
A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of
The School of Continuing Studies
and of The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

By
Ron Cassie
Georgetown University Washington, D.C.
April 15, 2016

Ron Cassie, MA

Mentor: Charles Edward Yonkers, JD

ABSTRACT

Located 40 miles south of the Mason-Dixon Line, Baltimore was the fourth – largest city in the U.S. and the largest in the South before the Civil War, serving as the economic hub of the Mid-Atlantic region. Although Baltimore was always home to a significant free black population, the city was centered in a largely slave-holding state. Although Maryland choose neither Union or Confederate sides during the Civil War before President Abraham Lincoln sent federal troops into Baltimore, the city’s port business in the middle of the 19th century focused on the rural exports of tobacco, cotton, grain, and flour; ship building; and the importation of sugar.

Politically, economically, and culturally, Maryland was, at the time, a Southern state full of plantations from the Eastern Shore across the state’s central area around Baltimore. The city, however, was more a blend of white Southern and white Northern influences, a marginalized African-American citizenry, a significant group of German immigrants, and more recent Irish arrivals at the start of the Civil War.

However, after the construction of the Locust Point immigration pier in 1867 until its closing in 1914—essentially the period between the Civil War and the start of World War I—approximately 1.2 million Eastern European immigrants streamed into the South Baltimore peninsula, making Baltimore the second or third busiest U.S. port of
entry (depending on the year) for new arrivals and the busiest south of New York. The Locust Point immigration pier was privately funded and built by B & O Railroad, the first common-carrier railroad company in the U.S, and by the 1890s, an estimated 90 percent of immigrants arriving at Locust Point traveled directly to a destination further west. The rest, often the poorest of the immigrant groups, remained in Baltimore, heading into the city’s burgeoning canning, steel, garment, shipbuilding, railroad, and manufacturing industries.

These immigrants—initially more Germans, but then larger numbers of Poles, followed by Czech, Slovak, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Russians, as well as Eastern European Jews—transformed and left an imprint on Baltimore’s identity that continues to this day. Italians and Greeks would come, too, forming today’s “Little Italy” and “Greektown,” but generally by train, often from New York and Ellis Island because there was no direct steamship service from the South Mediterranean region to Baltimore. Ultimately, each group contributed to the development of working-class neighborhoods around the port, particularly in Southeast Baltimore, where the descendants, touchstones, and vestiges of each immigrant group persist—and strongly so in several areas. These immigrants filled the city’s iconic row houses, built churches and synagogues, organized labor unions, savings and loans, and other institutions, opened restaurants and businesses, entered politics, and created institutions, schools, parks, public works, art, traditions, ethnic festivals, and cultural practices that, in some cases, have remained in place for a century or more, and continue to inform Baltimore’s sense of place into the 21st century. And, while gentrifying in many areas, some of these original immigrant neighborhoods in East Baltimore now serve as home to the city’s growing immigrant groups from Latin
America as the latest chapter in Baltimore’s immigrant history is being laid atop the previous century’s story.
PREFACE

The inspiration for this project comes from an intersection of several influences. First, my own family’s immigrant history; second, the Southeast Baltimore neighborhood where I live, walk, bicycle, eat, work, and attend church; a course taught in this program by my thesis advisor, “Sense of Place: Values and Identity;” and a kind of stumbling upon of an old immigrant boarding house in Locust Point.

Of my four grandparents, all of whom I grew up around and knew well, two were immigrants, coming to the United States separately in their early 20s. My other set of grandparents, my paternal grandparents, were children of immigrants, and in fact, I also fondly recall my immigrant great-grandmother on my paternal side.

Both of my mother’s parents were immigrants and in one way they were atypical of what we think of as “immigrants.” They were born and raised in northern England, not far from Manchester, in a region known for its coal mining. Obviously they spoke the language when they arrived in the U.S., an enormous advantage, and faced none of the discrimination that many immigrant groups confront to this day. But, in other ways, their personal story shares similar characteristics of “typical” immigrants. They arrived poor, with modest education, and few resources other than my grandmother’s older brothers who had immigrated a few years earlier. My maternal grandmother had an eighth-grade education and her future husband, who came from a family of coal miners, did not attend school past the 10th grade. But they did bring certain cultural practices, values, and a separate national identity with them (not as exotic, of course, as immigrants from more far-flung countries) from their northern England village to Nutley, NJ, where they settled. A few of these practices and values were passed down to my mother, naturally, and some
ended up in our home as well. For example, my mother’s love of shortbread cookies and English tea—she never drank coffee—and affection for small-town life, simple English country cooking, flowers, and rural landscapes were obvious. But equally important, and foundational to my own worldview, was the value my mother placed on family, hard work, striving, and self-sufficiency, which had been impressed upon her by her parents. She respected blue-collar work, taught an appreciation of all individuals no matter their economic status, and preached a daily gratitude for having a roof over one’s head and food on the table. (My mother also remains, to this day, deeply curious about the stories of other immigrants, whether they’re from Pakistan, Peru, or any place else.)

These may seem like trite values, but they were not in our household. My mother grew up, if not poor, certainly with little economic security. Born in 1940, she was not only the child of two immigrants without high school diplomas who had survived the Depression, but she also knew well the stories of her parents’ families’ hardships in the fallout of World War II in England. Seventy years later, she still recalls the care packages her parents sent to their families in England during and after the war. Tragically, my mother’s father suffered a stroke when she was still a teenager, which sent him out of a factory job to a lower-paying job until he became too ill for even that. Christmas, for my mother and her sisters, meant the gift of a single doll or toy. Clothes, coats, etc., were handed down. It’s probably also worth noting that my mother and her two sisters were discouraged from attending college—not that there was money to pay for higher education—but were expected to find employment in the traditional “women’s work” of the time. My mother worked in a department store before marrying my father and again later while I was growing up. One of my aunts worked at a local elementary
school and another as a daycare provider. Looking back on my earliest childhood memories of my mother’s parents, however, my strongest recollections are of my grandmother playing and singing at the piano, and baking in her small apartment kitchen. I find it compelling that even immigrants of modest means—notably before the advent of television—would scrap together money for music lessons for a talented child (only my grandmother in her large family received music lessons, according to my mother). My grandmother possessed a beautiful voice and played and sang in her church choir, the center of family life there, before immigrating, and informally for family and friends for her entire life. It may not have been in a foreign language as we typically associate with other groups, but the Protestant hymns she sang were straight from historic St. Anne’s Church in Clifton, England. Of course, my mother’s parents did speak with accents their whole lives, which as I got a kick out of as a child and occasionally tried to mimic.

I was also close to my paternal grandparents, both of whom lived long lives. My grandmother Patricia’s family had come from Ireland during the potato famine, I am told, and she looked like she had been born on the Emerald Island herself with her bright green eyes and red hair. My grandfather Frank’s mother, who lived to be 90, is my Sicilian great-grandmother, Angelina “Lena” Randazzo, whom I also recall very well. Short, stout, energetic, always cooking, she had married the son of Italian immigrants from Calabria, who had once been in an acrobatic troupe with his brothers in New York, according to the family history I was told by my father. Together, among dozens of odd jobs over the years, my paternal great-grandparents ran a seasonal Italian restaurant at the Jersey Shore for years.
This backstory of my family has come into my mind quite a bit in the four years since I bought a row house in the southeast Baltimore neighborhood of Highlandtown. My brick and marble stoop home sits alongside the northeast corner of Patterson Park, close to where President John F. Kennedy once landed by helicopter in 1962 for a downtown Baltimore political event and where local photographer Tom Scilipoti caught him being swarmed by hundreds of Catholic local residents, most, we have to assume, given the nature of the neighborhoods at the time, with recent immigrant family histories.

Within a few steps from my front door, I can see the golden domes of St. Michael the Archangel Ukrainian Church on Eastern Avenue. St. Elizabeth of Hungary Catholic Church, built in 1895, remains around the corner. Down the street is a Russian Orthodox Church, as well as the oldest synagogue in Maryland. There’s also a 100-year-old, family-owned Italian market, an 89-year-old family-owned German bakery, a holdover of the Jewish “Corned Beef Row”—the 100-year-old Attman’s Deli—nearby. And it goes on and on. If a visitor, or newcomer, to Southeast Baltimore is inclined to take a look, the ethnic history that can be uncovered, and that still lives and breathes here, is endless.

The folk art unique to the city, for example, the painted row house window screens of Baltimore, was created by a Czech immigrant not far from my home. In fact, the screen painting tradition has witnessed a resurgence in recent years, with a boost from the Southeast Community Development Corporation. On the other side of Patterson Park sits the oldest continuing duckpin bowling alley in the country, opened by a Polish immigrant and former shipyard worker. Further along my daily bike commute to work sit authentic Polish restaurants, delis, sausage-making shops, churches, and savings loan
institutions. There’s also a Slavic restaurant and museum. And, as anyone familiar with Baltimore’s Eastern Avenue knows, these treasures are bookended by Little Italy to the west, closest to the Inner Harbor, and Greektown on the city’s southeastern border.

As I mentioned at the outset of this preface, two other factors combined to inspire this thesis. As part of researching a feature story I was writing two years ago for *Baltimore* magazine, I met Locust Point native Bill Hughes, the 76-year-old son of a longshoreman father and Irish immigrant mother. He gave me a tour of his neighborhood—on the other side of Baltimore’s Inner Harbor—and one of the earliest row house neighborhoods in the city. As part of that walking tour, which took us next to the new Under Armour complex, housed inside a former Proctor and Gamble warehouse, Hughes showed me the three-story, 26-bedroom, brick Immigration House at 1308 Beason Street, close to the one-time Locust Point immigration pier, where the story of Baltimore’s great, post-Civil War, pre-World War I, immigration really comes to life.

Built in 1904, next to an even older German church—with the name still in German above the door—the Immigration House is where many new arrivals to the city stayed, awaiting a family member or friend from the old country to take them in. It was through this tangible reminder of Locust Point’s immigration pier that my curiosity was sparked about the story of the people who built Baltimore’s port industry and filled ethnic neighborhood’s now iconic—an in many cases, now gentrifying—row houses.

There have been ongoing efforts for some time now among local Baltimore historians and preservations to turn the Immigration House into a permanent museum to help tell the immigration story of Locust Point, long overshadowed, like many other U.S. entry points, by the immense scale of immigration at Ellis Island.
Eventually, the immigration history growing out of Locust Point did become the introduction into the feature story, “Then and Now,” I wrote for Baltimore magazine. And it was through the discovery of Immigration House and the Locust Point story with Bill Hughes’s help, through my purchase of a row home in Southeast Baltimore in 2011, through my family history, and through my class with Professor Charles Yonkers in the fall of 2012, that the ethnic “parts” of my extended neighborhood around the port of Baltimore began to form a larger, multi-dimensional picture. It was also through the class, “Sense of Place: Values & Identity,” with my thesis advisor that I also grew more conscious of what transforms mere geography into “place.” As Professor Yonkers puts it in his synopsis, “[Place] is a cerebral and emotional blend of associations, an awareness that is part physical, part science, and part history, culture and social memory.”

My intention with this thesis is not merely to count and examine the number of immigrant-started churches, businesses, festivals, etc. that have stood the test of time—although I think documenting those are important because many are fading from view. The broader purpose is it to illustrate how the events—the political, economic, and commercial decisions, and new industrial technologies, in combination with the Port of Baltimore’s unique geography—led to the construction of the immigration pier. And, how the subsequent Eastern European arrivals at Locust Point helped create the diverse, working class, port neighborhoods and shape the city’s lasting identity. It will also be worth exploring how that history persists today, serving to attract economic development and new families, including new immigrant groups, who have moved, in some cases, into the very same houses where those Eastern European immigrants lived a century ago.
This thesis is not, however, meant to serve as a complete history of Baltimore, nor its identity, by any means. Discussion of the African-American experience, most notably in historic West Baltimore, as well as the development of Baltimore’s older, wealthier white downtown neighborhoods and suburbs, are not touched except as they relate to the ethnic neighborhoods ringing the port.
DEDICATION

to

MY MOTHER’S IMMIGRANT PARENTS, FRED AND MARY, AND MY FATHER’S PARENTS, FRANK AND PATTY, CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

and

THE IMMIGRANTS WHO MADE SOUTHEAST BALTIMORE NEIGHBORHOOD THE RICH COMMUNITY IT REMAINS TODAY
EPIGRAPH

No matter what they put up in this town, it was built upon something that makes for a better story: Burke's beneath the chicken fat of a Royal Farms at Light and Lombard; orthodox synagogues and the bones of organ grinder monkeys beneath the new restaurants of Little Italy, heavy metals in the soil beneath Harbor East.

—Rafael Alvarez, former Baltimore Sun reporter and author.
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................. ii
PREFACE ............................................................................................................................... v
DEDICATION ........................................................................................................................... xii
EPIGRAPH ............................................................................................................................... xiii
CHAPTER 1: A PORT, A ROAD, AND A RAILROAD ............................................................... 1
CHAPTER 2: EARLY IMMIGRATION: THE IRISH ............................................................... 14
CHAPTER 3: A CITY OF GERMANS .................................................................................. 26
CHAPTER 4: LITTLE POLAND ........................................................................................... 36
CHAPTER 5: CORNED BEEF ROW .................................................................................. 56
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION ............................................................................................... 69
BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................................... 82
CHAPTER ONE
A PORT, A ROAD, AND A RAILROAD

To start at the beginning, in the summer of 1608, Capt. John Smith was the first European explorer to discover the Chesapeake Bay. As he chronicled in journals and maps, he sailed up the Patapsco River toward what would ultimately become “Baltimore Town” more than a century later.\(^1\) It was in 1726 that William Fell, an English shipbuilder, purchased land on the Patapsco River and named it Fell’s Prospect, which, of course, later became known as Fells Point, Baltimore’s now family-friendly and gentrified Colonial-period waterfront destination.\(^2\) By 1731, iron making began on the Patapsco, and in 1750, Baltimore pioneer and merchant John Stevenson shipped a cargo of flour to Ireland, the first export in a foreign trade industry that would eventually spur development around the deep-water harbor off Fells Point, and soon, the broader city as well.\(^3\)

In 1780, Baltimore rapidly growing as a commercial hub, the state legislature named the city the official port of entry for Maryland. Local merchants were already engaged extensively in business around the port, and shipbuilding continued to thrive as the “Baltimore Clippers” became famous.\(^4\) In 1796, “Baltimore Town” was formally incorporated as Baltimore City, and in 1797, the U.S. Frigate Constellation, the first ship

---


of the U.S. Navy, was launched from the city, building even further on Baltimore’s shipbuilding and commercial reputation. In 1809, pointing to the city’s booming and diversifying private sector, the Washington Cotton Manufacturing Company, the first in the state, was incorporated in Baltimore.⁵

Then, in 1816, truly modern technology made a breakthrough in the city. The first gas company in the Western Hemisphere, the Gas Light Company of Baltimore—the predecessor of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company—was founded, and the city became the first in the country with streets illuminated by gas light. On a June night that summer, local businessmen and their socialite wives were invited to Baltimore’s Rembrandt Peale Museum—opened several years earlier by Peale, a famous American artist and portraitist of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, among others—for a demonstration of the new gas light technology. The painting and natural history museum had been a successful creation of Peale—a forward-thinking entrepreneur as well as an artist—and his father, Charles Wilson Peale. (The museum, in fact, would remain open at its same location until 1997 and efforts have begun in recent years for the building’s restoration.) With a successful demonstration of the new gas light, Peale had hoped to attract fellow investors to his vision of lighting the city. Which he did. The Baltimore City Council passed an ordinance that year permitting Peale to manufacture gas, lay gas pipes beneath city streets, and contract with the city for street lighting. Less than a year after his demonstration won over investors, the first public streetlight was lit in a ceremony one block south of where City Hall remains today in downtown Baltimore.⁶

---


It wasn’t until 1957 that Mayor Thomas D. Alessandro extinguished the city’s last gas lamp in Little Italy, pointing to just how long these early industries influenced working life and the city’s culture. In fact, Baltimore Gas and Electric, a.k.a. “BG & E” to local residents, remains as the oldest gas company in the Western Hemisphere.

