

Fells Point in the Civil War

By Steve Bunker

I was surprised to read in Jack Trautwein's article in the March Fell's Pointer that the Civil War had no relevance to Fell's Point. This is a remarkable statement from a man who speaks to groups about local history. The Fell's Point and Canton areas played vital roles in the war.

The Battle of Pratt Street in April 1861 resulted in the first battle deaths of the Civil War. It began at President Street Station but did not end there. Unarmed soldiers separated from their units, fled east to Fell's Point where local citizens protected them. These refugees later expressed gratitude to the community for protecting them. Point merchants and shopkeepers formed a militia company the next day to guard the village from a "Confederate" invasion. East Baltimore, with a large immigrant, sailor and free-black population, tended to be sympathetic to the Union. It's not generally known, but in the midst of the April 19 Riot a mob sympathetic to the soldiers counterattacked the first mob, creating a small civil war in Baltimore's streets. Fells Pointers were injured and died that day.

East Baltimore's deep-water port became critical to the Union war effort. The Abrahams and Ashcroft shipyard at Thames and Wolfe Sts. launched the USS Pinola in October 1861. The Abbott Mills in Canton rolled the iron plates for the famous USS Monitor. The docks, wharves and warehouses were filled with cargoes, civilian and military. Sailors, marines and soldiers were recruited here.

Maryland is officially credited with 46,638 recruits, plus merchant seamen, nurses and support organizations. Some Baltimoreans went south and fought for the Confederacy. But by the end of 1861, Maryland was firmly in the Union and Fell's Point was finding new prosperity.

The campaign to save President Street Station began with a small band of believers in Fell's Point in 1979. We wanted to save the building and remember the soldiers and Marylanders who died that day in 1861. This does not detract from the great deeds of Baltimore sailors in 1812-15.

I don't think that a fantasy pirate or privateer festival, which is essentially a day of costumed drinking, sheds a positive light on those gallant deeds or brings much credit to Fell's Point. I am glad for the business it brings to local saloons; I just wish it was scheduled for a day that is less significant in Maryland history.

Jack Trautwein responded:

Bunker's account of the activities east of the Station may answer questions raised by Michael Lisicky's article in the spring Baltimore City Historical Society Gaslight suggesting the war's first death came in Fell's Point [See accompanying excerpt]. We need to find out Steve's sources for none of this has been mentioned in the accounts I have read, including those of Friends of the President Street Station, the State Archives, the Maryland Historical Society and the newspapers of the day.

In the newspaper research, Locust Point was the terminus of activity because of the B&O Railroad's piers and rail lines to Washington. The major freight activity was over the rails. Our shipyards did produce what seems to be a handful of gun ships. But we by then were sharing the shipbuilding with Canton and Federal Hill/Locust Point.

BRICK BANTER



Key Death Laid to 'Pointers

By Michael J. Lisicky

Most people who study this city's role in the Civil War are familiar with "The Baltimore Riot," also known as "The Pratt Street Riot," that produced, by all accounts until now, the first fatalities of the conflict. Trains then arrived from the north along tracks on Canton Ave., known today as Fleet St, which fed into President Street Station. Then the cars--in this case bearing federal troops bound for Washington--were removed from the locomotive. Each car was then pulled by horses westward on Pratt St., off limits to engines, along tracks to Camden Station and a Washington-bound engine. On April 19, 1861, that routine collapsed into a riot that left at least four soldiers and more than a dozen rioters dead along Pratt St.

But Simeon Hecht, German-born scion of a family of merchants in Fell's Point, tells a different story. Yes of bloodshed, but he insists that the first casualty occurred a dozen blocks east in Fell's Point. On that April 19, a long train, 25 to 30 cars, arrived in Baltimore by the tracks on Canton Ave. (Fleet St.). The train carried the Massachusetts 6th Regiment, along with some volunteers from Pennsylvania responding to President Lincoln's call to arms.

According to Hecht's 1908 memoir, which surfaced recently at the Jewish Museum, his son was playing at recess at Public School #2, Broadway and Bank St. Suddenly the students heard shots and outcries. They looked down Broadway to see men with guns and axes attacking a train traveling west on Canton Ave. (Fleet). Hannah Hecht went for Simeon's son and hustled him home. As Simeon was not home, Hannah huddled with her children in the cellar but watched the conflict. They witnessed, said Hecht, a Union soldier being pulled from the train. He was beaten to death by the mob and his body left on the sidewalk. When the commotion subsided, Hannah had the body brought to her store at Canton Ave. and Register St. A mob threatened to attack the Hecht store but police from the Eastern Station arrived and took the body to headquarters. Hecht concludes by saying this was the location of the first casualty of the Civil War.

