

LOCUST POINT FOR 350 YEARS, 1661-2011

Over a year ago, the Baltimore Immigration Memorial board proposed to place Locust Point on the National Register of Historic Districts, which was endorsed by the community. The Maryland Historical Trust, which oversees this process, requires a *Statement of Historic Significance*, describing why Locust Point is indeed a historic neighborhood. This Statement will cover Locust Point's early years, the advent of the B&O railroad, industrialization, immigration, the construction of working class housing, and a snapshot of Locust Point's economy and society 95 years ago.

THE EARLY YEARS, 1661-1845

In the colonial era, the Fort McHenry site hosted one of the first settlements by Europeans in what became the City of Baltimore. A colonist by the name of Charles Gorsuch obtained a patent or land grant of 50 acres there in 1661. Nevertheless, the entire Inner Harbor basin remained largely unsettled for the next 90 years.

In 1702 James Carroll (of the famous Carroll family) obtained the patent to the same land and named it "Whetstone Point," reputedly after a park in London. Four years later, the Maryland House of Delegates designated Whetstone Point as an official port of entry for Maryland. This did little to spur growth, as no more than ten ships a year landed in the Baltimore region, most of them docking at Fells Point. The beginning of industrial development began in 1727 when the British-owned Principio Company bought the right to mine iron ore, which had been discovered there, and constructed an iron foundry. Growth in the region remained slow, as Baltimore had only 200 residents in 1750, but after that the city grew rapidly, mainly due to a growing flour export trade to the West Indies, reaching 13,000 inhabitants in 1790.

Baltimore city authorities constructed a fort on Whetstone Point in 1776 during the Revolutionary War to protect the entrance to the Inner Harbor. The US Congress recognized Baltimore's military importance by taking over the fort and authorizing the building of a larger fort in 1794, named after the Secretary of War at that time, James McHenry, and the construction was completed by 1805. As we all know, Fort McHenry proved its worth in 1814 when the British fleet failed to destroy the fort in their bombardment, saving the city from destruction and inspiring Francis Scott Key to write the verses which became our National Anthem.

In 1816, the City of Baltimore annexed the peninsula; shortly thereafter, the surveyor Thomas Poppleton began to lay out the streets and published his plan in 1822. Many of the streets were named after heroes of the War of 1812. Stephen Decatur and Cornelius Hull commanded victorious frigates in the war. Towson Street is named after General Nathan Towson, born in Towsontown, Maryland, who fought on the Canadian frontier. Private Jacob Haubert and Lieutenant Gregorious Andre fell at the Battle of North Point, and privates Thomas Beason and Emery Lowman were killed in the Fort McHenry bombardment. Fort Avenue, of course, leads directly to the Fort itself.

THE B&O RAILROAD AND LARGE-SCALE IMMIGRATION

Locust Point abounded with locust trees, and in 1845, we find the term Locust Point mentioned. The peninsula still remained largely rural, even as Baltimore grew to 170,000 inhabitants in 1850, the second largest city in the US. Locust Point was still an attractive site for industrial development, as the water around it was deep enough to accommodate ocean-going shipping. All it needed was railroad access to connect land and water transportation. The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, the first railroad in the US, which had built a railroad to Ellicott City in 1832, aimed to connect the port of Baltimore with the rapidly growing Midwest. The B&O reached Cumberland, Maryland with its rich coal deposits in 1842. Coal was much in demand for heating homes and powering the steam driven machinery in Baltimore's new factories, and also was exported to Britain.

The B&O's main terminus was at the Mount Clare Station on Pratt Street, and the city authorities allowed locomotive traffic to the waterfront only during night hours. During the day, cargoes had to be pulled by horses on tracks on Pratt Street in order to arrive at the waterfront. The B&O's ambitious directors in 1845 decided to build a spur from the main line to Locust Point, where ships with a deeper draft could dock. The new cargo ships were also becoming too large for the Inner Harbor and even Fells Point. The B & O Company began construction of the new line in 1848 and also built piers on Locust Point (near where Silo Point is today), so that coal and flour could be easily transferred from the trains to the ships. By 1853, the B&O connected their new depot at Camden Yards with their tracks at Locust Point. Some of the coal and flour was exported to Liverpool, England. On the return trip, the ships brought some refugees from the Irish potato famine. Also, Baltimore merchants had had a long-standing relationship with the German port city of Bremerhaven; Baltimore exported tobacco and other agricultural products, and thousands of immigrants came in return. Of the 81,000 immigrants arriving in Baltimore in the decade of the 1850s, the majority came from the German states, with the Irish the second largest group.

