

# The Fell's Pointer

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## Lucretia Fisher Dies at 98 -- Personified Preservation

Lucretia Billings Fisher of Ruxton, who bought her first property here in 1966 before she knew a federal highway was going to displace Fell's Point, died at home of renal failure. When she learned what the federal, state and city officials were up to, she pulled together opponents, co-founded the Preservation Society, was elected its first president and helped organize its first fund-raiser Fun Festival. She ended up owning 10 properties here, culminating the run by donating her first purchase, 1732 Thames St., to the Society she helped form. "I still attend the Fun Festival," she said late in a series of interviews she gave over recent years.

In 2003, Jacquie Greff of Tonal Vision and a key volunteer with The Fell's Pointer, was preparing her book "Fell's Point." She asked Lu, as the Pittsburgh native was known by advocates and adversaries, what Fell's Point looked like on her first visit.

"I really didn't know much about Fell's Point, because even though my husband was a doctor at Hopkins, we called this . . . the foot of Broadway . . . and so I hadn't come down here much, but I had heard that some architects had been very, very interested in old houses down here. So my brother, who lived in New York, wanted to come down and see some old houses, and I said, 'Well we'd better go to Fell's Point. . . .' We liked it very much, although it looked almost deserted . . . . And, so we saw this house we liked very much. It was a fine looking house from the outside. And the little bar next door [Cat's Eye] said, 'Just go in, it's vacant.'"

"We did and we found that it was in very original condition . . . the people next door said they thought it was for sale. It turned out it was for sale at such a low price we were astounded! And so right away we put some money down. . . We were walking along the waterfront, and saw this man who looked as if he lived here. I said, 'We just bought that house over there.' And he said, 'Oh yes, that is where they are going to put the expressway. I think they're going to take out three blocks.' So, that was kind of an 'oh, forget it!' And I thought of Europe and all of the old places



Lucretia Fisher at 1992 Founders Day reunion.

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.' Her brother, Kirk LeMoyne Billings, was a prep school chum and lifetime friend of John F. Kennedy.

Fisher sought out Baltimore Heritage, the city's Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation and Tom Ward, the one (Continued)

## Awards for Preservation Society

The Preservation Society, of which Lucretia B. Fisher was a founder and first president 67 years ago, has run up an impressive array of recent awards, including:

- Preservation Maryland's Stewardship Award for the restoration of 1627 Aliceanna St., a donated derelict 18th century wooden home considered the site of The Leeke Academy and now a residence in large measure by volunteers' efforts and now producing income for the Society. In August 2010, First Lady Michele Obama, as titular head of the federal Preserve America initiative, cited the same project, honoring the volunteers.
- The Society's Authentic Ghost Walk was named the year's best Ghost by readers of Maryland Life magazine.
- The Baltimore National Heritage Area presented its Partner of the Year award to the Society for its help in strengthening the city's National heritage Area programs, including Civil War and 1812 tours. The National Park Service is a major player in this program.
- The Society's main source of income, the October Fun Festival, won the Maryland Department of Tourism's Economic Engine Award on Nov. 4, based on the festival's generation of commerce, having drawn visitors from out of state as well as locally. The Society has indicated that the Festival is in jeopardy because the City is sharply increasing fees for public services needed to produce the two-day event.

None of the awards received is monetary. "They never are," said Executive Director Ellen Vonkarajan, but perhaps they will convince those with funds "that we are deserving." Website is [preservationsociety.com](http://preservationsociety.com), phone 410.675.6750 ext.16.

## Happenings

### Hang-Ups at City Hall

Several community group leaders at the Oct. 26 meeting of the Task Force in Henderson's Inn complained that with the electoral process virtually concluded, the mayor's bureaucrats--who during the campaign were reasonably responsive--are ducking calls to address shortfalls in services. Representatives of the Residents, FPCO, Fells Prospect and Douglass Place exchanged frustrations, with Zoning officials the most frequent targets. Del. Pete Hammen, who heads the Task Force, said he would write the mayor-reelect about the situation.

### Rev. PJ's Thanksgiving Service

The Rev. Jack (PJ) Trautwein will offer his community Thanksgiving service on Sunday, Nov. 20, at 7PM in the Preservation Society's Visitor Center, 1724 Thames St. [pjtowncrier@excite.com](mailto:pjtowncrier@excite.com).