All other reports say that Southern sympathizers attacked the Massachusetts troops as they made their journey from President St. Station to Camden. How can Hecht see otherwise and be so adamant? He states that the troops on the train in Fell's Point were unarmed. Other ac- (Continued)

Happenings

Swashbuckler Soiree April 15, Teamed with Privateers' Day

Main Street's fourth annual Swashbuckler Soiree--in tandem with the 7th Privateers' Day--starts on Friday, April 15, 8PM to midnight in the 1300 block of Thames St., \$40 per person and free parking on site. The preferred garb is pirate, to the sounds of the Brigands and Salty Dogs, with a costume contest and pirate trivia quiz. Tickets at www.fellspointmainstreet.org. Information, robin@fellspointmainstreet.org or 410.675.8900.

On Saturday, April 16, from Thames Street Park to Bond Street Wharf, 11AM to 6PM, the Privateer Festival includes same music plus Inishowen.

Children's activities include treasure hunts and shipboard with the Urban Pirates. Also lessons on differences between a privateer and a pirate; a walk-through Living History Camp, and at 5PM a harbor-borne raid on Fell's Point featuring a fierce battle at sea with the Pride of Baltimore.

From noon to 6PM in Thames Street Park is a beer garden, with music by Pirates for Sail, and from 6PM to midnight is the "infamous Pirate Invasion Pub Crawl."

Wrestling at Du Burns

Billed as the Battle for Supremacy, Real Championship Wrestling is on the bill at the Du Burns Arena on Boston St. in Canton on Saturday, April 23. See www.realchampionshipwrestling.com.

4 May Tours of Green Mount

Four guided tours of historic Green Mount Cemetery, led by historian and educator Wayne R. Schaumburg, will take place on Saturdays, May 7, 14, 21 and 28. The cost is \$15 and reservations through 410.256.2180 or wayne.schaumburg@gmail.com are required. Thousands have attended the 2-hour tours and many return often. They start at 9:30AM from the main gate, Greenmount Ave. and East Oliver St.

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What Was the Question, Mark?-VII

The Artist of Fleet St.--and Madison Ave.

By Mark Walker

Michael Diliberto is a multi-talented visionary active in ads and in art. I've always looked up to him from the magician's perspective as a marketing wizard. He is a fan of magic and the old adage of a conjuror having another "trick up his sleeve" holds true for Michael--consistently topping himself when a corporate client needs an ingenious Madison Avenue-type campaign to achieve a superior competitive position. His oil paintings, more sublime, would grace any gallery.

Born in New York, Michael is a graduate of the Maryland Institute. Fresh out of college, he joined Fell's Point's own Trahan, Burden & Charles agency about 35 years ago and later did creative work for other companies, including Foote, Cone and Belding in Philadelphia. He returned to Maryland to join Gray Kirk/VanSant, one of the largest marketing/communication firms here. It was at the World Trade Center but moved to Tide Point when the ex-Procter & Gamble plant in Locust Point became a waterfront business park.

Michael's first big client for GKV--where he was executive vice president and director of communications-- was Choice Hotels. He created his now famous "Celebrity in a Suitcase" advertising campaign that ran for years on national television. Do you remember the commercials where a traveler walked into a Choice Hotel room, tossed his luggage on a bed, and a celebrity popped out of the suitcase talking about Choice Hotels? The celebrities Michael worked with included Tip O'Neill, Sonny Bono, George Foreman, Vanna White, Ed McMahon, Don Adams, Jack Palance, Johnny Cash and Kathy Ireland. The campaign won him international acclaim.

The character Michael most vividly remembers from these commercials is Evel Knievel, who he said showed up on the set drunk, claiming he needed his medication (a fifth of Crown Royal) to ease the pain from his motorcycle accidents. Because he kept flubbing his lines, a voice-over was deemed essential. Knievel did manage to deliver the commercial's final speaking lines. Another highlight of Michael's advertising and marketing career occurred in the 1986 when he hired an up and coming New York comedian for a Bell Atlantic (now Verizon) ad. Michael did a lot of development work with this now famous celebrity--Jay Leno.

At one time Michael was art director for MAGIC magazine, one of the largest conjuring publications in the world. Its editor, and hence occasionally mine, Stan Allen, marveled at Michael's creations.