Locust Point then developed into a significant immigration port of entry. Up to 1868, immigrants to Baltimore landed at various sites, primary at Fells Point. They largely traveled in sailing ships, which took 6 to 8 weeks to cross the Ocean. Before the Civil War, some steam ships also began Atlantic crossings, and afterwards they became more prevalent and could cross the Ocean in two weeks on a regular schedule (although the fares were higher than for sailing ships).

With an eye on future immigration, John Work Garrett, President of the B&O Railroad signed a contract in January 1867 with the North German Lloyd Company, a major German shipping company, based in the port of Bremerhaven. Representing North German Lloyd was Albert Schumacher from Bremen, who had immigrated to Baltimore in 1826 and had served as an agent for numerous German merchants and shipping companies since then. The B&O agreed to build a large immigration pier (later numbered 8 and 9) at the foot of Nicholson Street (which then extended to the water). The North German Lloyd ships would dock there, and immigrants would disembark and then could board B&O trains, which would take them to the cities and prairies of the Midwest. The

first ship under this arrangement, named “Baltimore” arrived in March of 1868, was received with considerable celebration. About one quarter of the immigrants landing in 1868-69 settled in Maryland, mostly in Baltimore, but after 1890 less than 10% of the immigrants remained here, and the rest traveled west.

The North German Lloyd Company established a network all over Eastern and Central Europe. Emigrants could buy a package of a rail ticket to Bremerhaven, passage on a liner to Baltimore and then travel on the B&O to the Midwest. While Germans remained the majority of immigrants up to the early 1890s, their numbers declined thereafter. The New Immigrants, various nationalities from the Russian and Austrian empires, including Poles, Hungarians, Czechs, and Polish and Russian Jews, comprised 90% of the immigrants after 1900. The wave of immigration grew, totaling 1,200,000 between 1868 and 1914. For that time period, Baltimore ranked as the third largest port of entry behind New York (and Ellis Island) with its 16 million and Boston with 1,600,000.

In the 1880s, for the first time, Congress began to restrict immigration excluding “convicts, lunatics, idiots, and persons likely to become a public charge.” Later polygamists and anarchists were added to the list. In 1887, the federal Department of Commerce, which oversaw immigration, leased an immigration station from the B&O, at the foot of Pier 9 where immigrants could be inspected and processed for entry. The steamship companies were responsible to house those who were denied entry until they were deported. North German Lloyd contracted with Augusta Jennie Koether to lodge the detainees and those who were quarantined at her saloon/boarding house at 1108 Towson Street, an arrangement which lasted until the end of mass immigration in 1914. The building since then has been demolished and the site is currently a parking lot.

Between 1904 and 1915, the federal Commerce Department, the War Department and Congress discussed constructing an immigration station nearby, on land belonging to Fort McHenry, with the purpose of building a facility to accommodate the growing number of immigrants, eliminating the need for Augusta Koether’s boarding house. Three buildings were erected during 1916-17 next to Fort McHenry, but the buildings were first used as a military hospital during World War I and then were never used for immigrants. The war prevented immigration, and Congress severely limited immigration in the 1920s. From then on, European immigrants used New York as the primary port of entry. North German Lloyd resumed service in 1926, but few immigrants landed here. On October 30, 1917, a fire burned down Pier 9 and the Immigration Station, destroying these important markers of our immigration history.

THE BEGINNINGS OF INDUSTRY

The industrial development of Locust Point grew from its advantages of access to railroads and being able to accommodate deep water ships. The first B&O rail line, completed in 1848, provided numerous jobs, including repair and servicing the rolling stock. One of the first new industries was the Baltimore and Cuba Smelting and Mining Company, founded in 1845, which imported copper ore from Cuba to be smelted, which built row houses for its workers on Cuba Street, some of which remain today. The

company also built a chapel in 1848 (operated by the Methodist Church), on the corner of Cuba and Towson Streets for its workers, which is still standing. In 1868, the Cuba Company merged with a competing smelting company in Canton.