It’s also worth noting that coal, first arriving by horse-drawn carriage and soon by rail (rail being an industry that will be eventually tackled in detail in this thesis) from Western Maryland’s Georges Creek Valley, increasingly became the energy source for the city’s budding industrialization. Keep in mind, too, that as recently as 2013, the port of Baltimore still ranked second in the country for exporting coal, now largely from West Virginia, and coal remains the port's top export commodity based on tonnage.\(^7\)

A few years after Peale’s modern breakthrough, the first oyster canning houses had begun to be set up around the Port of Baltimore in the mid-1830s. Baltimore was the first large-scale canning center in the U.S, and by 1869, there were 115 packing houses in the city.\(^8\) Also around the start of the canning industry, in 1828, Francis Beehler founded the first umbrella manufacturing company in Baltimore.\(^9\)


Coinciding with umbrella manufacturing were early forays into clothing and other accessories manufacturing in Baltimore, including ties and hats, pointing to the city’s future development as a major garment manufacturer after the Civil War.¹⁰

All of this significant early 19th-century development in commerce, industry, and manufacturing is foundational to understanding how the city’s economic engine developed around the Port of Baltimore—which has continued to serve as the city’s central economic driver through its history and into the 21st century. Although in many ways Baltimore is a classic Rust Belt city, suffering along with Buffalo, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, etc. in the decline of the U.S. auto, manufacturing, and steel industries—Sparrows Point on Baltimore’s harbor was once the world’s largest steel mill—the port still generates more than 14,000 jobs and more than 40,000 jobs when direct, indirect, and induced jobs are measured.¹¹

So, by the middle of 19th century, the Industrial Revolution was taking strong root in Baltimore, with the port playing the starring role, linking the shipbuilding business, other burgeoning local industries and manufacturers, as well as the state’s Eastern Shore and Central Maryland farmers, and Southern Maryland tobacco growers, to potential customers.¹² The port’s geographic location at the top of the Chesapeake Bay proved advantageous in this scenario for several reasons, as it has continued to do so


through the ensuing two centuries. One, it served to position Baltimore squarely between the young country’s growing Northern industrial base and Southern plantation states, making it a natural Mid-Atlantic connecting point between the two regions. Think of Southern cotton, for instance, heading to Northern mills.

In the decades to come, the Chesapeake Bay’s unique geography would continue to prove critical to the shipping and transportation industries, but for another reason. Its location far up the Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the U.S., also positioned Baltimore’s port much further inland than more Northern ports, for example, making the city a perfectly situated commerce point as the country’s population would expand into the Ohio River Valley and the Midwest. Its position still proves invaluable, as the port of Baltimore sits significantly further west of Philadelphia and New York, in terms of longitude and latitude, than it is south of those two cities, which is why it processed nearly 800,000 cars in 2014, the most of any U.S. port, with many heading directly to Ohio and the Midwest.

It’s a bit of an old song, but geography, in this case, truly became destiny. Not by mere accident of fate, however, but because of key, timely moves by city, state, and Congressional leaders—and even federal agencies—who exhibited rare vision, not unlike Peale, in pursuit of cutting-edge infrastructure, notably in transportation and shipping, to spur the city and state’s economic growth.


While Fells Point’s deep-water edges proved sufficient for the early Clipper shipbuilding industry, and the Baltimore harbor overall benefitted from several natural deep-water sites, dredging and channel building needed to be done almost from the outset to keep pace of the growing demands and increasing size of commercial ships. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, founded in 1775 during the American Revolutionary War, proved critical in the dredging process and creation of the harbor’s docks and expanding shipping channels. And credit must go to Congress, which in 1836 appropriated funds to dredge and expand access, and then again, in 1852, for the digging of a larger 22-foot-deep by 200-feet wide channel, made possible by funding via The River & Harbor Act of 1852. The dredging, development, construction, maintenance, and expansion of the port’s working harbor, a process that continues to this day, has always been of keen interest to city and state business leaders and elected officials. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers notes in its online history its substantial efforts in Baltimore. The Corps highlights major dredging initiatives completed in 1869, 1874, 1884, 1894, and 1896, and that by the 1890s the port had already established the city’s waterfront as one of the world’s busiest and largest harbors. Regarding much of this work, special recognition should probably be given to Major William P. Craighill, who served as Baltimore District Engineer for a crucial 30-year period, from 1865 to 1895. Craighill graduated second in his class at the United States Military Academy in 1853, served as a key Union army engineer during the Civil War, working on several Mid-Atlantic coast forts, and also

---


taught engineering at the military academy before retiring with the rank of Brigadier
General. But credit belongs, too, to Baltimore’s City Council, Maryland’s state
legislators, and Congress for their approval of the port’s infrastructure investments,
which formed the basis for Baltimore’s meteoric rise in the late 19th century and early
20th century as an industrial and shipping urban giant.

The port served not just as the means to import and export goods during this
epoch, but in many ways became directly responsible for attracting and literally carrying
Eastern and Central European immigrants to the city to work in its burgeoning port
commercial enterprises.

But there is another other critical component to Baltimore’s industrial and
economic development: the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, the first commercial carrier in
the United States. And, relatedly, it would be the privately owned B & O Railroad—not
Baltimore City, nor the state of Maryland, nor the U.S. Congress—that would build the
first immigration pier at Locust Point on the south side of the Baltimore harbor in 1867,
shifting the state’s immigration entry location point from Fells Point because of space
limitations there. Eventually the city’s industrial revolution, unique port access to
Atlantic trade routes, nexus between the rural South and more industrial North, railroad
connection to the Midwest—and events in Europe—would conspire to make Baltimore
the second or third-busiest entry point (depending on the year) for Third Wave
immigrants to the U.S. between the end of the Civil War and start of World War I, when
immigration was temporarily halted.

There’s no other way to put it: the construction of the B & O Railroad was
without precedent in this country. The development of the B & O Railroad and its 380-
mile line from Baltimore to the Ohio River Valley in the first half of the 19th century makes it one of the most important railroads in history (and explains its inclusion on the iconic Monopoly board, created in the early 20th century). The B & O became the first company to offer regular freight and passenger service, and the railroad would deeply impact the development of Baltimore’s port, the growth of its industrial and manufacturing base, and the birth of the city’s ethnic neighborhoods around the port.

Baltimore was the second largest city in the country in 1827, when the B & O was incorporated. The motivation at the time for its development is easy to understand. City leaders had become concerned that the construction of the Erie Canal, which opened in 1825 and linked New York to the Midwest, and plans for the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, linking Washington, D.C., to the Midwest, would put Baltimore at a competitive disadvantage.

An earlier infrastructure effort had distinctly benefitted Baltimore. The “National Road,” initially for horse-drawn carriages and mail coaches, of course, had been launched in 1811 to make easier passage via Cumberland, MD, through the Allegheny Mountains to the West, but the speed and convenience of those two canals, Baltimore leaders feared, would mitigate their city’s advantage.

Construction of the National Road, also called the “Cumberland Road,” had initially connected Baltimore to the Ohio River—there was already an established land route (today’s Route 40) that connected Baltimore to Frederick and Frederick to Cumberland, following an older Native American trail. The National Road project, starting in 1811, reached Southwestern Pennsylvania and Wheeling, Virginia (now West

---

Virginia), in 1830. The competitive issue for Baltimore quickly evolved because there is no waterway—to translate into increased efficiency—that could connect the city to Cumberland, which is in the far western corner of the state near the intersection of West Virginia and Pennsylvania, and critically, Ohio. The new National Road, also called the Cumberland Road and the first major federal highway, would link to Washington to the West via the C & O Canal, however. (Owing to its historic nature, the bicentennial of the National Road was celebrated in 2011 in Cumberland with a three-day festival.\(^\text{19}\))

Pointing to the Cumberland Road’s national significance, it later became the first road in the U.S surfaced with the macadam process developed Scottish engineer and road builder John Lowdown McAdam (note the last name). Subsequent efforts pushed the Cumberland Road across the state of Ohio, through the cities of Zanesville, the state capital of Columbus, and Springfield, and then Indiana, including the cities of Richmond, Indianapolis, and Terre Haute, before passing through Southern Illinois and ending in Vandalia. Ultimately, it would run through six states and 700 miles in all.

Not to lose track of the immigration theme of this thesis, but rather to shed light on why and how Baltimore became an attractive city for an enormous number of European immigrants, it’s important to stay on this bedrock story. The legislation to build and fund the National Road had been passed in 1806 by Congress and signed into law by President Thomas Jefferson. It was, again, one of several visionary and expensive infrastructure investments that would set the table, ultimately, for both Baltimore’s booming port business and an influx of immigrants—the vast majority of whom arriving in Locust Point, in fact, headed further west, filling the towns and farms along the Cumberland Road, and eventually, even further west. It may be obvious, but these

\(^{19}\text{Angie Brant, “National Road Celebrating Its Bicentennial, Cumberland Times, April 2, 2011.}\)
European immigrants who came through the Locust Point pier, did not just help the city by purchasing a one-way B & O rail ticket. They helped build cities and towns in the Midwest that grew into trading and import-export partners with the port of Baltimore.

The commitment by Congress in funding and building the National Road literally helped chart a course that the B & O railroad tracks would follow and then surpass. But it would take time.

One of the most detailed accounts of Baltimore city leaders trying to respond to the challenges—and opportunities—of the time, as the country grew by leaps and bounds, comes from the *North American Review*, considered the first literary magazine in the United States, founded in 1815 and published continuously through 1940.\(^{20}\)

In the magazine’s 56\(^{th}\) issue, published in July 1827, there’s an 11-page story, titled simply, “Baltimore and Ohio Railroad,” that reports on the city’s real-time discussions about how best to adapt to the western population movement in the U.S. and the potential for interstate business in the still young country.

For a port city like Baltimore, better interstate connectivity meant a competitive advantage with other potential Atlantic seaboard cities, inevitably translating into more international trade as well, which clearly commercial and civic leaders recognized.

---

From the *North American Review* and published as follows:

Art. III.—Proceedings of sundry Citizens of Baltimore, convened for the Purpose of Devising the most efficient Means of Improving the Intercourse between that City and the Western States.

The fertile districts lying west of the Allegheny ridge, and watered by the Ohio and the Mississippi, are among the most remarkable in the world, not so much merely from their great physical advantages, as from the rapidity with which these have been turned to account. In little more than half a century, the frontier of the Anglo-American population has become extended from Cumberland, in Maryland, on the Potomac, to a considerable distance beyond the Mississippi. The state of Ohio, whose nearest point to Cumberland is about one hundred and twenty miles, now numbers more than double the population of Maryland, whose western extremity bordered, in 1760, on a solitary wilderness. One can hardly conjecture how far this torrent of civilization will rush in the next half century. The same fertility of soil, mildness of climate, and facility of interior communication; the same equal laws, and security of property, will probably people the remote west with as great, perhaps greater rapidity . . . It is difficult to imagine how much greater this progress would have been, had our western states lain more convenient to the sea. From the physical features of the country, they have from the first, contended with the disadvantage of dealing with remote marts, accessible only at the expense of much time and money. The great chain of the Allegany, which has been called the backbone of the United States, dividing the tributary streams of the Ohio and Mississippi from those of the Atlantic rivers, neither affords a natural descending navigation from the western states to the Atlantic, nor has yet been pierced by a canal uniting their respective waters.

Construction of the first track of the B & O Railroad began exactly a year after publication of that story on July 4, 1828, with the ceremonial placement of the first stone amid great fanfare and coverage in local newspapers. Charles Carroll, the last living signer of the Declaration of Independence, put the first spade to dirt. Now located in the official B & O Museum in Southwest Baltimore, the first stone contained a copy of the company’s original charter. Meanwhile, President John Quincy Adams, believing that canals where the wave of the future, broke ground the same day at a ceremony in Washington for the C & O Canal.
The race for the future of commercial transportation was on. While in hindsight, the development of the railroad may look inevitable, it was not so at the time.

The first "official" B & O rail passengers rode in horse-drawn carts on wooden rails from Mount Clair in Southwest Baltimore to the Carrollton Viaduct, which would remain under construction for the next year and a half. Less than two years after the first stone had been placed, the initial 13-mile rail line was completed to Ellicott's Mills, MD—a mill center, not surprisingly—now known as Ellicott City. Soon afterward, the first trial run of Peter Cooper's “Tom Thumb” steam-powered engine in August of 1830 brought the new technology to the Baltimore railroad. Cast iron rails soon replaced wood, trains of carts divided the weight upon the rails, while flanged iron wheels held to the rail better than wood, and a breaking system was developed.

The battle with the C & O Canal, for all intents and purposes, was finished before it really started.

It is almost impossible to overstate the leap that the Baltimore’s B & O two-dozen founders—including many well-known city civic and business leaders, such as Johns Hopkins, the university founder, and investment banker George Brown, of the firm Alex. Brown & Sons, which survives to this day as part of Deutsche Bank—had taken in committing to the virtually unknown technology when launching the rail company.\textsuperscript{21} But apparently they had done research in 1826 on the budding rail transportation system, still barely gaining a toehold in England at the time.

