. And Lu and Tom Ward finally got Norman Ramsey from Semmes, Bowen and Semmes. He's a great historian himself, and he said that he would really like to do this because he said we had a good case and he said, "I know that we can win it." And he said that he would do it pro bono. And for 10 years they did all the paperwork on the road.

Sandy Hillman

All these activists were always butting heads. They were very vocal, very headstrong, a lot of very articulate people who knew sort of how to take on the establishment. And they said, "You know what, you can fight City Hall and win." And they did. They stopped the road. They saved the neighborhood. They were an incredible force.

Bill Struever

And if you think about the things that have really changed the face of Baltimore as we know today, to me there is nothing more important than the road war.

9. *Dangerous Times - 1970-1990*

Ed Kane

We had a community that was just recovering from having been condemned. Lots of people wouldn't invest, people wouldn't invest in it.

Now almost simultaneous with that, there was another great change that has been overlooked, and that was the transference of virtually all sea-going shipping from Fell's Point to the Dundalk Marine Terminals and to the Maryland Port Authority. So that we had, well, the effect of one of the old western boom towns. The gold rush was over. The seamen no longer came.

With the result that, from a period of let's say 1965 to maybe 1975, Fells Point was a community in very dangerous flux.

Lu Fisher

The city had taken over so much of it that a lot of it was worse than before the city took it over, because they would, for instance, turn off the heat. Everything would be ruined. Roofs would be leaking. A lot of the places needed more work than they did, even before the city took it over. You see, that was eleven years of vacant houses. And that was really bad!

Romaine Somerville

But then something very good happened. The city set up excellent standards for rehabilitation of historic property within these taking lines, and first allowing the families that had originally owned the properties to come back and purchase them. They put them up for sale to the public at a very reasonable price, with the condition that you had to restore them to the standards that they had selected.

Bob Eney

I did a book for the City. Each person who bought a house got this booklet, they got this booklet and they got a page with their house on it. And on that page, it shows exactly what has to be done on the front of that house.

Steve Bunker

There was a tremendous collision of cultures in Fell's Point. Well-to-do people coming in from the suburbs, professional people, well-educated people, were buying homes in Fell's Point and were fixing them up. They met resentment from a lot of the older people who had been there, because they saw a threat to their being able to stay there due to rising property taxes. For the folks that had come in themselves, the poorer folks, the artisans, the sailors, and so forth, they saw the collision because their way of life was much looser. They weren't particularly concerned about historic homeowner tax credits. They didn't worry about where to park their car. They only had one car. They could park it on a back street. They didn't care. Many of the families coming in owned two and three cars and their houses were only 17 feet wide. So they insisted they had to have a place to park.

PJ Trautwein

It was a lot of divisiveness... The battles at the town hall meetings were just notorious and it was old residents against new residents. The old residents didn't really understand ... they thought they were being kicked out of the community. And the newer residents didn't do anything to assure them that they weren't being kicked out. And then you had some people who came in for their own political advantages who festered on that.

Bob Eney

I moved in '67 to Fell's Point. And they saw me as a free-loader coming in, buying cheap property. Everybody else who came in when I came in, we got a bad reputation because we were fighting the road as well. Anybody who moved into the neighborhood from outside, they ostracized and they said that they were rich because they were coming in, fixing up these houses.

And when you walked around the neighborhood, they sneered at you. As a matter of fact, Laura Norris, one of the priests at the church stopped her on the street and told her that he thought that she was one of Hitler's people working in this neighborhood against these poor Poles. Laura was horrified. She had never even spoken to this priest before. But that was typical of what was going on.

Vince Peranio

I moved here in Fell's Point in 1968. I'd just graduated from the Maryland Institute and moved down here with about 8 other graduate students, artists, sculptors and painters. We did it because the

rents were so incredibly cheap down here. And I just fell in love with it. Most people in the city and in suburbia wouldn't even come down here. They thought it was too dangerous. In it's history, it was a dangerous place. People were shanghaied from here in the 1800's or 1900's. But we were young artists and this was very intriguing to us.

We became kind of party central. People from all over the city and the country would stop into our little commune. And that's how I met John Waters. And he came one day with Divine and Mink Stole and David Lockery and Susan Lowe and his whole group that had just finished doing the movie "Mondo Trasho." And we became instant friends. And so the next time he was working on a film, about a year later around 1969, he had all of us become part of his troop, "The Dreamland Community".