### Kudo for The Fell's Pointer



The following, much appreciated by the volunteers who produce The Fell's Pointer, appeared in the Sept. 21

City Paper's compilation of Bests in Baltimore:

### Best Local Newspaper--The Fell's Pointer

"Retired Washington Post correspondent Lew Diuguid knows a thing or two about the newspaper business, and he's been putting his expertise to good use editing The Fell's Pointer, the monthly publication of Fell's Point Citizens on Patrol. The one-page broadsheet (OK, so it's printed on both sides of an 8-by-14-inch sheet of paper) is stuffed in mailboxes and dropped off at local businesses, providing hyperlocal coverage of newsworthy developments in Fells Point, along with tidbits of history, a cartoon, announcements of upcoming neighborhood meetings, and humor and commentary about what's up in the cobblestoned hood on the waterfront. . . . It's an all-volunteer effort, with printing . . . costs donated by local businesses. In tone, it's in perfect pitch with the twinkly vigilance of the Fells Point zeitgeist, which, like the more seasoned habitués of the neighborhood taverns, knows how to tell a story, laugh at a joke, and, when circumstances dictate, get its hackles up in righteous indignation. We hope the Enoch Pratt Free Library is keeping an archive, because when future historians seek out the flavor of the current Fells Point era, the Pointer will be an essential resource."

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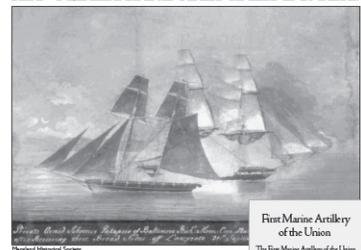
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## Fell's Point

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President James Madison

PRESENTED BY THE SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF FELL'S POINT AND FELL'S POINT

Cover by Charles Norton

Guide for visitors is instructive for residents, too.

## Lucretia Fisher - *Cont. from front*

member of the City Council who had voted against the federally financed expressway plans. As she described in an op-ed article in The Sun 25 years later, those entities called a meeting that drew 23 people, and the Preservation Society of Federal Hill, Montgomery Street and Fell's Point was formed in 1967.

Van Smith of City Paper, who lives on Fell St. in a house owned by Fisher, wrote of her in 2007: "She earned the ire of the bar owners and residents who came in after her, including Steve Bunke," an ex-Pointer advocate for an earlier time. "Lu Fisher was a speculator in her own right," Bunker explained. "She grabbed her property, got it cheap, rented it out as slum property for years, and then sold it out." Fisher demurred, yet Smith quoted her as saying, too, "I think the whole area is going to be ruined. I feel that I'm not going to see it when it happens, because I'm so old. But it's already starting with all this wealth coming down there, and these big buildings covering up the waterfront. It's going to be overdone, and by the time they're finished, you won't see any water."

Maritime historian Geoffrey Footner, who bought his current house on Fell St. from Fisher, offered this reminiscence:

"912 Fell St. was my residence in the early years when Fell's Point was filling its vacant houses with a backwash of society's misfits, which included Lucretia Fisher. Thereby I came to know that I had landed in the epicenter of Lu Fisher's empire. Her pad in that house, with its magnificent panorama in the stars, to which you reached by floors and stairs of simply beautiful Georgia pine, was dreamland for those climbed them. Lu-Lu, as I called the queen of the ostracized domain south of North Ave., had that castle that she named the Captain Pitt House--as this street had once been Pitt St. She said he must have been the most important person in Fell's Point.

"Thus she sparked my interest in history, which revealed that William Price, a master shipwright built the house in 1796. The fight to save lower Broadway's Historic District had been won by the preservationists of the '70s. Lu-Lu didn't just want to preserve Fell's Point, she wanted to own it all, too! And that is how her life here unfolded. She stuffed every moment of her life, as though that multitude of moments was there to make her life complex and full--and it was this that brought forth a community."

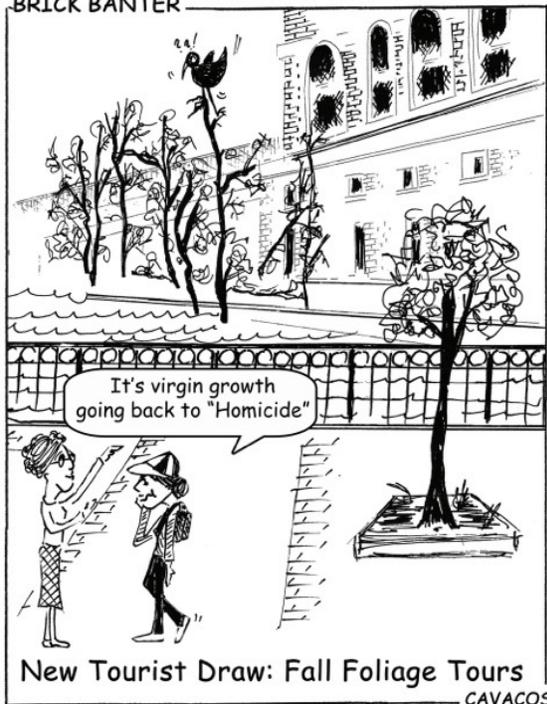
Fisher, Smith reported, was especially disappointed by the current state of the City Recreational Pier. "Why did they think that [developer] Joe Clarke was so good for it?" she asked him. "It's nothing again," said this restless matriarch four years ago. And that is still the case. She left uneasy, survived by two sons and two daughters. A service will be held Dec. 11 at 3PM in the Unitarian Church of Towson, 1710 Dulaney Valley Rd.