The B & O reached Point of Rocks, MD, which sits on the Potomac River, by 1832 and then Washington in 1835, with the addition of a southern branch. The U.S. Mail started moving on the railroad in 1838, but it remained a long slog to reach

\textsuperscript{21} Woody, “Baltimore and Ohio Railroad,” 70.
Cumberland, in the mountainous western Alleghenies, where the tracks weren’t completed until June 1851.

To reach Wheeling, 11 tunnels and 113 bridges had to be constructed, and the last spike was laid in Wheeling a year and a half after B & O reached Cumberland on Christmas Eve 1852. On Jan. 1, 1853, the first train arrived in Wheeling from Baltimore in 16 hours, a trip that had once taken several days.

The West was now truly open for business.

At this point, we’re getting closer to the heart of this paper, immigration into Baltimore between the Civil War and World War I. The development of the B & O Railroad coincided with the tragic potato famine in Ireland, which sent some two million Irish emigrants out of the country between 1845 and 1855. According to the Library of Congress, an estimated 4.5 million Irish arrived in the U.S. between 1820 and 1930, and, between 1820 and 1860, the Irish constituted over one third of all immigrants to the U.S.

---


CHAPTER TWO

EARLY IMMIGRATION: THE IRISH

In the decades between the mid-1840s and mid-1850s, more than 1 million people died of starvation and famine-related diseases in Ireland because of the massive, repeated failures of that country’s potato crop. A tragedy beyond modern comprehension in a small country of roughly 8.5 million,¹ the potato famine sent another 1.5 million Irish fleeing to the United States. From the perspective of the United States, the potato famine would become one of the most singularly important events in American immigration history. (In a terrible ironic twist, it was only just a few years ago that scientists, studying the DNA of a 166-year-old potato plant, uncovered the history of the fungus outbreak that led to the crop failure and famine: It came from a strain previously unique to Mexico that had made its way back to Europe and Ireland aboard North America ships.²)

As early the fall of 1845, The Baltimore Sun reported under the headline “FAMINE IN IRELAND-of the “most dreadful of calamities” . . . “a failure of the Irish potato crop, is now painfully certain.”³ By 1847, the situation in Ireland as reported by The Sun had continued to deteriorate, with ships of new immigrants arriving even as Americans sent wheat and flour overseas in assistance.⁴


³ ‘Famine in Ireland of the ‘most dreadful calamities,” The Baltimore Sun, November 07, 1845.

⁴ “Arrival of the Steamship Britannia,” The Baltimore Sun, May 18, 1847.
Some of the individual stories of these desperate Irish immigrants, the ones fortunate enough to survive the voyage across the Atlantic to the United States, and specifically Baltimore, are recounted in horrifying detail at the Irish Railroad Workers Museum.

The saga of the potato famine in Ireland is, of course, a classic “push” event that historians note when examining the broad factors that compel large groups of immigrants to leave their country of origin. The fact that there was available work in the U.S. with the Industrialization Revolution underway—as this paper has highlighted in Baltimore with the start of the country’s first commercial railroad—is a quintessential “pull” event.

This arrival of poor Irish immigrants in the U.S. is of particular importance to the broader Baltimore immigration story and the early development of the city’s ethnic port neighborhoods. Many of these Irish immigrants who arrived in Fells Point—some literally near death, according to accounts from the time—aboard what became known as “coffin ships,” ended up working for the B & O Railroad, either digging and constructing the railroad, or working at one of the nascent industry’s depots, rail yards, or warehouses. They often worked alongside free blacks in the hard laying of the steel rails, highlighting their low socio-economic standing.

In fact, the Irish Railroad Workers Museum in Southwest Baltimore is just one block from the B & O Railroad Museum and a short walk from the historic St. Peter the Apostle Church, built in 1842 by the Archdiocese of Baltimore to serve the city’s fast-growing Irish population. A few years after the completion of St. Peter’s, the Sisters of

---

5 Jessica Valdez, “A Visit from Old Ireland,” The Baltimore Sun, June 4, 2003

Mercy—an Irish Order brought to Baltimore by a granddaughter of Charles Carroll of Carrollton—established a local mission at the church to teach and tend to the needs of these newly arrived Irish. The church, which soon added a rectory, convent, and a school building across the street, continued to serve the community for the next 165 years before it was sold to a non-Catholic, African-American congregation—ultimately a reflection of the long-changing demographics of the neighborhood.

The relatively small but compelling Irish Railroad Workers Museum in the 900 block of Lemmon Street is housed in two narrow, two-story row homes. Those two row homes, generally familiar in style to anyone who has visited Baltimore’s working class neighborhoods around the port of Baltimore, were built in 1848 specifically to provide homes for the increasing number of workers required by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.7

According to the historical research undertaken by the museum, the Lemmon Street row houses were constructed by a carpenter named Charles Shipley on land leased to him by John Howard McHenry, a grandson of Revolutionary War hero Col. John Eager Howard. By September of 1849, all of the row houses in the block had been sold to families of Irish descent, most of whom worked in the nearby B & O Railroad complex. For example, Thomas McNew worked as a watchman at the B & O Railroad depot; Thomas Medcalfe, was hired as a fireman; and Dennis McFadden and Cornelius McLaughlin were employed as laborers.

Each paid $400 for their six-room houses.

At the time that the Lemmon Street row houses were built, the number of homes near the new B & O Railroad complex was relatively few, unlike today, where the

---

landscape is now packed full of row houses and various commercial and industrial buildings. (Although, given late 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st}-century deindustrialization many of the warehouses are empty of activity.) Downtown Baltimore then remained some distance away, separated by open tracts of land dotted with private estates. This originally, largely Irish neighborhood, is part of port’s general Southwestern area, of course, that is closely associated today with Oriole Park at Camden Yards. The giant red brick warehouse at Camden Yards—the longest building on the East Coast and now 439 feet from home plate—built in the ensuring years by B & O, beginning in 1898.\footnote{8 “Oriole Park at Camden Yards History,” Baltimore Orioles, http://baltimore.orioles.mlb.com/bal/ballpark/information/index.jsp?content=history [accessed: January 6, 2016].}

The Camden Yards warehouse harkens back to the foundational history that the B & O railroad plays in the city’s history and culture, and continues to play, in essence today, as CSX rail, which formally took over B & O in 1987.\footnote{9 “CSX merger family tree,” Trains magazine, http://trn.trains.com/railroads/railroad-history/2006/06/csx-merge-family-tree [accessed: January 7, 2016].}

But the significance of the Lemmon Street houses is not only directly due to their physical proximity and historical involvement with the National Register landmark B & O roundhouse and railcar shops and St. Peter’s the Apostle Church, but to nearby Hollins Market as well. One of Baltimore’s early public markets—these are key cultural institutions in the fabric of the city—Hollins Market, established in 1846, continues to provide local food, goods, and services for the citizens of Southwest Baltimore. It’s a neighborhood for decades now referred to as “SOWEBO” and also home to a long-running and diverse SoWeBohemian arts festival.
Architecturally, the Lemmon Street houses are significant in themselves because they represent some of the earliest surviving row houses—and row house adaptations—built in Baltimore. Constructed in a two-story plus attic style, they are a vernacular version of the more expensive Greek Revival-style townhouse found in the city’s monied, older central Mount Vernon neighborhood. Those late Federal period row houses, in contrast, had more steeply pitched triangular roofs and top-floor dormers to light the attic story.

The new, cheaper-built row houses near the B & O Railroad complex for Irish workers, with their lower-pitched roofs and smaller attic windows in place of dormers, provided head room for two small bedrooms on the upper floor instead of one room of the dormer style. Though narrower, and thus less expensive to build in bunches, the small row houses with an extra upstairs bedroom proved a good fit for immigrant Catholic families. Although, it’s important to note that row house styles would continue to shift slightly in style—at least to the casual observer—from neighborhood to neighborhood as the city’s ethnic row house neighborhoods developed over the next 50-70 years. Newer row houses, for example, would grow wider, and include wider living room windows. In some neighborhoods, such as around Upper Fells Point, Butcher’s Hill, Patterson Park, and Lombard Street, larger three-story row houses would become local storefront businesses on the first floor with families living upstairs. Others would be divided into small apartment buildings.

The two-story plus attic houses in the 900 block of Lemmon Street are also particularly of interest and worthy of preservation because much of their original interior fabric was restored by the museum, offering visitors the rare opportunity to see firsthand
how immigrant Irish families of the 19th century lived in Baltimore. They are not unlike, albeit on a much smaller scale, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in Manhattan.

Each of the main rooms had a fireplace with a Doric mantel. The wide kitchen fireplace was flanked with a set of built-in shelves for cooking and food preparation purposes, taking up the space between the hearth and the rear wall of the house. On the other side of the fireplace, in the middle of the first floor, a tightly wound staircase rises to the second and attic story.

The influx of Irish immigrants from the period of The Great Hunger were not the first Irish immigrants to Baltimore, however. The Hibernian Society of Baltimore had been organized in 1803 and incorporated in 1818 “for the purpose of affording charitable assistance and advice to such emigrants from, or natives of Ireland arriving at, or residing in any part of the State of Maryland, as may be in want and deemed worthy.”

The Hibernian Society still holds regularly scheduled meetings throughout the year and hosts Baltimore’s popular annual St. Patrick's Day parade and related events—some 5,000 runners take part in the holiday’s 5K run—with a half-dozen other Irish organizations in the city.

The city’s new Irish population would not merely remain tied to the immediate neighborhood near the B & O Railroad complex and St. Peter the Apostle Church, however. As the country’s Western frontier continued to move, new cities began to grow and expand in population, and importance as trading partners for Baltimore. Cincinnati, St. Louis, Chicago, etc., all eventually became targets for the B & O, which would continue to grow its massive operation. Most notably, in terms of the development of

---

Baltimore’s ethnic port neighborhood’s, B & O had laid rail lines east to the port’s shipping docks, both in Fells Point—on the northern side of Baltimore harbor—and to Locust Point, a short ferry ride away on the southern side of the Baltimore harbor.\textsuperscript{11} Today, these areas are linked by a 7-mile urban walking/jogging trail—a semi-circle essentially—with the city’s popular Inner Harbor sitting between both points.

During the Civil War, the B & O railroad also played a critical role, moving Union troops and supplies, but was subjected to numerous Confederate attacks as well. (An interesting side note, the B & O President John W. Garrett was a Southern sympathizer but recognized that his railroad’s long-term commercial interests were more aligned with the Northern cause.\textsuperscript{12}) Rail bridges were burned and rebuilt during the war, tracks were torn up and replaced, telegraph lines pulled down and restored—which had the result of facilitating technological advances in the rail network after the war. Steel rails replaced wooden rails and prefabricated iron bridges sped repairs, for example, during the war and contributed to faster, better construction following the end of the conflict.

The first B & O bridge across the Ohio River was begun in 1868 and took 37 months to complete. A second bridge was begun on the Parkersburg line in 1869 and completed in January of 1871. The B & O finally reached Chicago in November of 1874 after completing 811 miles of track. At the same time, the B & O increased its control of the Marietta & Cincinnati Railroad, the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad, and others to reach


St. Louis. These lines became part of the B & O in 1893. By the end of the 19th century, B & O had achieved almost 5,800 miles of track and connected Chicago and St. Louis to Baltimore, as well as Washington, Philadelphia, and New York City.

Leading up to and during this period of enormous expansion, B & O recognized if it was going to continue grow and lay track westward, it would need European immigrants on its passenger trains to fill and grow the burgeoning cities of the Midwest. Not just for the purpose of selling newcomers a one-way passenger ticket to the West, but to create demand and markets for their commercial freight trains.

Thus, the decision to build two immigration piers in 1867 at Locust Point is the crucial turning point in Baltimore’s European immigration story.¹³

Before the construction of the immigration piers at Locust Point, those who came to Baltimore from Europe in the first two decades after the War of 1812, sailed past Fort McHenry, birthplace of the Star Spangled Banner, into Fells Point. They also largely resembled, in terms of nationality, those who had arrived earlier in the city during the colonial era. These were mostly English or Irish immigrants who arrived by sailing ship, or Germans who had made their way south from Pennsylvania.¹⁴

By 1830, Baltimore merchants in the commercial cotton, tobacco, and flour industries had established firm trade relationships with partners in Liverpool, England and Bremen, Germany, and these links began to influence the number of immigrants coming to Baltimore—if not changing their country of origin initially in the first few

---


decades following the completion of the National Road and launch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. As the city continued to expand its transportation network, adding connective roads and rail lines into Pennsylvania and Virginia, not only did Baltimore’s reach into the blossoming West increase opportunities for the city’s mercantile class, it also necessitated, naturally, the need for more able-bodied workers to build those projects and work in the local mills and related enterprises.

Soon, the ships carrying tobacco, cotton, and flour to Liverpool and Bremen, two of the largest industrial ports in Europe at the time, were returning to the Baltimore Harbor with hulls full of immigrants. From just a few hundred annual immigrants in 1820, the yearly total of immigrants climbed to nearly 2,000 by the end of the decade. From 1830, when the population of Baltimore was put at 80,620, the city grew to 212,418 during the Civil War. Of that Civil War-era population, an estimated quarter of Baltimore residents were foreign born, including 15,536 Irish and 32,613 Germans.

In fact, it is the trade relationship between Baltimore and Bremen that will eventually prove critical to Baltimore’s immigration story. Baltimore was the largest tobacco exporter in the United States in the 1840s and 1850s, and Bremen became the largest tobacco importer in Europe. It is through these two cities’ relationship, and, in particular, linked through the efforts of a German-born Baltimore immigrant named Albert Schumacher, who was active in the Maryland tobacco and shipping trade, that a

---

15 Esslinger, Forgotten Doors: The Other Ports of Entry into the United States, 62.


17 Esslinger, Forgotten Doors: The Other Ports of Entry into the United States, 65.

deal would emerge between the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, Baltimore City, and Bremen to build an immigration pier at Locust Point after the Civil War.

Not immediately, but within a few short decades of the building of Locust Point immigration pier, ships leaving Bremen for Baltimore began bringing not just Germans to Locust Point. Central and Eastern European immigrants—Polish, Czech, Slovakian, Russian, Jewish, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian—as well as German, started arriving not just by the hundreds or thousands each year on the shores of Baltimore, but by the tens of thousands.

German and Irish immigrants had been among the first ethnic groups to live in the Port of Baltimore row house neighborhoods. They filled the still relatively small residential community of Locust Point as well and South Baltimore—including part of what is today known as Federal Hill. And they kept filling the western port of Baltimore neighborhoods of Hollins Market and Pigtown. The early and first post-Civil War German and Irish immigrants had also been among the first moving into the ever-growing number of row houses being added in Canton and Highlandtown. One can just look at the founding of several of the early Catholic Churches around the port of Baltimore to establish when the various ethnic groups arrived and gained a toehold.