Steve Bunker

There was a real pioneering spirit in those days in Fell's Point because most of us didn't have anything. And so we started out with nothing and we had to kind of pull together to get there. Artists and musicians and merchant seamen and longshoremen and immigrants and folks that didn't speak English and folks that didn't bother to check in with Government authorities when they got off the boat. It was a time of some innocence.

Unfortunately, a lot of those people that I knew then died young. They spent a lot of their lives in the saloons, in the bars. And drugs became a factor. People that didn't have families any more, didn't have any money, couldn't hold a job, and who died tragic deaths, early deaths.

Bill Struever

There was still what I would call active vestiges of Baltimore's maritime and industrial past cooking in the '70's. Industry was still here, though on its way out. Browns Wharf, the Rukerts were still operating there in a lesser way. Miller's Wharf was still standing and still being used. The Bond Street Wharf, which was Terminal Corporation, was still standing and being used. Allied Chemical was going strong and puffing out whatever they were puffing out.

Rich Milovicz

Just before I came to Baltimore, the Baltimore soap plant had a significant environmental release that gained national press coverage. In August of 1978, there was a leak that developed on the sulfur trioxide storage tank. And by 7 o'clock in the evening, there was a sulfuric acid cloud that extended from Baltimore northward to York Pennsylvania. Of course, it went directly over Fell's Point. There were a number of folks that went to hospital and reported breathing problems, skin burning issue problems.

PJ Trautwein

A lot of the people here in the 20th Century, they were later immigrants, the Polish community, but this was their livelihood. We didn't know what caused cancer and the whole thing. Later on, we found out that we had so many cancer deaths in Fell's Point, it was way out of proportion to the national average.

Rich Milovicz

Our impact on the land and the air, our impact on the people in an urban setting, lead the company to, I think, ultimately, to decide that we were better moving our manufacturing operations out of urban areas, and out of the Baltimore area in particular. The Baltimore plant was considered to have the second largest risk of any manufacturing site we had in the world. And reducing that risk became a priority for the company.

Vince Peranio

When I first got here there were buildings and properties all the way down to the Inner Harbor, and slowly but surely developers would buy these old factories and old lumber companies and stuff like that... Then usually 1 Sunday a year, one of the buildings would burn to the ground, until eventually

all the acreage was cleared. My theory, is just that it's the easiest way of getting out of having to renovate something is to have a fire, you know.

Bob Keith

One evening, I think I was over in some other part of town and looked over and saw the flames. Like everybody else, we came rushing back to the area to see what was going on. This wonderful lumber company, the Atlantic Lumber, went up in flames with a lot of great wood, seasoned, wonderful, the kind of wood that you just can't find in lumberyards any more... And then right near it was the Apex little Oil Company – as the drums got heated up, they became explosive and just shot up in the air like mortars.

Bill Struever

Allied Chemical closed shop in the late '80's and by then most of everything else out on Harbor Point peninsula was gone. Constellation had bought the Terminal Warehouse and Barry Levinson had done his movie and had his fake fire for Avalon in the Terminal Warehouse building. So that by the early '90's, the industrial past was truly a past.

10. An Important Future: The Allied Chemical Site

Rich Milovicz

The most significant probably environment site in the Inner Harbor adjacent to Fell's Point was the Allied Chemical site. The Allied Chemical site was involved in chromium processing, and prior to Allied Chemical owning and operating that site, it was previously owned and was involved in chromium manufacturing. Probably started, I think, around 1860. By September of '78 when I came here, I believe that the operations had ceased and the Allied site had been declared a Superfund site. The cleanup that Allied performed exceeded 3 years, and many of millions of dollars. There were men in moon suits, men and women in moon suits. The buildings were truly encapsulated in plastic to contain all of the dust that remained on the site.

Bill Struever

The plant had closed down. They had just had done the consent decree with the Maryland Department of Environment and the EPA, and were going to spending 90 million dollars cleaning it up. And the folks at Allied were saying "What should we do with this? Is there something that we should ... some higher and better use that we should be thinking about? This incredible peninsula that sticks into Baltimore's Harbor, the original Fell's Point." The neighborhood came in and said, "You can't really do anything... We don't want anything out there.... There should not be any buildings out there... If we do anything at all, it should just be a park – the whole thing."