## Running through Fell's Point

It is not often that a marathon runner gets to run through one's own neighborhood, but Fell's Point residents get that opportunity during the Baltimore Marathon. Bruce Swanson and I ran in it last month enjoying the variety of the city's neighborhoods, including our own. Runners get a good view of both its residential and commercial character since the marathon route crosses from west to east on Aliceanna St.--as most residents are aware from street closures. We have both run all 11 Baltimore Marathons and fantasize each time about stopping for a cup of coffee, since the route goes so close to our house. So far, we have resisted the urge. While running, Bruce met Tom Smith, a new resident who also ran along with about 26,000 through Fell's Point and beyond.

--Bob Olsen, Bank St.

## BRICK BANTER



## Open House, and More

A pair of merchants along the 1700 block of Aliceanna St.--Mary Butler of MAJA and Lorraine Gaudet of A Good Yarn--are organizing an east of Broadway Holiday Weekend Open House by shop owners on Nov. 25, 26 and 27, with discounts and a high-energy raffle. Initial response is affirmative and if it goes well the shops will consider becoming a more formal association, said Butler. She is a member of Main Street, which succeeded the business association, and hopes to obtain its help in publicizing the open house. But she said the community-wide organization was too broadly focused to address an immediate need of the Aliceanna shops: drawing foot traffic their way from Broadway.

"We have a lot of new owners in our block and this makes us a deal in Fell's Point," Butler added. "We hope to bring the shoppers." She opened MAJA at 1744 Aliceanna and Ann St. 11 years ago. It was a branch of the store she had operated for 12 years in the Inner Harbor, selling furnishings, art and clothing, many with an African accent. The original shop and eventual branches took their name from the first letters of her name and that of a partner named Jane. The partnership ended but the name stayed, she added, smiling, because her own middle name is Jane. After an overlap of two years she cast her lot full time with the 'Point. The other participating shops on the block include Cafe Latte'da, PEDX shoes, Babe women's clothing, Along the Way furnishings, Lululemon Atletica sports clothes, and Saratoga Trunk antiques and pottery.

Gaudet explained that her Good Yarn knitting shop, at 1738 Aliceanna, was inspired in part by Butler's original MAJA in Harbor Place. Lorraine and her family were living on a boat in 1985 and docked in the Inner Harbor. Her three daughters gravitated to MAJA, the family decided to stay ashore and now her Good Yarn is knit into Fell's Point. Now she and MAJA are neighbors, although Mary Jane lives in Park Heights. Lorraine has not joined Main Street.



Pianist Kraig Greff and his wife Jacquie, who together form Tonal Vision on Lancaster St., are presenting his first commercial collection of Christmas music. The CD is available at TonalVision.com and retailers.

## Farmers' Market til Nov. 19

Main Street's first annual Saturday Farmers' Market in the Square, with the number of morning shoppers having increased weekly, will continue through Nov. 19. It will be replaced on Saturday, Dec. 3, with the association's eighth annual Olde Tyme Christmas. At 9AM, St. Nicholas is to arrive by tug at Broadway Pier to greet youngsters and shoppers and shoppers on the Square. Tree lighting at dusk and at 6PM comes the Parade of Lighted Boats.

## 'The Little Dog Laughed'

A comedy about sexual hypocrisy in Hollywood, "The Little Dog Laughed," directed by Steve Goldkranz, is playing at the Corner Theater, 251 S. Ann St., through Dec. 11: Fridays, Saturdays \$17 at 8PM; Sundays \$15 at 2, and Thursdays \$10 at 8. Tickets [www.fpct.org](http://www.fpct.org).

## 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 each month at Bertha's, [dlh411@gmail.com](mailto:dlh411@gmail.com).

Antique Dealers' Association: Call 410.675.4776.

Community Organization: Second Tuesdays at 606 South Ann St., 443.791.1717.

Main Street: office, 1730 Bank St. 410.675.8900.

Preservation Society: 410.675.6750 ext.16 or [preservationsociety.com](http://preservationsociety.com).

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

## thanks!

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Editor Lew Diuguid

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