The Holy Cross parish, founded in 1858 in Federal Hill, was the first and remains the oldest faith community established in South Baltimore. It started as a mission of St. Alphonsus Church in downtown Baltimore. It became known as “the German church,” servicing the religious needs for the some 1,000 Catholics of German descent living in the then-burgeoning South Baltimore port neighborhood.19 Around the

same time, Our Lady of Good Counsel was originally founded as St. Lawrence O’Toole Chapel by Irish immigrants in South Baltimore in 1855—an area known as “the Hill” before the name Federal Hill became popularized—neighboring Locust Point. In 1862, Father James Gibbons, later Cardinal Gibbons, the son of an Irish immigrant widow, became that church’s first pastor.20

Finally, a few years later, the cornerstone of the St. Mary, Star of the Sea in the port neighborhood Federal Hill was laid in 1869. (For reference for non-Baltimoreans, cannons atop Federal Hill protected the Baltimore Harbor during the British invasion of Baltimore in the War of 1812.) That church as well was established to meet the needs of the still-growing Irish immigrant population, many of whom were now going to work in the nearby port of Baltimore’s shipbuilding industry and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad—jobs that they could literally walk to.21

Father Gibbons, the first pastor at the aforementioned Our Lady of Good Counsel, had also served as the pastor at St. Brigid Parish in Southeast Baltimore’s Canton neighborhood since his ordination. St. Brigid had been established in 1854 as a mission of Saint Patrick Church in Upper Fells Point. Famously, Gibbons rowed across the Baltimore Harbor twice on Sundays to serve both parishes. He would later become renowned across the Catholic world as the first Cardinal from the United States.22

It’s worth noting that although Our Lady of Good Counsel, St. Mary, Star of the Sea, and Holy Cross have essentially been rolled into a single parish today—known as


21 Ibid., 106.

the Catholic Community of South Baltimore—services are still held at each church on a weekly basis. After 162 years, St. Brigid’s in Canton remains a vibrant, if small, parish, with a regular Mass schedule and sacramental services.

Even older than St. Brigid’s in Canton is the old German parish of St. Michael’s, which was founded in Fells Point at Wolfe and Lombard streets in 1852. (In 1995, St. Michael’s and St. Patrick’s were combined as local congregations shrank and the number of priests dwindled.)

Another of the early German Catholic churches in Southeast Baltimore is the Sacred Heart of Jesus, also known as “Highlandtown’s Cathedral,” which began as a mission of St. Michael’s. In 1870, the growing number of Canton’s German Catholics petitioned Archbishop James Roosevelt Bayley for a church in their neighborhood. The Archbishop requested Rev. Peter Zimmer, the pastor of nearby St. Michael’s, to assess the request, and Zimmer, in 1873, became the church’s first official pastor.

In essence, the establishment of the Sacred Heart of Jesus community in 1873—an immense church that still stands today—now serves a largely Latino congregation, connoting the ongoing development of Southeast Baltimore’s diverse, ethnic Highlandtown community.

---

23 Alvarez, First and Forever: The Archdiocese of Baltimore. A People’s History, 35.
CHAPTER THREE
A CITY OF GERMANS

Before getting back to the building of the Locust Point immigration pier, it’s also worth taking a quick look, for a more complete picture of early immigration into Baltimore, at the key push and pull events that brought Germans to the city in such large numbers before the Civil War. After all, as noted by the figures at the end of the previous chapter, Germans were far and away the most established immigrant group in the city, many playing key roles in city affairs before the influx of Irish during the famine years—and helping newer mid-19th-century German arrivals assimilate into city life.

Other European immigrant groups coming later in significant numbers to Baltimore between 1867 and the start of World War I—when direct immigration to the U.S. was temporarily halted and for all intents and purposes ended forever into Baltimore—would have some similar “push” and “pull” factors compelling them to leave their country as the early Germans did.

For rural and urban working families in Germany—then a confederation of small states—who faced food shortages, including their own potato plague in the mid- and late-1840s, feudalism, economic problems, social unrest, and the repercussions of the failed German revolution of 1848-1849, prospects in the United States would have appeared hopeful.1 It also soon became easier to leave Germany, as restrictions on emigration were eased there. Another push and pull event: in the mid-19th century, starting in the 1840s and continuing through the next couple of decades, steamships replaced sailing

---

ships, making the transatlantic journey more convenient and more tolerable. Overall, more than 5 million people left Germany for the U.S. during the 19th century. The German immigration into Baltimore in the mid-19th century by no means included only Catholic immigrants, although it was the largely Catholic immigrant churches that were among the first built in the ethnic Southeast neighborhoods around the Baltimore Harbor. The oldest German church in Baltimore is the Zion Lutheran Church, which still offers German language courses, in downtown Baltimore, whose history dates to 1755.

During this same period, the United States became a refuge for Jewish Germans fleeing religious persecution. Anti-semitic violence in Germany drove thousands of German Jews to emigrate in mid-19th century, specifically during the time around the 1848 anti-Jewish riots. German Jews during this period were, by and large, proud of their German culture; they generally chose to speak German instead of Hebrew or Yiddish and lived together with Catholics and Lutherans in German-American communities. While there were approximately 1,500 European Jews living in the U.S. in 1800, there were almost 15,000 by the middle of the century.

---


6 “A New Surge in Growth,” Library of Congress
During the mid-19th century, a large number of German Jews came to Baltimore, at least partly because of the large, assimilating German population already in the city. They formed a strong Jewish community that persists in Baltimore and its close northwest suburbs, ranking 12th in terms of overall Jewish metropolitan population today. (Baltimore ranks much lower, at No. 26 in terms of overall city population.) The Lloyd Street Synagogue, for example, built in 1845 by the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, made up of German Jews, remains open to this day as part of the Jewish Museum of Maryland in East Baltimore. It was the first synagogue erected in Maryland, and today is the third-oldest standing synagogue in the U.S.

Nearly one million Germans immigrated to America in this period, one of the peak periods of German immigration; in 1854 alone, 215,000 Germans arrived in this country. And by the 1860s, an estimated 1.3 million German-born immigrants resided in the United States. Some 200 German-language magazines and newspapers were published in this country, including Baltimore, where the *Deutche Korrespondent*, launched in 1841 and became a daily paper in 1848.

Before the end of the century, another dozen German language newspapers would be launched in Baltimore, which quickly became a German-oriented city. 

*Deutche Korrespondent* would publish daily in German until 1918 and then weekly until 1935. Not to jump ahead of the story, but in the first decades of the 20th

---


century, the minutes of the Baltimore city council would be also kept in both English and German.⁹

Among the German-Americans who will make a lasting impact on Baltimore’s culture, tracing their roots to this period, is the writer and journalist H.L. Mencken, born in the city in 1880. His grandfather arrived when the city was one of the chief ports of entry for Germans, sometimes referred to as “the Forty-Eighters,” in the mid-19th Century. These were German immigrants, typically educated and wealthy, that had supported the failed revolution for a unified German nation and a more democratic government that respected civil rights.¹⁰

Likewise, the maternal grandparents of a future baseball player named George Herman “Babe” Ruth, born in 1885 in Baltimore, were German immigrants to the city during this mid-19th century period.¹¹ Ruth, in fact, was born in Pigtown, known for its German butchers, also near the B & O Railroad headquarters and Irish Railroad Workers Museum.

Ruth’s German father ran a saloon roughly where second base is now located at Camden Yards, highlighting the mixture of German and Irish influences in this early, ethnic, working class immigrant port neighborhood. It’s also interesting to note that Ruth famously spent much of his incorrigible childhood at St. Mary’s Industrial School for Boys, located not far away, which was run by the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

---


¹⁰ Philip Wagner, American Writers (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1966), 62.

Even more important than the immigration of Mencken or Ruth’s family during this time—economically and in terms of the direction of the city, if not its literary or baseball legacy—was the arrival of Albert Schumacher, the young, connected German immigrant businessman mentioned briefly in Chapter 2, who also came to Baltimore during this period. By all available accounts, everything Schumacher touched appeared to be successful. Ultimately, in 1839, Heinecke left the firm and Schumacher took over, becoming even more prominent in the city. Already the firm’s general consul to Bremen and Hamburg, Schumacher would go on to serve on several prominent boards in the city, including those of four banks, the Baltimore Chamber of Commerce, and—central to understanding the city’s growth as an immigration hub—the B & O Railroad.  

Schumacher, ultimately, becomes the key individual link between the city’s shipping and import-export industry, the developing port’s industrialization, and immigration.

The close relations between Baltimore and Bremen were first established through the tobacco trade and became more and more entrenched as years went by—through the personal and commercial efforts of individuals such at Heinecke and Schumacher. Although tobacco did not quite play the dominant role in Maryland economics that it had during Colonial times, it was still one of the top items on Baltimore’s list of exports. During the 1840s and 1850s, Baltimore remained the largest tobacco export harbor in the U.S. and Bremen developed it into the largest tobacco import center in Europe.

12 Cunz, The German Marylanders, 235

13 Ibid., 236.
In February of 1867, B & O Railroad announced the signing of an agreement, in which Schumacher was instrumental in negotiating, with the North German Lloyd Company to recruit and transport immigrants from the Bremen port to Baltimore.\(^{14}\)

Locust Point’s development as a residential area accelerated after 1867 when that partnership turned the small peninsula into the city’s immigrant port of entry. At first, the new deep-water piers at Locust Point had been intended strictly for the burgeoning coal trade—today that trade serves China’s energy needs, too—but Garrett, the B & O president, also had other ambitious ideas.

Always forward thinking, continually pursuing Western expansion, as well as northern and southern rail networks, and by assisting the Union side in the Civil War, Garrett had determined that Baltimore should have a transatlantic steamship line to carry the trade that would inevitably resume after the Civil War. Initially, B & O purchased two wooden screw steamers from the Federal government. Rebuilt and refitted, they began trips to Liverpool in the fall of 1865, leaving from Henderson's Wharf in Fells Point, but those vessels could not compete successfully with the British lines serving the port. So in January 1867, Garrett entered into a new arrangement with the North German Lloyd Company, a major German shipping company, based in the port of Bremerhaven.\(^{15}\)

The deal, negotiated by Schumacher with the German company, included running at least two first-class iron steamers between Baltimore and Bremen for a trial period of five years. A North German Lloyd line had already successfully established

\(^{14}\) “Local Matters: Meeting of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Board—The Steamship Line to Bremen,” The Baltimore Sun, February 14, 1867.

from Bremen to New York City and the company was interested in carrying Maryland tobacco back to Bremen. B & O’s own efforts to buy vessels and start its own shipping line had failed.

The arrival of the first Bremen steamer in Locust Point, appropriately named “the Baltimore,” was greeted with great fanfare, including a firing salute as it passed Fort McHenry, and reported in great detail, on March 24, 1868 by *The Sun*. Highlighting the efforts of Schumacher and Garrett, specifically, *The Sun* also quoted at length a speech given by Frederick Raine, the founder of the *Deutsche Korrespondent*, who congratulated the city council, port officials, mayor, and “other distinguished citizens of Baltimore” on hand, as well as the commander “of the first steamer of the new line to ply between Bremen and Baltimore.”

Raine described “a feeling of great pride swelling our hearts at beholding the realization of an enterprise which in its results must prove of the greatest advantage to the commercial intercourse between Baltimore and Bremen, between the old and new hemispheres. With railroads branching in every direction, Baltimore becomes at once a prominent stations on the highway by which millions of people on both sides of the Atlantic are linked.”¹⁶

As his part of the deal, Garrett built modern berthing facilities next to the coal piers at Locust Point (later numbered 8 on one side and 9 on the other side) as well as a passenger terminal for the arriving immigrants. Garrett favored the partnership because the North German Lloyd ticket offices in Bremen also sold tickets for travel on the B & O to the vast majority of immigrants' ultimate destination: the farmlands of the Midwest.

---

Garrett built B & O tracks that ran right up to the new Pier 9 in Locust Point, so the disembarking immigrants could immediately board trains to head west—to Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Milwaukee.

Roughly one quarter of the 10,753 immigrants landing in Baltimore in 1867 settled in the state, mostly in Baltimore.\(^\text{17}\) But as rail connections improved, only an estimated 10 percent of the immigrants remained in Baltimore in the 1890s and afterwards—despite plans by the state “to ensure a larger share of this valuable population for settlement in Maryland.”\(^\text{18}\)

Initially, many of those who did stay in Baltimore settled in Locust Point and nearby Riverside in South Baltimore. Later immigrant arrivals staying in Baltimore would take ferry rides across the harbor to Fells Point, moving into ever-expanding row house immigrant communities in Southeast Baltimore.

As the North German Lloyd Company established a network all over Eastern and Central Europe, emigrants from other places—Poland, Slovakia, Bohemia, the Ukraine, Lithuania, Russia, etc.—could buy a package that included a rail ticket to Bremerhaven, passage on a steamship to Baltimore, and then travel on the B & O to the Midwest. Although Germans remained the majority of immigrants arriving in Baltimore up to the early 1880s, their numbers declined thereafter, as residents of the former Austrian and Russian Empires—especially Poles, Ukrainians, and Russian Jews—took their place. Those immigrants who did not immediately travel west could stay at a boarding house next to Pier 9, run by Augusta Jennie Koether, between 1869 until 1914.


\(^\text{18}\) Ibid.
She signed a contract with the steamship companies and received 75 cents a day to house and feed immigrants. Koether, described as a small, German woman with blonde hair and blue eyes, is said to have received as many as 40,000 immigrants per year at her boarding house.
CHAPTER FOUR
LITTLE POLAND

At this point, this paper has laid down a foundational understanding of how the Port of Baltimore developed as an economic engine—with great assistance from the B & O Railroad—and how the start of European 19th-century immigration began in the city.

In the first chapter, the city’s geographical advantages and initial commercial, industrial, and infrastructure advancements were put forth—as well as the city’s advantageous location far up the Chesapeake Bay and in the Mid-Atlantic border between the interdependent economies of the Northern and Southern states.

And, in the second and third chapters, this paper discussed the mid-19th-century period when the first European immigrants, the Germans and Irish, came to Baltimore. Those immigrants, with the Germans as the first, more entrenched, and more prosperous of the two ethnic groups, helped launch, respectively, the city’s budding industrial revolution. Both groups, particularly poor Irish immigrants, also contributed the hard manual labor—along with free blacks—in building the B & O Railroad. That massive enterprise affected the course of the city’s development more than any other single private endeavor—outside of the ongoing public-private development of port itself.