And, went through this whole 2 year-long process, meeting after meeting, and that total buy-in by everybody that this was THE fantastic site of Baltimore of the east coast and that if there was ever going to be a Sydney Opera House type icon for Baltimore, it would be at Harbor Point. Everything bought into that, and the give and take back and forth, it ended up almost half the land was going to be park. That was the deal that was made – and at the same token, that it was too important a site to leave it at that, and the community bought into 1.8 million square feet of buildings, including buildings as tall potentially as 180 feet in the center of the site.

Peter Cavaluzzi

Let me just take you through some analysis that we've made with regards to a project called Harbor Point in Baltimore. And how we begin to look at a project like that, and learn from the existing neighborhoods and existing areas as a way to generate an idea about how we can create a project that is sensitive, that will fit in, at the same time it will also meet today's current market needs.

Fell's Point is an area that has high building coverage. All the blocks are pretty much filled up. The streets are small. The buildings in general are much lower. The streets are much smaller. There's a

central main street, which is Broadway, but another street, Thames Street, which is the waterfront street, which has really been of interest to us – really are the main streets within the area.

Thames Street is a street like no other street in the world. It's got varied blocks. It's got angles and twists and turns. No two blocks are the same. There's always changing views, changing buildings. And so, we really like that character and we really think that the nature of Thames Street is really much of what the, sort of, the gold and the value that exists in Fell's Point. So, if we can learn from that, and, perhaps, extent that kind of characteristic onto Harbor Point, we think we'd be setting ourselves up to have a much better development that would be a natural outgrowth of Fell's Point.

The water edge you find that the water edge of Fells Point is very distinguished. It has a whole variety of piers and water bodies and water shapes, and you can see that this entire water edge was one that was really driven by what takes place in the water.

[Page turns] And this is just several photographs of those buildings. The old City Pier that's really, sort of, the central focus of the Broadway and sort of the heart of Fell's Point.

11. *An Uncertain Future: City "Recreation" Pier*

Steve Bunker

Where the Recreation Pier stands now, there was a whole series of houses, a little village out there... But in 1912, the City decided that they wanted to do something with that and they wanted to build a modern cargo moving facility. So they bought everybody out and tore down everything that was on the pier and then built the Recreation Pier that you see there now.

People were upset that they weren't getting something within their own community. Fell's Point has always had its own agenda. And so the City said, well all right, we'll make a nice recreation facility and a safe place for kids to play and a nice ballroom. Kids had been playing in the street on Thames Street. And now automobiles were becoming big, and trucks. And the trucks were coming and going from this cargo pier and were in danger of running over kids.

Bob Eney

The Recreation Pier is a wonderful building. There was a ballroom on the 2nd floor that was exquisite. Magnificent height. Just wonderful. The Preservation Society, to call attention to the building, we had the 1st and 2nd Harbor Ball there. Which, the Harbor Ball was an annual thing for a few years. It just lent itself to that whole magical kind of thing.

Vince Peranio

Then "Homicide" came along. Berry Levinson came into town. The city has shown them several buildings that the city owns that are vacant for possible use. On the list was the Recreation Pier, which has always been one of my favorite buildings in Fell's Point. So we got to possess the building as our own for about 8 years. On the second floor, I built the whole "Homicide" set. The first floor, were the offices and the different departments. For that size show, it worked very, very well.

Sandy Hillman

I've loved that building forever. But, you know what, that building has not been used the whole time I've lived in Baltimore. It's a fabulous piece of real estate.

Lori Guess

So then the Rec Pier came up and for some reason I decided, this is a good issue to get involved with. And so I became the chairperson of this thing. And we met every week for months and months and years... We nixed residence, both condos, town houses, also apartments, because we said ... now this is part of the contrarian Fell's Point feel. We didn't want a bunch of rich people

taking up our view. Here's a city-owned building, a public-owned building, and the idea that only people who can afford million \$ condos or town houses would be there really irked us in our spirit ...

There is a couple of mil, maybe 4 million \$s we need to shore up the Pier. It's a gorgeous building. It's the only city building, I believe, on the entire waterfront, now. And we really want it to be used for something magical. Something that benefits the community.

Paul Swensen

Moran has had a very comfortable home here. I think that the people that live here that are a part of the Fell's Point community would like to see the tugboats stay here, all the time if they could. I mean, stay forever. And, we have no intentions of leaving. Domino Sugar is, I guess, probably one of the last holdouts in the Harbor, in the Inner Harbor.