Gustavus Ober, originally a druggist, began importing guano from Cuba in 1856 and then selling fertilizer to Southern cotton planters. After the Civil War, he built a plant in 1869 between Haubert and Hull Streets to continue operations. In the 1860s and 1870s, Baltimore fertilizer plants (27 as of 1880) produced more than half of the fertilizer for the entire country. Afterwards agriculture moved further west, and Baltimore became less important in fertilizer production, but these industries prospered up until the 1920s, when agriculture suffered a national decline. In the late 1920s, Proctor and Gamble bought the site, demolished the fertilizer plant to build its soap factory

A SNAPSHOT OF LOCUST POINT IN 1916

Economic conditions fluctuated over the decades, and except for the B&O Railroad (later CSX), there is no industry that survived the all ups and downs of the century and a half. We will not recount the story of the rise and fall of each enterprise, but instead will give a informative picture of Locust Point in 1916, when the Social Service Corporation, a philanthropic group, surveyed Locust Point, with the goal of diagnosing its problems and working towards improving the community and helping immigrants assimilate.

6000 people resided in Locust Point (compared with 2100 in the 2000 census), largely working class, skilled and unskilled. 30% of the residents were immigrants, compared with 15% for Baltimore as a whole. Of the immigrants, 95% were over 16, from which we can infer that they came from Europe as young adults, who formed families here, and that entire family groups with children generally did not immigrate to Locust Point. Of the total population, 29% identified themselves as “Americans,” (most likely British background) 20% as Germans, then Poles (10%), Hungarians (4%) Irish (3%), and 17% were “unstated,” while 9% were mixed, with an immigrant spouse and an American-born spouse. Germans formed 51% of the mixed families; Irish and English immigrants formed 31% of such households, while the Poles and Hungarians intermarried less. German immigrants resided throughout the entire neighborhood and did not congregate in a particular enclave, while Poles were the largest group on Reynolds Street and Burrough Street (later Key Highway) As far as recreation was concerned, the report noted that all ethnic groups “generally intermingled,” except for the Hungarians, who were of recent origin. While blacks formed 15% of Baltimore’s population and Jews 9% at that time, we have no mention of black Americans living in Locust Point, and just one Jewish family.

As Locust Point was adding new residents in the second half of the 19th century, they also constructed or helped construct their own places of worship, all of which were geared to serve the immigrants and their children.

The German United Evangelical Christ Church was constructed during 1887-88 at 1308 Beason Street; the congregation followed the German Reformed tradition. Prior to World

War I, all services were in German, and then in German and English thereafter. In 1972, the church affiliated with the United Church of Christ.

In 1904, the Church built and then operated the Immigrant House next door, as a mission, to help immigrants and to house sailors in Baltimore. The mission provided a place to stay for immigrants before they traveled elsewhere or while they were looking for work and/or a home in Baltimore. Some immigrants stayed there while they were waiting for ships to return to Europe. It was also a place to for sailors to stay while their ships were in port. In a report of June 1915, the pastor noted that 3710 German sailors had visited the house over 10 years, and he had provided new and used clothing for hundreds. The church ended its mission for sailors in 1939 with the outbreak of World War II. It was then used as a hostel for truck drivers making deliveries at the port who needed a place to stay. In the late 1950s, the church ending the practice of providing lodging, and used the house for Sunday school classes and storage. Baltimore's Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation designated the Church and the Immigrant House as Baltimore City Landmarks in 2006.

In 1877, the Episcopalian Diocese of Baltimore decided to establish a mission in Locust Point to help the immigrants and working class adjust to life in an industrial city. They established after school programs and a Sunday school in a former freight office at the foot of Hull Street, and moved nine years later to the building at the corner of Cuba and Towson Streets (which was originally a Methodist chapel and then a girls grammar school). Baltimore's Episcopalian Bishop Paret decided to build a church and bought property at the corner of Towson and Clement Streets and oversaw the construction, and the church was dedicated in October 1902. Ten years later, the Diocese sponsored the building of the Bishop Paret Memorial Hall. The church provided an array of services including free medical care, and English classes for immigrants, boys and girls clubs, dancing classes, a kindergarten, and included a gymnasium and a bowling alley. In the early 1960s, the church was transformed into an independent parish, and no longer operated as a mission church.