In the last two chapters, this paper will examine the arrival and impact of the next two largest immigrant groups—the Poles and Jews—into Baltimore after the Civil War and the subsequent construction by B & O Railroad of the immigrant pier at Locust Point. Additionally, there will be some discussion of other significant immigrant groups into Baltimore up to the start of World War I—the Czechs, Slovaks, Russians, Lithuanians, Italians, and Greeks, and their impact on the waterfront neighborhoods of
the city, particularly those in Southeast Baltimore, where the majority of immigrants would build new communities.

It is one of the themes of this paper that the development of Baltimore as an industrial giant—which lasted through the 1970s—was not merely accidental or inevitable, but the result of unique geography that was exploited by the key decisions, infrastructure commitments, and vision of Baltimore business and political leaders. It’s worth noting, for example, that in the lead up to the Civil War, Southern port cities such as Savannah, Charleston, and Norfolk were all vying to become “the New York of the South”—a title Baltimore would earn.¹

Today, in fact, all those cities remain competitors with Baltimore to varying degrees for U.S. port trade. But their states’ succession from the U.S. into Confederacy and Baltimore’s quick construction of the immigration pier and deal with the Bremen steamship line proved decisive. (Maryland’s General Assembly never actually voted on secession, largely because of political ploys by the sitting governor. The governor’s delaying tactics allowed time for President Lincoln to send federal troops into the Baltimore before any full-scale uprising could gather steam.)

From 1900 through 1960, Baltimore typically ranked as the sixth largest city in the U.S. and the largest, by far, below the Mason-Dixon line.² But the title of “the New York of the South” proved appropriate not just because of the relative size of Baltimore and its commercial prowess. It is also the mission of this paper to connect the dots between Baltimore’s enormous commercial port, the building of the B & O Railroad, the

¹ Andrew L. Slap and Frank Towers, Confederate Cities: The Urban South during the Civil War Era (Chicago: University of Chicago), 77.

construction of the city’s industrial foundation—and the subsequent immigration between the Civil War and World War I, when immigration directly into Baltimore was halted—to the development of the city’s unique ethnic, cultural, and religious mix. Ultimately, what the paper will pull together in its conclusion, is how Baltimore became, essentially, a mash-up of Anglo-Southern, Northern Yankee, free black residents, and Appalachian transplants, and finally, a city of Central, Eastern, and Southern European Catholic, and Jewish immigrants as well.

Baltimore grew rapidly after the Civil War.³ In 1860, the city’s population had been 212,418 and it more than doubled over the next 30 years, with an unprecedented number of immigrants contributing to the city’s growth. Between 1868-1914, approximately 1.2 million immigrants landed at the Locust Point pier built by B & O Railroad. By the 1890s, up to 90 percent were traveling directly to a destination further west, but the rest—the majority of whom were men under the age of 45—remained in Baltimore, in many cases joining the city’s burgeoning industrialization centered around the port.⁴

In 1866, the legislature of Maryland had created the Office of the Commissioner of Immigration, whose duties included overseeing the distribution of pamphlets and materials designed to highlight the state’s agricultural, port, industrial, and commercial resources to attract new immigrants from Germany and Eastern Europe.⁵ In fact,


Maryland contracted with German attorneys and others to assist in the dissemination of the state’s pamphlets and material information and recruitment of immigrants. The legislature’s main goal was to attract immigrants with capital to invest in Maryland, but they also highlighted the importance that inexpensive immigrant labor had already played in the building up the state’s economy.\(^6\) Maryland, which created the State Bureau of Immigration in 1896, would continue to print such information pamphlets and actively engage in the recruitment of immigrants until the start of World War I.\(^7\)

Initially, the largest immigrant groups into Locust Point after the Civil War continued to be German, not surprisingly, given the establishment of the regular Bremen shipping lines.

One of the most notable of these new German immigrants, certainly the most important in terms of transforming the U.S. newspaper and publishing industries through the middle of the 20\(^{th}\) century, was an 18-year-old named Ottmar Mergenthaler. In 1872, the trained watchmaker emigrated to the U.S. via the immigration pier at Locust Point. After initially working for a cousin’s firm in Washington, Mergenthaler returned to Baltimore where he demonstrated a model Linotype—literally “line of type”—to local newspaper publishers. Mergenthaler’s intricate, mechanical machine—preceding the use of electricity in factories and plants—used hot liquid metal to form molds for each letter as they were struck on a keyboard. Those subsequent molded lines were then carried over to the printing press. Because a single Linotype operator could do the work of six

\(^6\) Report of the Commissioner of Immigration of the State of Maryland to the General Assembly, 6.

hand typesetters, the machine’s introduction dramatically speeded composition and lowered costs. Previously limited to four or eight pages, newspapers doubled in size. Weeklies turned into dailies, and more newspapers entered the market—soon including a plethora of foreign language newspapers in Baltimore—some selling for as little as a penny.  

But not long after Mergenthaler’s arrival (Baltimore City’s public vocational technical high school is still named after the German immigrant) other immigrant groups from Central and Eastern Europe began coming to the U.S. in greater numbers. Each made contributions to the city’s commercial growth and culture—some as innovators and entrepreneurs, such Mergenthaler—more as stevedores and shipbuilders at the port and factory laborers. The first such group to arrive in large numbers were Poles. By the end of the 1870s, the U.S. added nearly 35,000 Polish immigrants—officially arriving from Prussia, the Russian Empire, and Austria—as the former Polish commonwealth ceased to exist at that time. The following decade, from 1880 to 1890, added nearly 100,000, with another 236,000 Polish immigrants arriving in the U.S. from 1890-1900. By 1900, there were 383,407 natives of Poland in the U.S.

The Polish labor connection to the Baltimore port continues to this day, in fact. It’s worth highlighting that in the television show, The Wire, for example, its second season focused largely around a Polish family, the Sobotkas, of union dock workers.


These growing Polish immigrant numbers to the U.S. were reflected in Baltimore as well, where Locust Point became the second or third busiest immigration port in the country, depending on the given year, after Ellis Island.¹¹

(Unlike Castle Gardens in New York, and then Ellis Island, which opened in 1890, Locust Point continued to operate as a private enterprise—again pointing to the successful partnership between city, state, and private leaders in building Baltimore’s infrastructure and developing a foundation for the city’s commercial success.)

Overall, between 1871 and 1911, the four provinces of Prussia sent roughly 430,000 Poles to this county. The small kingdom of Galacia—the historical and geographical area that once straddled the modern-day border of Poland and Ukraine—sent about 856,000 during the 30 years before 1914. And, between 1901 and 1913, the United States received 596,950 Poles from the Russian empire.¹²

Compared to the German immigrants to Baltimore, who generally brought with them more resources—as well as the ability to connect to an already-established German network in the city—Polish immigrants often arrived at Locust Point as unskilled laborers or peasants.

The majority of the Polish immigrants arriving by steamship into Locust Point were Roman Catholics, with the first Polish-Catholic parish forming in the city in 1880—notably in Southeast Baltimore neighborhood of Fells Point.¹³ The second Polish


parish, Holy Rosary Church, was founded a few years later in 1887. St. Casimir Church, in nearby in Canton, was founded in 1903.

The first Polish-language newspaper in Baltimore, titled *Polonia*, began publication in 1891. 14

And by 1893, the Polish population was starting to become the backbone of Baltimore's laboring class. Some 1,500 were arriving in Baltimore annually, and by 1893 there were 23,000 Polish-Americans living in the city. 15

Why did they immigrate? What induced them to undertake the dangers of the journey? All human beings have ties, such as family, ancestors, property interests, and sentimental associations. These bonds are powerful, and individuals do not migrate unless the potential inducement surpasses the strength of these bonds. To determine the exact cause, except in extreme cases, such as the Irish potato famine, is difficult. But whatever the push factors may have been which led an immigrant to leave his native land, dissatisfaction with the conditions in the homeland must have been present to some degree.

The religious factor was a prominent push factor in the early years after the U.S. Civil War for German and Polish immigrants. Into 1870s, religious and ethnic oppression was one of the expulsive forces responsible for the migration. In 1871, Bismark determined that all the inhabitants of Prussia, which included Prussian Poland, should speak the German language, and laws were passed to give the government control


of parochial schools; this was very irritating to the Catholics, and especially to the clergy. Another decree banished Jesuit priests, and through their influence, a great impetus was given to the movement.\textsuperscript{16}

The religious, social, and political factors, including conscription into Bismarck’s army, though they may appear minor in importance to economic factors, brought many immigrants to U.S. shores until the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. The Poles were humiliated by the three partitioning powers—Russia, Prussia, and Austria—in various ways. Resentment grew against these stigmatizing practices and led many to leave for the hope of new life in America. (That new life in ethnic Southeast Baltimore was eventually represented by the “I Am an American Day Parade,” which started in 1938 and remained a city tradition for nearly six decades.)\textsuperscript{17}

Then, compulsory military draft in Russia, passed in 1874, required all residents in Russia to do military service, including the Poles in Russian Poland. Many emigrated from Prussian Poland to evade military service, specifically, because the term was unusually long, with cruelty occasionally practiced.\textsuperscript{18} But closer to the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, many Polish immigrants to the U.S. became known as \textit{za chlebem} or “for-bread” immigrants. Many of these planned to earn a nest egg and return home. Whatever their intentions, however, most Polish immigrants ended up remaining in the U.S. Still, they kept one eye on their homeland and passionately guarded their language, faith, and sense


\textsuperscript{18}Sister Lucille, \textit{The Causes of Polish Immigration to the United States}, 85-91.
of themselves as Poles—the vestiges of which are still on view in parts of Southeast Baltimore.\(^{19}\)

In the early years of the 20th century, the Polish population became more established in Baltimore. They established ethnic clubs, Polish-language newspapers, and their own savings and loans societies. By 1910, Eastern Avenue in Baltimore was known as “the Polish Wall Street” in Baltimore. In the years prior to World War I, the Polish population in Baltimore ranked as the seventh largest in the United States. In the 1920 census statistics, Polish ranked as the third most-spoken mother tongue in Baltimore (listed as more than 11,000 city residents), only behind German (20,000) and Yiddish (19,000), noting the enormous Jewish migration from Central and Eastern Europe also underway at roughly the same time. Baltimore's Poles first gained political representation in 1923, when Edward I. Novak was elected to the Baltimore City Council.\(^{20}\)

By 1940, an estimated 34,000 Polish-Americans lived in Maryland, most of them in Baltimore.\(^{21}\)

To see firsthand how Polish immigration to Baltimore changed in the ensuing decades after the first ship from Bremen arrived in Locust Point’s new immigration pier, a Charm City native or visitor still needs only to take a walk down Eastern Avenue, beginning in Fells Point.

---


Running parallel to the waterfront as it extends from Baltimore’s touristy Inner Harbor, Eastern Avenue extends through what is today known as Spanish Town (owing to more recent Hispanic immigrants to Baltimore), Little Italy, Fells Point, Canton, Patterson Park, Highlandtown, and Greektown. A trek down Eastern Avenue remains a literal stroll through Baltimore’s immigration story. The newest European immigrants arriving in post-Civil War Baltimore via the Bremen to the Locust Point shipping line agreement first gained a toehold in an area that became known as “Little Poland.” It’s a nickname not often used anymore, but it nonetheless remains descriptive of the past and apt if one takes the time to get closely acquainted with the neighborhood around the nexus of Fells Point, Upper Fells Point, and Canton.

Next to the popular Inner Harbor now stands Harbor East, the waterfront’s newest commercial neighborhood, which was literally built atop former lumber and shipyards, and later, an Allied Chemical plant that required EPA-directed cleanup efforts. But in the center of Harbor East, in the middle of the main traffic circle that includes a Four Seasons Hotel, high-end restaurants and retail shopping, stands a 56-foot gold statue: the National Katyn Memorial, which memorializes the victims of the 1940 Katyn massacre of Polish nationals carried out by Soviet forces.22

The monument, while not depicting a Baltimore event, certainly represents the concerns and culture of the long-standing Polish immigrant community in Southeast Baltimore. Among others on hand at the dedication of the monument in 2000 was U.S. Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski of Maryland, the granddaughter of Polish immigrants who ran a grocery store in Fells Point. Mikulski told the gathering at the dedication that the

---

prominent, waterfront location for the monument was particularly appropriate because many Polish immigrants' first glimpse of Baltimore was that of Fort McHenry, followed quickly by the cross atop nearby St. Stanislaus Church, founded in 1880, in Fells Point.23

St. Stanislaus has since closed in recent years, with the Polish immigrant community shrinking over the past four decades, coinciding with the loss of population in the city overall and consolidation by the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Still, numerous other Catholic Polish churches and cultural institutions remain in the Eastern Avenue’s “Little Poland”—and even thrive today. For example, there is Sophia’s Place, a traditional Polish grocery-deli-eatery located inside the historic Broadway Market, where women behind the counter still speak Polish to each other. Founded in 1985, a time at which many of the grandchildren of Polish immigrants born into this neighborhood had already moved to the suburbs, the community nonetheless remains strong enough to support the Old World-style delicatessen. Sophie’s specializes in Polish and Eastern European cuisine such as golabki—cabbage stuffed with ground beef and rice and served with a creamy tomato sauce—pierogies, liverwurst and tongue sandwiches, kielbasa, sausage, borscht, and sauerkraut. The deli cases and shelves at Sophie’s are stocked with packaged and canned goods imported from Poland: sweets from Wedel, the famous Warsaw confectioner; bags of poppy seeds, essential to the Polish baker; jars of preserves; pickled veggies; and more.

Sophie’s Place isn’t the only outpost of Polish cuisine, however.

Just two blocks away, also in Fells Point, sits Krakus Deli, which bills itself as “the best Polish Deli on the East Coast.” Not a sit-down restaurant, the authentic Krakus

---

Deli sells Polish smoked meats, cheeses, and its own sausages, which hang from the ceiling. Like Sophia’s, it’s a place where Polish is still spoken in Baltimore, and their website is in both languages. They also offer a large selection of dumplings, pickles, tripe, soups, sauces, spices, and fish, as well as Polish ciders, cookies, donuts, and pastries. They also stock Polish films for rent and sell the latest Polish books, magazines, and newspapers.