Bob Keith

The commercial waterfront is so exciting here in Baltimore because it's close in ... You always get surprised when you go by Broadway Pier – there might be some huge passenger ship that's come in. Just this last week, there was a three-masted ship out of some movie. The so-called tall ships is a very major attraction to Fell's Point...

Richard Kirstel

The notion that it is the oldest continuously operating, still working, waterfront community in the country really grabs my interest. We're not a fly preserved in amber. All that history is here and yet it's still a living, changing, growing area.

Dan Rodricks

I don't know. Is it a working waterfront? It kind of is, it still is. On the other side, you see Domino Sugar across the way. Ships come in. There's tugboat action, but it's been greatly reduced.

James Bond

To be so close to the waterfront and to experience a working harbor is so really special. It's great that Domino is still here, and we have the ships here every day. I think the heritage of the area and the working port will continue out towards Fort McHenry, but I think the Inner Harbor area out towards Fell's Point, that the tourism industry has really become the major industry that drives the working port.

12. A Special Place: Living Classrooms

James Bond

The Living Classrooms Foundation began in 1985. In partnership with the city, state and the community, we came up with the concept of "Lets bring the history of Fell's Point back alive around the ship-building tradition." And to involve young people with that. And so that was the genesis. And we began with a program called "Fresh Start" that was working with, and still works with, youth who may have had some trouble in the traditional school system, and may have had some scrapes with the law. But these kids are turning their lives around and they are here at a job-training program that's 40 weeks long and works on construction skills, carpentry skills....

We have raised over 12 million dollars to honor Fredrick Douglass, Isaac Myers and the Black Maritime History contribution to this city and state. And so we're really honored to be building the "Fredrick Douglass – Isaac Myers Maritime Park," and to have saved the oldest industrial building on the waterfront, which those of us in the neighborhood affectionately refer to as the "Sugar House," even though it was the Levering Coffee House at one point, too. So that building dates back to, they're telling us now, to around 1804. And that will be one of the centerpieces of a site that will also have a working marine railway, a shipyard, which after all that's what Fell's Point, that's what the roots of this city all stem back to – is the Maritime heritage. So this Maritime heritage will come

alive. Like everything Living Classroom Foundation does, it's always about bringing things alive, involving young people and the community. I think it's going to be one of the very, very special spots in this city.

13. *An Upscale Romanticized Past*

Romaine Somerville

A major portion of Jones Town was destroyed in urban renewal, and a major portion, just about all of Baltimore Town was destroyed in the big fire of 1904, so that Fells Point has survived as the only relic from that period.

What Fell's Point has is its original waterfront, original street pattern, and its fabric of eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings. And that should be honored, respected, preserved. You can't replace it, you can build another high-rise, but you can't replace the historic district. It's just very valuable, very delicate, very fragile, and extremely important to our cultural heritage.

Bob Keith

Fell's Point was quite attractive to developers but everybody wanted to push it just a little bit farther for their own project, and you do that cumulatively and you have pressure for over-development. If it all happened, then you'd have a whole lot of problem in Fell's Point with traffic and parking ... you would kill the goose.

Steve Bunker

One of the things that we did in Fell's Point in the 70's, 80's and 90's, is we learned to fight for the things that we believed in. And we learned to pull together to do it. Fell's Point is the kind of place that's wide open to exploitation. Political exploitation – there was a time when every developer that wandered into town with an expensive suit was promised a piece of Fell's Point by the city administration. They never met a developer they didn't like.

Some of these guys were absolute con men. And they would come in with the most outlandish schemes, schemes that took no interest whatsoever in the well-being of the people who lived in Fell's Point.

Bill Struever

I would agree that the city in the past has suffered from a sense of desperation perhaps, about the need of investments. So that anybody that came along with a plan and a promise to do something, the city, perhaps more so than it should, was kind of a reactionary kind of position where ... what can we do to make it happen, rather than thinking big picture and kind of highest best use and what's the larger view, best interest of the community and the city as a whole.

Rich Milovicz

Property values rose so significantly in a very short period of time. People could absolutely realize a very great windfall in selling their property. The economics really changed the class structure in the Fell's Point area to young urban professionals moving in and families that have lived in the area for 1, 2 or maybe even 3 generations moving out to less expensive neighborhoods. And neighborhoods that they were probably more comfortable being in. It was a real change in character for the area.

Romaine Somerville

Life is a constant battle down here. The community has been at hearings for the last, I think we started in 1999 when the developers began to ask for variances, and we figured out we've been in something like 300 meetings and hearings trying to get the reasonable density and height restrictions on the new development.