After winning every major advertising industry creative award, including the Clio, One Show, Addy, CA and the coveted Golden Effie, Michael left GKV in 1996 to start his own firm, Diliberto Inc., in a swanky Towson office building. With his experience in the hotel business, he worked on

advertising campaigns for the Travel Industry Association of America and one of the biggest hotel chains--Best Western International. For this account he created a corporate ID that was simple, yet effective: a globe resting on a pillow. The campaign proved so popular that Michael and his crew traveled throughout Europe and the U.S. filming commercials for Best Western. Michael also worked with the offbeat funnyman and actor Martin Mull for Red Roof Inns commercials.

From 1999 to 2004 Michael was exhibiting at art galleries all throughout the mid-Atlantic region. One of the problems with galleries, though, is that their take is 50% on sales. So, in 2004 Michael, and his then wife Susan bought a retail spot at 1922 Fleet Street. The first floor is Diliberto Gallery and the second and third are Michael's business, Diliberto Inc., www.diliberto.com, where he is creating ads for Johns Hopkins Alumni, Chesapeake Urology, Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, and Nassau Paradise Island.

Michael's ex-wife is an art teacher. Their son David lives in New York and is an art director with BBDO, the third largest ad agency in the world, and their daughter Lauren, also in New York, is a production assistant in the film industry. Michael has lived in Fell's Point but currently commutes from Parkton. As for the 'Point being the locus of his international art and ad business, he said: "It works for me."

Key Death - *Cont. from front*

counts say the Massachusetts troops were armed with muskets, although ordered not to shoot.

At least eight cars made the trip down Pratt Street without incident before the disturbance occurred. Could this long train have been stopped in Fell's Point as the Massachusetts troops received word of the Pratt Street attacks? At the end of the train were some volunteers from Pennsylvania, unarmed. They might have been on a stopped train as the rowdy crowd advanced in Fell's Point.

Most accounts of the killings include four privates from the Massachusetts militia and about 11 city civilians. Some add a southern sympathizer, perhaps even a soldier, shot dead in Camden Station early on. A memorial displayed by Friends of President Street Station also lists a 26th Regiment Pennsylvania volunteer, shot at the station, who died on return home. The Friends have a data base on the casualties that does not corroborate Hecht. But could his be the real account of the first death? History is usually documented through personal accounts. Hecht's version makes one question other, often inconsistent, accounts.

Hecht's narrative continues that after the death of this soldier, a crowd of Union sympathizers in Fell's Point raised the "Stars and Stripes" across Broadway from the Register St. side to the opposite corner. This suggests the sentiment in Fell's Point might have been more for the Union than the Confederacy--contrary to the general city position. After the riot, Baltimore was held at bay under martial law for the course of the war.

Lisicky is author of "Hutzler's: Where Baltimore Shops" and "Wanamaker's: Meet Me at the Eagle." He is a musician with the Baltimore Symphony, member of the Preservation Society board and a Towne Crier.



Michael Diliberto's gallery and shop are at 1922 Fleet St.

Rev. Trautwein's Easter Service

The Rev. Jack Trautwein, Towne Crier, will offer sunrise service at 6AM on Easter, April 24, on the foot of Broadway Pier next to the Keith binoculars.

Hearty Harbor Ball Benefit

Preservation Society Director Ellen VonKarajan said the Residents' Association did an exceptional job with the March 19 Harbor Ball, netting \$21,272 for the Society, earmarked for restoration of the windows on the Merchant's House, 1732 Thames St., deeded by anti-Interstate leader Lu Fisher.

Drop Off Hazards April 23

The Dept. of Public Works will receive hazardous wastes 9AM-2PM at Poly, Falls Rd. and Coldspring La., on April 23. Enter on Coldspring, with proof of residence. www.baltimorecity.gov.

Schedules

Trash and Recycling

Current days for trash pickup are Tuesdays and for recycling are Thursdays. Residents are limited to setting out three 32-gallon cans of waste between 6PM on Mondays and 6AM on Tuesdays.

Neighborhood Meetings

Douglass Place: Third Tuesday of every other month at Bertha's, dlh411@gmail.com.

Fell's Point Antique Dealers' Association: Call 410.675.4776.

Fell's Point Community Organization: Second Tuesdays at 606 South Ann St., 443.791.1717.

Fell's Point Main Street: office, 1730 Bank St. 410.675.8900.

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

thanks!

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Editor Lew Diuguid

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The Bob Keith memorial binoculars are installed on Broadway Pier, thanks to the Residents' Society, serving viewers for a quarter. Keith, captain of the Half-Shell buy boat and of Bond St., died in Feb. 2010. A plaque was not yet in place but the Vela family of Harford County enjoyed the amenity.