Around the corner from the Krakus Deli are not one, but two Ostrowski sausage businesses. The original Ostrowski’s Famous Polish Sausage on South Washington Street, was founded in 1919, and Ostrowski of Bank Street Sausage, a family offshoot, was launched in 1976. Both are still open, just a block, south and north, respectively, from Eastern Avenue in Fells Point.24

Still located in the same neighborhood is the Polish National Alliance (1627 Eastern Ave.), a cultural center that offers Polish language and cooking classes, a Polish heritage book club, and a folk dance troupe for children. Another local cultural hub/social club for the Polish community in Southeast Baltimore is the Polish Home Club, on Broadway Avenue in Uppers Fells Point, which hosts live music and holiday dances and festivals.

But if anyplace keeps the old Polish culture and traditions alive, it is Holy Rosary Church, an ornately Old World church, built in 1927. The congregation peaked a decade later when the church, which still hosts Mass in Polish several times as week, served some 2,500 families. Though the pews of the 2,000-seat cathedral are no longer filled each week, the church community remains strong and continues neighborhood

24 Richard Gorelick, “In sausage news, no changes at the other Ostrowski’s,” The Baltimore Sun, December 19, 2013.
traditions such as the blessing of Easter baskets, door-to-door Christmas caroling, pierogi sales, and an annual Polish festival. Not only does the church host events, it contains a Polish-themed religious gift and book shop. Similarly, Polish Treasures, across the street, is another neighborhood gift shop, but filled with more secular Polish pottery and crafts.

The other Roman Catholic Polish church in the neighborhood is St. Casimir, located in Canton, and dedicated in 1926 to serve the then-growing Polish community. In the 1930s, the church had an estimated 5,300 members. Today, with a smaller, but still significant number of 800 parishioners, St. Casimir’s remains one of the anchor institutions in the gentrifying Canton community. Another older church in Fells Point, Holy Cross of the Polish National Catholic Church, founded in 1898 by Polish immigrants who split from St. Stanislaus and the Roman Catholic Church, continues to function and perform Sunday Mass.

A couple of other historic Polish institutions with staying power on Eastern Avenue are Kopernik Federal Bank, founded as the Kopernik Building and Loan Association of Baltimore City in 1924, and Kosciuszko Federal Savings, founded as mortgage lender in 1894.

The recounting of this remaining Polish culture in Southeast Baltimore is not intended to overly romanticize the Polish immigrant experience. Many Polish immigrant men from rural areas, arriving with few resources and few skills, went to work at the port of Baltimore as stevedores or oyster shuckers. Later, like other immigrant men, they joined the workforces at Sparrows Point’s Bethlehem Steel, at one time the largest steel plant in the world, and General Motors, located near the port in Southeast Baltimore.25

Many Polish women, including working mothers, found seasonal work in the canneries around the Baltimore harbor, many within walking distance of their homes.\textsuperscript{26} Other Polish immigrant women and children spent their summers working in the farm fields around Baltimore, picking fruits and vegetables, a practice that continued through the Depression years.\textsuperscript{27}

Housing conditions continued to be crowded and difficult for many years for Polish immigrants coming into Southeast Baltimore. According to a city housing investigation of a predominantly Polish block in Fells Point, three or four households lived in the neighborhood’s compact row houses, which had been intended for single families. Many of the apartments in the subdivided homes were in need of significant repairs, badly lit, without proper ventilation, and without indoor plumbing. Conditions outside the homes were often less than ideal as well. Chicken coops and outdoor bathrooms were part of the row house neighborhoods around the port. Row house blocks to this day have alleyway arches originally incorporated into their design for the shuttling of animals, often for butchering, to their small backyards. Sewage and running water in the streets were also common. The report states:

One of the apartments in this house, consisting of one room, was occupied by six people; the room had an area of 220 square feet, but had only 12 square feet of window space. A family of seven occupied two rooms in the same house but as one room, a triangular place, was used as a tailor shop, the other larger room served as kitchen, bedroom, and living room.\textsuperscript{28}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
Given the proximity to what is today Poland to Germany—it’s only a little more than 200 miles from the Polish border to Bremen, for example—it is not surprising that Poles were the first ethnic immigrant to arrive in Locust Point in significant numbers.

With the similar geographic proximity—it’s only a little more than 600 miles from Prague to Bremen—it’s not surprising the Czech immigration into Baltimore also began to boom after the construction of the Locust Point pier.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, thousands of Czech, Slovak, and Bohemian immigrants arrived in Baltimore, making important contributions to the city’s ethnic and cultural fabric. The Czech, Slovak, and Bohemian—the Bohemia region encompasses an area that is more than half of today’s Czech Republic—communities founded a number of institutions to preserve the city's Czech and Bohemian heritage, including St. Wenceslaus Church Roman Catholic church in East Baltimore.

According to the U.S. Immigration Office, the Czech community numbered roughly 10,000 between 1882 and 1910. And, in 1920, Baltimore remained the fifth largest city for Czech immigrants in the country after Chicago, New York, Cleveland, and St. Louis.  

The St. Wenceslaus parish congregation formed in 1872, with the construction of their own church, which still hosts Mass today, beginning in 1914.

As with the other ethnic churches, the St. Wenceslaus parish also included a Catholic private school, which remained open until 1986.  

---


Similar to the Germans, Irish, and Poles, the Czech, Slovak, and Bohemian community launched a heritage association, an annual Czech and Slovak festival that continues to this day, a language school, and a cemetery. From the late 1800s to the early 1900s, Baltimore was home to 12,000 to 15,000 people of Czech birth or heritage, highlighted today by a small museum in Fells Point next to the Ze Mean Bean Café, which specializes in traditional Eastern European fare.31

However, that the community that hosts the St. Wenceslaus parish, which became known as “Little Bohemia,” is not in Fells Point but sits further north in East Baltimore near Johns Hopkins Hospital. One of the lasting contributions of Czech, Slovak, and Bohemian communities is the Sokol social and athletic club, founded in 1872 in Baltimore and still in operation today in East Baltimore. Another is the painted screen folk art tradition, launched by a former Czech immigrant butcher named William Oktavec. In the summer of 1913, in his corner grocery store across the street from St. Wenceslaus, in the heart of Little Bohemia, Oktavec painted the front door window screen of his shop with images of the produce and meat that he sold.

Nearby, a neighbor named Emma Schott, according to Baltimore folklorist Elaine Eff, who has published a book on the city’s screen painting tradition, saw Oktavec’s handiwork and a light bulb went off. Schott apparently was among the first to realize that the butcher’s screen painting blocked passersby from seeing directly in the shop while still allowing the air from outside to filter in through the window. Given the proximity of row house living rooms to pedestrian sidewalks in the decades before air-conditioning, there was a practicality to the screen art. It’s been estimated that at its peak, there were some 100,000 painted window screens in Baltimore, the overwhelming

majority of which were found in the city’s ethnic port neighborhoods. Some of the original works still survive today and in recent years, as mentioned earlier, there has been a resurgence of the folk art in Southeast Baltimore.

The other nod that must be given to Czech immigrants is the celebration of the National Bohemian beer, first brewed in Baltimore in 1885, and its “Natty Boh” mascot, “Mr. Boh,” whose visage has become synonymous with the city.

The last immigrant group to mention here is the Lithuanian community, also predominately Roman Catholic, whose immigration to Baltimore began in the mid-1870s and continued until the start of World War I. The Lithuanians largely settled in Southwest Baltimore, just west of the Baltimore harbor and just north of the Irish and B & O railroad neighborhoods. The residential row house area directly above Hollins Street there became known as “Little Lithuania.” Several remnants of the neighborhood's Lithuanian heritage still remain, including the still-popular Lithuanian Hall, which hosts a Lithuanian museum as well as events such as the annual Night of 100 Elvises and weekly Friday night “Save Your Soul” dance parties.

The community’s largest Roman Catholic church, St. Alphonsus, originally a German immigrant parish, was designated a Lithuanian parish in 1917 by the Archdiocese of Baltimore as those immigrants replaced older German immigrants who were moving to more upscale Baltimore neighborhoods. Mass is still said once in Lithuanian on Sundays to this day. Again, the intent is not to overly romanticize this period of immigration—St. Wenceslaus’s own website still notes that rivalries existed not


just between established Baltimore elites and the new immigrants, but also among the immigrant groups themselves.

Similar to the Poles, a major push factor for the Czechs, Slavs, Slovaks, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians arriving in Baltimore was that they did not have their own country, either, but were part of either the Austro-Hungarian or Russian empires. Rather than attempt to document each individual immigrant group’s arrival, it’s more important to make a couple of final, overview points in this chapter on the arrival of new Eastern European immigrants. First, highlighting a major theme of this paper, city leaders remained intent on increasing the number of manufacturing and commercial enterprises by exploiting the resources tied to the Port of Baltimore into the turn of the 20th century. From the early 1870s to 1900, the Port of Baltimore rose from the fifth busiest port in the country to the third, with a fourfold increase in the value of its foreign trade. This, of course, sparked an increase in the city’s population increased from 332,000 to 509,000. In just one decade, between 1880 and 1890, for example, the number of manufacturing enterprises jumped by 40 percent and the number of workers rose 50 percent.34

This is not, however, to overstate the percentage of foreign-born citizens in Baltimore at this time—that number was 68,600 or 13.5 percent of all city residents in 1900, according to the Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics and Information of Maryland. Other cities, including New York, Boston, and younger Midwestern cities of St. Louis and Cincinnati, for example, had higher percentages of foreign-born residents.35

34 Charles Belfoure, Mary Ellen Hayward, The Baltimore Rowhouse, 86.

The number of foreign-born residents in Baltimore at that time, however, is roughly three times the estimated number of foreign-born citizens living in Baltimore today. Many of the new residents coming to Baltimore were workers from the South and rural Maryland—blacks and whites—as well as whites from southern Pennsylvania and Appalachia looking for jobs in Baltimore’s quickly industrializing economy. But the percentage of foreign-born residents alone does not tell the complete story. Taken together, first- and second-generation Germans, for example, accounted for an estimated 28 percent of the city’s population in 1900.

The other point that must be made is the role of home ownership, also encouraged by city leaders. And, relatedly, the role of ethnic savings and loan institutions, and the role of row house architecture—all of which helped drive up homeownership rates and promote stability in Baltimore’s ethnic port neighborhoods. With banks finding it more profitable to invest in industrial ventures, mortgage money was harder to come by for the port’s relatively cheap narrow houses. That is the void which the ethnic savings and loans filled. In 1894, the home ownership rate in Baltimore was already significantly higher than in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago. A few

---


years later, in 1903, Baltimore’s mayor made the claim, “The individual home for each family is the rule. And the effect is wholesome.”

German immigrants and German-Americans chartered more than 130 savings and loans in the city between 1865 and 1914. While more than 30 were also chartered by the Bohemians, Poles, Lithuanians, and Italians during the same period.

The last ethnic group this thesis will explore at length are the Jewish immigrants, who arrived en masse after the construction of the Locust Point immigration pier. Initially, German Jews, then Polish Jews came to Baltimore, but the largest number ultimately were Russian Jews. By 1907, there were an estimated 40,000 Jews in Baltimore, and the city remains one of the largest urban centers of the Jewish population in the U.S.

As with the other immigrants examined previously, the next chapter will broadly highlight some of the lasting contributions of Jewish immigrants, most notably in Southeast Baltimore, where many first made their way in the city. The purpose is twofold: to further understand who immigrated to Baltimore during the city’s industrial and population explosion between the Civil War and World War I and why, as well as marking the lasting institutions and cultural landmarks they created.


CHAPTER 5
CORNED BEEF ROW

The Jewish Museum of Maryland in Southeast Baltimore is located on the north side intersection of Lloyd and Lombard streets, in what was the center of immigrant Jewish life in the city at the turn of the 20th century.

Only a few remnants remain of the rich Jewish immigrant past on Lombard Street, nicknamed “Corned Beef Row” for much of the past century because of all the Jewish delicatessens.¹ In fact, a smaller street in the neighborhood was also once known as “Horseradish Lane,” where Tulkoff Food Products, makers of horseradish and other sauces, and a company that is still in business in Baltimore County, launched in the early 1920s.²

From its 1890s beginnings as a kosher market, the Lombard Street commercial district developed into an Old-World bazaar where members of all of the city’s ethnic groups mixed with other residents from different sections of Baltimore. To some extent, this is still true.

In fact, Attman’s Delicatessen, opened by Harry Attman, a Russian immigrant, and one of the last two Jewish delis on Lombard Street, celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2015. More than mere anachronism, Attman’s remains as a family-run business and home to the “Kibbitz Room,” which is still a popular meeting spot for business lunches.


The corned beef is still boiled in Attman’s kitchen each day as it has always
been done, and lines still form each weekend morning outside on the sidewalk. At the
same time, Attman’s has also become something of a tourist attraction over the years,
pulling in visitors from around the Baltimore area and from around the country. In
proximity with other authentic Old World ethnic restaurants in Southeast Baltimore, the
Polish restaurants, for example, which were highlighted in the last chapter, but also the
nearby 89-year-old German bakery, Hoehn’s, and DiPasquale’s Italian Market, which
celebrated its centennial in 2015, Attman’s is a reminder of the neighborhood’s
immigrant roots and part of the unique character that continues to attract residents and
young homebuyers to the area.4 5

In the early days of Lombard Street, according to a history at the Jewish
Museum, newer Jewish immigrants bartered with fellow Jews, the owners of small, often
struggling small businesses on Lombard Street, intent on feeding their families as
inexpensively as possible. As the ever-growing number of immigrants adapted to life in
the new country, shops and stores multiplied and the range of goods and services
broadened.

Italian immigrant vendors, many of whom lived nearby on the south side of
Lombard—in the area closer to the Baltimore harbor in the neighborhood that is still
known as Little Italy—set up shop as well. Lombard Street always maintained its Jewish
flavor, however. And, at least in a small way, with the museum, whose campus includes

---

3 Richard Gorelick, “The 100-year-wait for melt-in-your mouth corned beef,” The Baltimore
Sun, March 28, 2015.

19, 2016].

[accessed: February 19, 2016].
the historic Lloyd Street and B’nai Israel synagogues, built in 1845 and 1876, respectively, and the three remaining delicatessens—Attman’s, Weiss’s, and Lenny’s—the Lombard and Lloyd street intersection provides at least a glimpse of its former culture.

The story just behind the Lloyd Street and B’nai Israel synagogues is particularly revealing in how the Jewish immigration changed after the construction of the Locust Point immigration pier and during the ongoing steamship line relationship with Bremen. In fact, the evolution from initial German immigration to Baltimore, to Polish, Russian, and other Eastern European immigration, is also a telling pattern of Jewish immigration into Locust Point.

The Lloyd Street Synagogue, built by the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation in 1845, was the first erected in Maryland. And today, the Lloyd Street Synagogue—restored between 1963 and 1965 when this neighborhood’s Jewish identity still thrived but was on the cusp of decline with the onset of suburbanization—is the third-oldest standing synagogue in the country. The Lloyd Street Synagogue’s original mikveh (ritual bath) is even accessible to museum visitors.