Constellation came to a community meeting on a Wednesday or Thursday and said that if the community would go along with this exchange of property that they would not demolish the George

Wells House and the London Coffee House. So everybody went along with it, and on Friday, PJ's walking his dog over on that land there, and the dog ran behind the properties and there were two enormous signs, big red signs, posted on the buildings that they would be demolished in 48 hours.

And when we called Constellation they said oh that wasn't them, that the buildings were in such poor condition the City decided to condemn them. So we ran around all weekend getting the condemnation notices lifted, and then we were given a very short period of time to purchase the buildings and stabilize them.

Lori Guess

Now Martin O'Malley said, "You love it in Fell's Point. Do you really feel it's fair to say OK now we are here and we're closing the door and no one else can come in?" And we said, "No, of course not. We're just saying that we don't want to warehouse people here just so they can say they live in Fell's Point.

Ed Kane

It's two and a half miles from Harborplace by water to Fort McHenry. The average width of that body of water might be 350 to 400 yards. That isn't very much water. It doesn't take long to fill it up. And we have idiot developers, who are at one in the same time eating their seed corn, because they want barges on the harbor to do this and to do that.

Romaine Somerville

Some of the marinas are going way out into the water. And all of them haven't come to light yet because less than 10% of the proposed development has actually taken place.

Richard Kirstel

Fell's Point has, over the years, followed a pattern you see in other cities. There's some funky old neighborhood, which is inexpensive, and so artists move in because one can afford the space needed. And, artists start to attract, again, a faux hip crowd, weekend escapes, and eventually some of them decide to start moving in. Prices go up. Lofts get renovated. Buildings get fancified. And artists find another old neighborhood. And what's left behind becomes an upscale, gentrified, kind of updated, romanticized past.

Steve Bunker

I couldn't afford to live in Fell's Point now, not where I lived. I wanted to live on the water. I've lived on the water all my life. That's what I do. That's where my roots are. That's where my background is. I've been a sailor and a dock worker all my life.

Sharon Bondroff

You get to borrow it. It becomes yours for a while. But not forever, because it's got to belong to other people [parrot squawks], so you have to let it go.

14. A Happy Amalgam

PJ Trautwein

One of the negative things I've seen is the constant gnawing away of the historic fabric of Fell's Point.

Lisa Suit

People that are here, that live here and work here, believe in Fell's Point. That's bottom line. I think the passions of the people here are all in the right place. And I think we're all heading towards that same goal, which is to keep the historic aspect of Fell's Point intact. And not be devoured. And not be taken over. Hopefully what I see is that as the development goes on and kind of envelopes us,

we stay as the quaint community that we are that becomes kind of the place that people can escape to. It's a magical place. It really is. It's very magical.

Ed Kane

By and large, for most of its history, Fell's Point wasn't a very nice place. I'm not sure it was ever nice until recently, simply because it was dangerous, it was lawless.

There seems to be not a great public agreed-on destiny, but rather kind of a quiet, "This is happening. We'll get someplace." But, whether that's good or bad, I don't know. That remains to be seen.

Sandy Hillman

This was always a neighborhood with a lot of activists and people who had very specific agendas. Some people wanted it to stay as it was. Some people wanted it somewhat renovated. Some people wanted it really renovated. And some people wanted it gentrified and other people didn't. So, I think what ultimately happened here is sort of a happy amalgam of everything. Everybody kinda got their way. So you have a neighborhood that's got a lot of character and a neighborhood that's got a lot of characters.

Bill Struever

Well you have to love Fell's Point. It's kind of a little bit like with New Hampshire's "Live free or die." It's this effervescent spirit and curmudgeonly energy of people like Ed Kane and Bob Keith and Steve Bunker, that aren't always the easiest people to deal with at times that truly love their neighborhood.

What's so important and precious about this kind of ... idiosyncratic funkiness. Where you do have the old tugboat guys operating right next to some kind of fancy home furnishing boutique and restaurant and then a pub where all the locals hang out. And you have Morgan Stanley and Brown Investment Advisors and a ton of Johns Hopkins people sitting in Bond Street Wharf, coming there just because their delight in being a part of such an interesting neighborhood. So working with Fell's Point is never a boring moment but you have to love it to do it. If you don't like it, you shouldn't be in Fell's Point. That's my perspective.