In 1859, Locust Point Catholics built the Lawrence O'Toole Chapel on Fort Avenue, to serve the growing Catholic population. Its first pastor was Reverend James Gibbons (later Cardinal), who also served the parish of Saint Bridget's in Canton; it is said that he rowed back and forth on Sundays to celebrate masses in both churches. As Locust Point grew, and Catholics became its largest denomination, they built a larger church starting in 1889 in Gothic Revival style, Our Lady of Good Counsel. They converted the Lawrence O'Toole Chapel into a school, eventually run by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Then in the 1930s, the Sisters arranged to have the chapel demolished and constructed a school building, which would better fit the children's needs. They operated the school into the 1970s, and currently the building is used by a Montessori school. Our Lady of Good Counsel's tower has four bells, one each to honor the Irish, the Germans, the Poles, and those who are here and still to come.

WORK ON LOCUST POINT

According to the 1916 Report, 61% of the resident men (a total of 1081) were employed in the Point's industries; those who worked "off the Point" traveled by trolley to employment elsewhere, and tended to hold a higher percentage of skilled jobs. One job that was unsteady was stevedoring, and stevedores averaged working only 3 days per week. The Report investigator observed that when a Dutch ship docked, 500 or 600 men showed up, half of whom were black workers. The employer hired 200 men, and divided them into work crews of different races; such segregation was common on the Baltimore waterfront in those days. Wages for stevedores averaged \$ 6 a week (while local median family income in 1916 was \$12/week), which perhaps reflects their lack of unionization and the irregularity of employment.

57% of the adult Locust Point residents were male, from which we can infer that more men than women immigrated or migrated as they were looking for jobs. Regarding women at work, 18% of the adult women were employed, and only 5% of women with children worked outside the home, which was normal for urban families in that era. While 1081 men from the Point worked there, another 2182 men (and only 35 women) came from outside to work, as the industry and stevedoring there required a large labor force.

The 1916 report lists 22 major industries in Locust Point, but does not give the numbers employed by each firm. The B&O railroad was listed first, perhaps the most significant, and provided employment in their rail yards, the round-house, the grain elevators, the coal piers, and repair facilities. The fertilizer industry was also important. In addition to the Ober plant described above, there were four other fertilizer plants.

Canning was one of Baltimore's major industries of that era, and there were four canneries located just outside Locust Point, but hired many from the neighborhood. One was Platt and Company on Key Highway, currently the site of the Baltimore Museum of Industry. As we have noted, the annual wages of stevedores were low, and in the case of immigrant stevedore families, the women and children would go to the countryside in the spring and summer to pick fruits and vegetables and then return to can the products in the fall and later shuck and can oysters in the winter. Together they could earn as much as the husband.

RECREATION ON THE POINT

According to the 1916 Report, Locust Point was home to 31 saloons, patronized mostly by men. There were 6 public dance halls that were connected to saloons; one of these was Otterbein's on the Southwest corner of Hull and Beason. During 1887-1901, the building was owned by the Eintracht (Harmony) singing society and then was bought by the Otterbein family. The Locust Point Turnverein (Gymnastics Society) also met in the Otterbein Hall. Both singing societies (Baltimore had a total of 15 in 1900) and gymnastic societies were important cultural groups for German immigrants in the United States.

In addition, the Paret Memorial Parish House sponsored dances, as did the Catholic Church. The Settlement House in Fort Avenue, a nonsectarian outreach center established to induce immigrants to assimilate, also held dances and dancing classes. Also, young people traveled by ferry to the Recreation Pier on Fells Point for dancing. At that time, Locust Point residents also enjoyed both Latrobe Park, with its athletic fields and playgrounds, and Fort McHenry Park, which then actually had a bathing beach, a carousel and weekly band concerts.

THE LOCUST POINT HISTORIC DISTRICT AND THREE PERIPHERAL SITES

The Locust Point Historic District consists of the historic row houses and churches. The boundaries are:

Beginning at the corner of Key Highway and Fort Avenue, north and east on Key Highway to the CSX tracks, north and east following the curve of the railroad, then south along the rear property line of the east side of the 1300 block of Andre Street, then east on Clement Street, then south following the rear property line on the east side of the 1400 Block of Reynolds Street, west on Fort Avenue to the east side of Latrobe Park, then south and west along the outline of the park, then north along the rear property line of the west side of Latrobe Terrace to the rear property line of the south side of Fort Avenue, then west to Haubert Street, north to Fort Avenue and west to the point of origin.