The Baltimore Hebrew Congregation was started by an early German immigrant congregation.6

The B’nai Israel Synagogue was built on the same street by a breakaway, reform group of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation members in 1876, and it was the last synagogue built by Baltimore’s German immigrant Jewish population. In fact, that

---

breakaway, reform Jewish congregation only occupied the new synagogue for 19 years before selling the building to more recently arriving Russian immigrants. The B’nai Israel Synagogue remains the oldest continuously operating Orthodox synagogue in the city of Baltimore.\(^7\)

Again, highlighting the change in the ethnic groups arriving in Baltimore via Locust Point and its steamship line to Bremen—and changing demographics of Southeast Baltimore—the original Lloyd Street Synagogue was later sold to one of the first Lithuanian "ethnic" parishes in the U.S., the St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church, in 1895. Then, it 1905—as the Lithuanian community ultimately put down its community roots in southwest Baltimore—the building was sold again, to Shomrei Mishmeres HaKodesh, one of the leading Orthodox congregations of the East European immigrant community.\(^8\)

While the largest wave of Eastern European immigrants came to Baltimore in the late 19th and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries, as this paper as highlighted, the first waves of Jewish immigrants began arriving in Baltimore several generations earlier.

Beginning in the mid-1800s, many Jews began to flee intolerance in Bavaria (the southern region of present-day Germany) for the United States. Bavaria had curtailed the civil rights of Jews, making it difficult for them to marry and settle, in an effort to limit the Jewish population, for example. But the Jews also came to the U.S. for other reasons—and most likely a combination of reasons, including Bavaria’s marriage restrictions, a lack of economic opportunity, and other social and political issues. Jews

---


were not allowed to hold artisan positions in Bavaria; there was a mandatory military conscription for Jews as well, and pogroms that accompanied the 1848-1849 revolution in the Germany states. Most immigrants, we can assume, were attracted by the U.S.’s offer of potential full citizenship as well as greater economic opportunity.⁹

In 1820, only about 120 Jews lived in Baltimore, but by the onset of the Civil War, an estimated 7,000 Jewish German immigrants were making their home in Baltimore. Primarily, these immigrants arrived in Fells Point (the point of arrival prior to Locust Point as previously noted), before moving a few blocks north into upper Southeast Baltimore, not far from today’s Inner Harbor, in an area known as Jonestown because of its proximity to the Jones Falls River, which funnels into the harbor. Many went to work in the garment industry; others started off as itinerant peddlers, offering goods, such as dishes or tools, door to door, and those who succeeded then opened shops, particularly along Lombard Street.¹⁰

With the established Baltimore Hebrew Congregation and a growing number of Jewish schools, charitable societies, theaters, literary clubs, and similar organizations, Baltimore offered appeal to other Jewish, Eastern Europeans immigrants, who began arriving in the late 1870s and through the 1910s. As with the pogroms that German Jews had faced, after 1877, many Eastern European Jews came to Baltimore in response to periodic, violent anti-Semitic riots, as in the Ukraine, for example, in the early 1880s.¹¹

---


As with the earlier immigrants from Germany, the Russian and East European Jews moved into Southeast Baltimore, peddling goods and grinding away in the sweatshops. By 1901, more than 400 sweatshops operated in Baltimore, mostly in some of the larger, three-story Southeast neighborhood row houses—much smaller than New York’s eastside tenements—many located in the same buildings that housed multigenerational families.\(^{12}\) They, too, established newspapers, schools, social clubs, beneficial societies, and other organizations specifically designed to assist newcomers.

At the same time as new Eastern European immigrants were arriving, many of the German Jews had become successful and moved northwest in the city, relocating their homes and synagogues to well-to-do Bolton Hill. By 1903, all the German Jewish synagogues had moved uptown following a pattern of Jewish migration that would continue to move in almost a straight northwest line over the ensuing decades. Because of restrictive housing covenants, Jews, along with African Americans, of course, were prohibited by restrictive housing covenants from many neighborhoods. Subsequently, Jewish migration within Baltimore City continued to Bolton Hill, Druid Hill, Park Heights, and Mount Washington, and then to Pikesville, Owings Mills, and Green Spring Valley in Baltimore County.\(^{13}\) Further, German Jewish religious practice had become more liberal over the generations, compared to the more traditional approach of the new arrivals from East Europe and Russia, drawing further distinctions between the two Jewish immigration waves. Much of this Jewish story serves as the context for Baltimore


filmmaker Barry Levinson’s semi-autobiographical movie *Avalon*, which explores Polish Jewish assimilation.

During the early 20th century, the Jewish community was able to grow in numbers and advance economically, but it was not an easy path to economic security. An estimated 23,000 Jews, about 70 percent of the community around the turn of the century, worked in the clothing industry, a quarter of the overall garment labor force, which also included Italian, Bohemian, and Lithuanian immigrants in Southeast Baltimore. From 1870 to the 1930s, the garment industry was the largest employer in the city.\(^\text{14}\) Having been in Baltimore for several generations, the German Jews were now prospering, with several opening large factories and warehouses, employing large numbers of the newer Jewish immigrants. Eventually, the Baltimore-born descendants of German Jewish entrepreneurs became the founders of Baltimore’s well known downtown department stores, including Hutzler’s, Hochschild Kohn’s, Gutman’s, Hamburger’s, and Hecht’s.\(^\text{15}\)

While the work was tedious and the conditions typically deplorable, the sweat shop jobs created incomes for new families. Both shop owners and workers, many making as little as 12 dollars a week, saved money and organized charitable organizations to support the burgeoning Jewish community.

The low pay and brutal working conditions facing the Eastern European immigrants spurred a labor movement in Southeast Baltimore, leading to years of off-and-on again strikes and lockouts, and eventually, a landmark collective bargaining


agreement in 1914 between the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the Baltimore-based Sonneborn firm, one of the largest clothing factories in the U.S.\textsuperscript{16}

This Baltimore garment industry labor movement, coincidentally, was in large part led by a Jewish immigrant named Jacob Edelman, who immigrated from Russia, arriving alone in Locust Point in 1912, speaking no English whatsoever. The son of a Russian lawyer, Edelman began working in a city clothing factory at 16, eventually working his way through the downtown University of Maryland law school at night. Frustrated and upset by the low wages and working conditions in Baltimore’s sweatshops, Edelman had joined his first strike only a few months after arriving in the city. He later put his law degree to work in support of union causes, and also eventually won a seat on the Baltimore City Council. Edelman was not a typical Russian Jewish immigrant of the period, arriving with more education than most, but he remained a champion of union and civil rights his whole life, including supporting an unsuccessful anti-discrimination bill in the City Council in 1958, whose defeat he said would make Baltimore “appear to the world as a bigoted hamlet instead of a great city.”\textsuperscript{17}

One of the key buildings of this bustling, garment industry period—which echoes New York’s fabled garment history, still stands. The Labor Lyceum at 1023 E. Baltimore St. was a neighborhood cultural center as well as a busy union hall. The Labor Lyceum (“lyceum” at the time served as a general description for public halls that were used for lectures, meetings, and gatherings of many kinds) was one of many halls serving working-class immigrants in East Baltimore. Local men and women went to the Labor


\textsuperscript{17}Fee, Shopes, Zeidman, \textit{The Baltimore Book: New Views of Local History}, 98.
Lyceum to read and catch up on the daily news, socialize, and exchange information regarding job prospects. During lockouts and strikes, which were regular occurrences, the Labor Lyceum became the center for organizing union members, planning tactics and strategy, and engendering public support. While only the remnants of Jewish immigration remains in Southeast, the legacy of Jewish immigration, via Locust Point, into the city as a whole remains as profound, if not more so, than any other immigrant group during the period between the Civil War and World War I.

Prominent Jewish immigrants include Meyer Cardin, the son of Russian Jewish immigrants, who would serve in the state legislature and sit on the city’s top court, and the father of current Maryland U.S. Senator Benjamin Cardin. The Cone sisters, Claribel and Etta, whose collection of French art is the prize of the Baltimore Museum of Art, were the children of early German immigrant Jews from Bavaria.

Businessman and philanthropist Joseph Meyerhoff, whose name sits atop Baltimore’s Symphony Hall, was born in the Ukraine and came to the U.S. and Baltimore with parents in 1906. Another prominent Jewish Baltimorean, businessman Carroll Rosenbloom, who would later own the Baltimore Colts, was the also the son of Russian Jewish immigrants.

---


19 Frederick N. Rasmussen, “Meyer M. Cardin, 97, congressman’s father, served as city judge,” The Baltimore Sun, June 13, 2005.


The descendants of Charles and Sarah Hoffberger, who arrived from the Austria-Hungarian Empire in 1881, first built a heating and oil business in Baltimore and then went on to own the National Brewing Company and the Baltimore Orioles professional baseball club. The family continues to support large philanthropic enterprises in the city and also founded the acclaimed American Visionary Arts Museum in Federal Hill two decades ago.\textsuperscript{22}

And finally, one of the greatest philanthropists Baltimore has ever known, Zanvyl Krieger, was one of eight children born to Austrian Jewish immigrants. In 1992, his foundation donated $50 million to the Johns Hopkins University School of Arts and Sciences, the largest monetary gift in the school’s history and one of the largest ever in U.S. higher education history. Other charitable concerns bearing his name, include the Krieger Children’s Eye Center at Johns Hopkins’ Wilmer Ophthalmological Institute; and the Kennedy Krieger Institute, a world-renowned clinic for children with disabilities.\textsuperscript{23}

As noted earlier in this chapter, Southeast Baltimore’s Little Italy, the ethnic port neighborhood that remains the most cohesive and vibrant today in the city, formed just south of the Jewish Lombard Street district.

In terms of the focus of this paper, the development of Baltimore’s ethnic port neighborhoods, Italian and Greek immigration is a slightly different story than the German, Polish, Czech, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Russian, Jewish, and Eastern European immigration stories. Italian and Greek immigration is not directly related to the


construction of the immigration pier at Locust Point because there was no regular steam
ship service to the southern Mediterranean between the Civil War and World War I.

However, Italian immigration to Baltimore was quite significant during this period. By 1920, native Italian-speaking immigrants, who numbered nearly 8,000, trailed only native-German, Polish, and Yiddish-speaking immigrants in Baltimore. The Italians, for the most part, came to the U.S. by other ports, such as New York and Philadelphia, arriving in Baltimore by train. In fact, the former President Street train station, now a Civil War museum, sits in Harbor Point, across the street from the traditional Little Italy boundary. Many of the early Italian immigrants were said to be initially headed west—via the B & O Railroad—some even as far as California, apparently attracted by the gold rush there. But others followed and stayed behind, building the enclave around the President Street Station.

While the first Italians in Baltimore arrived in the 1840s and 1850s, the overwhelming majority arrived in the 1880s and afterward, mimicking the overall pattern of Italian immigration to the U.S. In truth, two “Little Italy” neighborhoods formed in Southeast Baltimore. The first, as mentioned before, around the President Street Station and eventually St. Leo the Great Roman Catholic Church, established in 1881. The


second was established in nearby Highlandtown, around Our Lady of Pompei, which was built in 1923.

Like their Eastern European counterparts, the Italian immigrants went to work at the docks, later at the Bethlehem Steel and GM plants, and other factories—laying bricks in budding row house neighborhoods around the city, and also becoming barbers, doctors, lawyers, and tailors.

Among the most notable descendants of these Italian immigrants to Baltimore was Thomas D'Alesandro, who served as mayor of Baltimore from 1947-1959. His daughter, Nancy Pelosi, would become the first woman Speaker of the House in U.S. history while representing California in Congress. By 1940, more than 18,000 Baltimore residents were Italian immigrants or the descendants of Italian immigrants.28

Today, Little Italy remains a vibrant destination, particularly for dining, with nearly two-dozen local Italian restaurants tucked in its 12-block radius.

More than just dining, Little Italy is also home to two annual festivals, outdoor bocce leagues, an annual arts festival, an Order of Sons of Italy Lodge, and regular language and cooking classes, among other religious activities based at St. Leo’s.

Finally, Greek immigrants to Baltimore, who also formed a vibrant community on the Southeast Baltimore city line, came later than the other European groups.

In 1920, roughly 700 Greek immigrants were living in Baltimore.29 By 1940, roughly 1,200 Greek immigrants lived in the city.30


30 Kenneth D. Durr, Why are we troubled: white working-class politics in Baltimore, 1940-1980, 142.
Pointing to the more recent Greek arrival, St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox was established 58 years ago. Greektown remains home to eight authentic restaurants, bakeries, and coffeehouses, as well as a number of annual events.31 Like much of Southeast Baltimore, Greektown has also become home to many of Baltimore’s newest Latino immigrants over the past two decades—an evolution that takes us to the conclusion of the paper.

---

Overshadowed by Ellis Island, the story of immigration into Baltimore in the key period between 1867 and 1914 has gone largely unexamined. The central purpose of this paper has been to show how the port of Baltimore developed over time into one of the industrial centers of the United States, and from there, provide an overview of the various European ethnic neighborhoods that subsequently developed around the Port of Baltimore.

It remains a hope that further study of immigration into Baltimore will continue, perhaps inspired by the 150th anniversary of the construction of the Locust Point pier in 2017. While a few papers and several chapters have been written about elements of immigration into Baltimore, for example, around the development of ethnic savings and loan institutions, the row house architecture, the development of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and around Jewish life in Baltimore—the thrust of this paper has been to try to build a broader understanding of which immigrant groups came to Baltimore and when, what neighborhoods they settled into, and to some extent why they came.

In that way, another main goal of this paper is to provide a bird’s eye view of the immigration story into Baltimore. If the reader can imagine being 2,000 feet above the Port of Baltimore, they should be able to identify, for example, I-70, the great, former “National Road” that still leads directly from the Port of Baltimore out to Ohio and the great cities and markets of the Midwest. And also identify I-95, which leads directly from the port of Baltimore to the great cities and markets of the north, Wilmington, DE, Philadelphia, PA, Newark, NJ, New York, NY, Providence, RI, Boston, MA, etc., and the
great cities and markets of the South, represented by Washington, Richmond, VA, Norfolk, VA, Fayetteville, NC, Savannah, GA, and Jacksonville, FL.