Outside the historic district are the new houses east of Reynolds Street, as well as Fort McHenry, Silo Point, and Tide Point. While not in the Historic District, the latter three are of great historic importance and have already been designated as National Historic Monuments or Places.

Fort McHenry has already been designated as a National Shrine because of its significant role during the War of 1812. During the Civil War, Fort McHenry also played an important role for the Union side; 2000 suspect civilians were held there without trial for varying periods of time, as well as 23,000 Confederate war prisoners. In 1914, the US Army leased the fort to the City as a recreation area along the waterfront. Once the US joined World War I, the Army reclaimed the fort and constructed 39 temporary hospital buildings. The hospitals were removed in 1926, and the Army turned the fort over to the National Park Service in 1933. Congress adopted the Star Spangled Banner as our national anthem in 1931 and designated Fort McHenry as a National Monument and Historic Shrine 8 years later.

Silo Point was the site of grain elevators, also an example of the connection of maritime and railroad transportation. The B&O Railroad brought grain to the elevators, which then traveled by conveyor belt to the ships. The B&O built the first elevator in 1872, which burned down in 1891. A lightning strike caused a fire which demolished the second elevator in 1922. The B&O then constructed a 15 story elevator out of less flammable cement in 1924, which could hold 3.8 million bushels, one of the most efficient elevators at that time. In the year 1956, it set a record of exporting 102 million bushels of grain. After that in 1961 the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad (CSX) bought the B&O, and then the

Peavey Company bought the elevator in 1967 (later ConAgra). The Maryland Historical Trust designated the elevator as National Historic Place in 2004, and it has been subsequently converted to condominiums.

Another example of the maritime-land connection was the construction of the Proctor and Gamble plant in 1929, which was designed to produce soap for a mass market. Ships brought raw materials to the site, which were processed in huge kettles 30 feet high, and distributed initially by rail on the other side of the buildings. Originally, it was a 5 acre site and then expanded by 17 more acres. Proctor and Gamble closed the plant in 1994, which was bought by the Struever Brothers Company, which then obtained designation as a National Historic Place from the Maryland Historic Trust in 1999. It served as the headquarters for Struever Brothers taking the name Tide Point and later was sold to the Under Armour firm in 2011.

PERIOD OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE, 1845-1928

The Maryland Historical Trust requires each applicant to identify the *period of historic significance* for the area to be designated. 1845 marks the beginning of Locust Point's period of significance for two reasons: the B&O Railroad Company made the decision to extend its line to Locust Point, which brought industry to the peninsula. The Baltimore and Cuba Smelting Company was also founded in that year. Shortly thereafter it built the first row houses, which later dominated the Point's residential housing. 1928 is the last year when the historic row houses were constructed, and for the purposes of historic designation, it marks the end of the period of historic significance.

To work in Locust Point and nearby industry, a large number of workers and their families chose Locust Point as a place to live. The majority of the residences built in Locust Point during 1848-1928 are representative of the style of row houses seen throughout Baltimore in that period. At a steady pace throughout this period, builders constructed the row houses most of which are still homes for Locust Point residents today. Locust Point is significant in that most of its row houses and the three major churches are more than a century old. Compared with other working class neighborhoods such as Riverside, Locust Point houses were more plain and modest, usually two bay wide and a front door opening directly in the parlor. Also unique to Locust Point was the large number of builders (40) who constructed row houses, and few built outside Locust Point. In other neighborhoods, a builder would develop an entire half or quarter of the city block, but the limited land in Locust Point discouraged many large scale builders from investing there. Even though Locust Point might have been perceived as a relatively poor neighborhood in that period, 70% of the houses (compared with 65% for the national average today) were owner occupied, due to the modest prices and the help of assistance of ethnic savings and loan associations. The American Dream within the reach of hard-working thrifty immigrants as well as native-born Americans.

To summarize,

- Locust Point played a significant role as part of the port of Baltimore, attracting local entrepreneurs who built a diversified group of enterprises that benefited from the confluence of water and land transportation.
- Locust Point was America's third largest port of entry during the Great Wave of immigration, also the result of the confluence of water and railroad transportation.
- Builders in Locust Point constructed row houses, which are typical for Baltimore in the period, and which became the homes of immigrants and other workers who turned the wheels of Baltimore's industry.

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This proposal for historic designation is currently under review and consideration for approval by the Governor's Consulting Committee.