But also, readers should be able to imagine themselves looking more closely at the city’s narrow port streets from above—and see where the great B & O Railroad was born and where the B & O Railroad museum sits today, just to the southwest of today’s Inner Harbor. Of course, Oriole Park at Camden Yards and its iconic brick former B & O warehouse in right field should help orient readers as well. Readers should also be able to recognize the small row houses around the ballpark and B & O Railroad museum, in Pigtown, for example, where the first Irish immigrants lived in Baltimore and where the Irish Railroad Workers Museum sits today.

Also recognizable from above would be the heavy trains tracks that head west from the B & O Railroad—as well as south and north—and to Locust Point in the east, leading to the immigration pier that was built there by the railroad. Locust Point is where Eastern European immigrants who had already booked a train could head directly to Cincinnati, St. Louis, or Milwaukee, merely by leaving their steamship and walking a short distance to their train. Or, if they intended to remain in Baltimore, either because of a lack of resources to continue west or because of local family or ethnic ties, immigrants could take a ferry over to Fells Point and the burgeoning residential row house neighborhoods on the north side of the harbor (considered Southeast Baltimore, as opposed to South Baltimore, which designates Locust Point, Riverside, and Federal Hill, among some other neighborhoods).
Moving to a lower altitude, say, 1,000 feet above the harbor, a reader should be able to pick out the early German and Irish immigrant neighborhoods and the churches that formed in Locust Point, Riverside, and Federal Hill.

And finally, surveying the vast row house neighborhoods on the north side of the Inner Harbor, readers could see the Polish neighborhood of Fells Point, Little Italy next to the President Street Station, Lombard Street and Corned Beef Row a few blocks up, more German areas in Canton, and a second Italian enclave in Highlandtown around Our Lady of Pompei. Also, slightly further north, the Czech area known as “Little Bohemia” around St. Wenceslaus, not far from where the ever-expanding Johns Hopkins Hospital complex sits today.

In that way, it has been the intention of this paper to help put the pieces of the Baltimore immigration puzzle together in a manner that establishes the broad outlines of a full picture. None of this is to say that the ethnic neighborhoods themselves around the port were so completely delineated that they were completely different enterprises, however. Southeast Baltimore, in particular, with its mix of Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, and to some extent, blacks—typically in alley houses near Fells Point and Upper Fells Point—was a mixing bowl of ethnicities.

That is not the case, at all. There remains, today, for example, the small, but still active Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church community in Southeast Baltimore.¹ That church previously had served a Lutheran congregation, but as immigration patterns changed and more Orthodox immigrants from Russia—and what is today Belarus and Poland—came to Baltimore, the church changed hands in 1919. The original Holy

Trinity congregation shared row house neighborhoods in the corridor along Upper Fells Point in what also became known as Butcher’s Hill, with Jewish, Italian, and Polish immigrants, among others, and also poor black residents who typically lived in so-called “alley houses”—smaller and even narrower versions of Baltimore’s row houses literally located in cramped alleys.²

Also in Southeast Baltimore sits the still-active St. Michael the Archangel, which is located across the street from Patterson Park on Eastern Avenue, the traditional dividing line between Canton and Highlandtown. That Ukrainian congregation initially formed in Fells Point in the 1880s before buying a new property and moving to its current spot in the 1980s.³ Pointing to one more Eastern European immigrant group that made its way to Southeast Baltimore, there’s also the still-active St. Elizabeth of Hungary Roman Catholic church on East Baltimore Street just north of Patterson Park—the 137-acre green space created that served as the backyard, playground, and ball fields for thousands of immigrant families.

So as the first chapter (and to some extent the chapters on Irish and German immigration) focused on the construction of the port, the national road, B & O Railroad and continual commitment of Baltimore’s political and business leaders to infrastructure and commercial development, the ensuing chapters looked at who came to Baltimore and why after construction of the immigration pier at Locust Point. Still, there are two other points to be made in the conclusion.


The first point regards the lasting impact that these ethnic, working-class, immigrant neighborhoods made in shaping Baltimore’s blue-collar and often characterized quirky modern identity. If a visitor or newcomer is to understand Baltimore’s culture, it’s important to understand the root of the city’s symbols and unique cultural practices—just as all cities have their own unique cultural symbols and practices. And, after that, this paper will conclude with a brief look at the latest chapter in Baltimore’s immigrant chapter—the story of Latino immigration into Baltimore over the past two decades—which is taking place in some of the same neighborhoods where Eastern European immigrants first resided now more than a century ago.

Ultimately, much of what is generally thought of as quintessentially Baltimore—its row houses and marble stoops, duckpin bowling, blue crabs, Old Bay, the Bawlmerese dialect, Edgar Allan Poe, Babe Ruth, H. L. Mencken, Corned Beef Row, Little Italy, The Block, Camden Yards, John Waters, Barbara Mikulski, Natty Boh, its Mobtown nickname (dating to early Irish political gangs)—came out of a mash-up of the city’s Old South heritage, blue-collar industrialization, and, most importantly, the immigrants who streamed through what was once the busiest immigration center below the Mason-Dixon line.

“Absolutely, you can trace it all back to the blending of Southern culture and [African-American] migration, Northern industry, and the influx of European immigrants—first mixing at the port and its neighborhoods,” said Mary Rizzo, an American Studies Ph.D. and co-editor of The Public Historian journal, in a recent interview. “Baltimore’s character, it’s uniqueness, the dialect, all of it, is a kind of amalgamation of these very different things coming together—with a little Appalachia
thrown in,” added Rizzo, who has studied the city’s love affair with the working-class “Hon” women of old Baltimore. “It’s all threaded through these neighborhoods.”

Gentrification, both residential and commercial, is growing again around the port in recent years as the recession has receded. In Locust Point and other ethnic port neighborhoods, warehouses have been converted into trendy restaurants and condominiums. But there are also remnants of old Baltimore everywhere as this paper touched on, particularly in the Fells Point area that used to be known as Little Poland, in the neighborhood still known as Little Italy, and generally in areas often closest to the ethnic churches, most of which still remain open—even if their parochial schools have closed and congregations have shrunk.

At 1308 Beason St. in Locust Point, the three-story, brick Immigration House, next to an even older German church, still stands. This is where arrivals to the city stayed awaiting a family from the old country to take them in. Proctor and Gamble no longer remains at Tide Point—named after Procter & Gamble’s detergent factory—but the Under Armour apparel company has taken over its buildings. Nearby stands Silo Point, the 24-story luxury apartment tower that was once the world’s largest grain elevator.

The Baltimore Museum of Industry on Key Highway stands where Platt and Company Oyster Packers—patent holders of the tin can—launched the canning boom that filled Canton’s shoreline. It is from these port factories, docks, shipping, and financial institutions that the city’s economic heartbeat still manages to ring through the neighborhood.

---


railroad industries, and the ethnic neighborhoods that developed around them, that much of the city’s character was born.

“Every city claims to be a city of neighborhoods, but in Baltimore, it’s actually true,” Rizzo said. And it’s because of the close-knit, ethnic neighborhoods, in which newcomers felt supported, that each group thrived. It also explains how Baltimore’s quirky culture developed—and stuck.

“Out of such insular places come eccentric characters and odd cultural practices; however, it’s more than that,” Rizzo said. “You could pick and choose eccentric characters from any city. The thing that really makes Baltimore unique is its embrace of its weirdness—the darkness of Poe—by those who stayed behind in its neighborhoods [and didn’t flee for the suburbs]. Because not everybody did. In Philadelphia, for instance, with the Founding Fathers, history is very serious business, but in Baltimore’s, there’s always this edginess to it.”

It is a coincidence worth highlighting, that Baltimore’s stubborn refusal to let go of its characters and history—other modern manifestations of which include HonFest, the Charm City Roller Girls, the Stoop Storytelling Series, and the pro football team’s name (the Ravens, taken from Poe’s epic poem)—is actually considered by urban experts crucial to rebuilding a vital city. The reclaiming of the abandoned warehouses around the harbor and the ongoing mixed-use repurposing is more than mere cost-savings and nostalgia. It showcases Baltimore’s ethnic, blue-collar roots and character.

“Think about it,” said Rizzo. “Baltimore can’t offer, say, more sunshine or space than Orlando or Phoenix. What it does have—that those cities don’t—is this eclectic history and its neighborhoods.”
Once more, this is not to romanticize what were tough economic conditions in these early ethnic neighborhoods, particularly before the post-World War II economic boom.

“That area, Harbor East, was filthy. It was nothing but empty warehouses and trash for years. Fells Point? Canton? They’re beautiful today. Fells Point was a slum when I was growing up; you never went down there,” said Tom Scilipoti, 85, the son of Italian immigrants, in a recent interview. “Canton [because of the canneries] smelled like tomatoes.”

When asked if there’s been a loss of community amid all the change—or if he has a sentimental feeling for the time when neighbors regularly scrubbed their marble stoops together, as in the renowned photo by Baltimore Sun photographer A. Aubrey Bodine—the affable Scilipoti smiled. “Things change,” he said. “That’s just the way it is.

“And let me tell you, because people forget,” he added. “The reason everybody was scrubbing those white marble stoops all the time was because of the black soot and smoke billowing from the oil refineries and factories down at the port. I don’t miss that.”

Today, however, someone passing by Patterson Park is much more likely to see Latino immigrants playing soccer than German, Polish, or Ukrainian immigrants in the evening after work. And the Friends of Patterson Park sponsor a number of programs specifically designed for the newest immigrant families in Southeast Baltimore. On the weekends, adult Latino leagues are in full swing with grown men in full uniforms and metal cleats competing in front of family and friends. Meanwhile, on the sidelines,

---

vendors serve eggs, fried plantains, and beans for breakfast plates, and grilled chicken
tacos, ribs, rice, refried beans, *pupusas* with cabbage, and mangos for lunch.\(^7\)

For a long time, however, Baltimore was an anomaly on the East Coast, in terms of Hispanic immigration. New York, Philadelphia, Boston—and Washington with an influx of Salvadoran refugees in the 1980s—had significant active Latino communities for decades before Baltimore's recent growth spurt. In fact, Baltimore City's 1990 Hispanic population of 7,600 was slightly lower than it had been a decade earlier.\(^8\)

As recently as 1999, *The Baltimore Sun* still referred to the city's "small" Latino community in Upper Fells Point.\(^9\) By 2010, the U.S. census put the city's Latino population, generally considered undercounted, at 25,960, or 4.2 percent.\(^10\)

Driving the growth, according to Latino leaders, is Maryland's relatively stable economy and hospitable laws, such as driver licensing for non-citizens, and favorable immigration policies, especially in comparison to Arizona or Northern Virginia, for example. Historically, earlier Latino immigrants were Puerto Ricans and Cubans, many from educated, middle-class backgrounds, not the Mexicans, Hondurans, Salvadorans, Ecuadorians, and Guatemalans that make up the bulk of arrivals today in Baltimore. Still, there's long been a hidden population of Hispanic immigrants in Southeast


Baltimore, looking to find work, trying to access health care and support systems, and send their children to school.

In fact, the annual Latino Festival, celebrating 35 years in 2016, has evolved into one of the city's largest festivals, attracting 30,000-40,000 people to Patterson Park over two days each summer.

Over the past two decades especially, Baltimore City's Latino community largely remained concentrated in Upper Fells Point, which became known as Spanish Town. More recently, small grocery stores, the restaurants, music, and clothing stores have followed, and the culture has grown to include much of Eastern Avenue, from Fells Point to Highlandtown and Greektown.11

Eventually, as the first Latino immigrants acquired a level of economic status, many of them, too, made the move to the suburbs, following the traditional journey of the German, Polish, Italian, Greek, and Jewish immigrants who preceded them from Fells Point to nearby neighborhoods and then Baltimore County. Baltimore County's Latino population more than doubled in the past decade to 33,735, according to the 2010 census.12

In the city, it is Highlandtown now that has become the new center of Hispanic life and culture, developing around Patterson Park, the Southeast Anchor Library, the Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church, and Archbishop Borders Elementary School, which began a unique dual-language curriculum two years ago, as well as mom-and-pop


stores, barber shops, salons, and, of course, bars and popular restaurants like Tijuana Tacos, Restaurant El Salvador, Chicken Rico, La Sirenita, and Carlos O'Charlies.

Chronicling the Latino boom, in the tradition of earlier iterations of foreign-language newspapers, for the past seven years has been *Latin Opinion*, Baltimore's locally owned Spanish-language weekly newspaper. A Spanish language website, Somos Baltimore Latino (somobaltimorelatino.com), has begun covering Baltimore for the Latino community as well.

In Southeast Baltimore, nearly every institution has been affected by the new immigration growth. In 2007, the Baltimore City Police Department, for example, recruited 23 police officers from Puerto Rico to bolster its ranks and increase the number of bilingual officers.¹³

Also, highlighting Latino growth in the Catholic Church, the Archdiocese of Baltimore now has 20 parishes offering Spanish Masses, led by native-language or trained priests.

Likewise, Baltimore City Public Schools have seen a dramatic increase in Latino populations, especially at schools like John Ruhrah in Greektown, which sends its newsletter in English and Spanish, as well as at Highlandtown Elementary-Middle, Graceland Park Elementary, Holabird Academy, Patterson Park Public Charter, and Patterson High School, all located in Southeast Baltimore.

The Southeast Community Development Corporation, which operates the Highlandtown Main Street program, also provides links to housing and community

---

¹³ Nicole Fuller, "23 from Puerto Rico graduate as city police," *The Baltimore Sun*, June 2, 2007.
resources in English and Spanish on its website. They also partner with local nonprofits, as well as the Creative Alliance, an arts center that was formerly a first-run local movie theater called The Patterson, in Southeast.

There’s a misconception that the Latino community, as with other immigrant groups, is largely consisted of undocumented workers. The Baltimore's Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, which is affiliated with the larger Maryland Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, now counts 250 members.¹⁴

Politically, the Hispanic community has won several significant battles, including passage of the Maryland Dream Act, which allows the children of undocumented immigrants to pay in-state tuition at Maryland colleges, which was supported by the Baltimore City Council and state delegation.¹⁵

Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake has also made attracting more immigrant families a central component of her oft-stated, long-term goal of bringing 10,000 new families to Baltimore.¹⁶ According to an analysis of the 2015 U.S. Census, immigration into Baltimore is the key factor in stabilizing the city’s population over the past five years after decades of loss.¹⁷ Baltimore, however, is not just a destination, more than ever, for Latino immigrations, but because of its proximity to New York and Washington, D.C. it is

---


also a growing destination for refugees, asylees, and immigrants from around the globe, a policy which local officials also continue to embrace even as other parts of the country turn away refugees from places like Syria, the broader Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia. In fact, Baltimore City public schools now serve more than 3,000 English as Second Language (ESL) students. It’s also more than mere coincidence that one of the two state of Maryland’s official resettlement centers is located on Eastern Avenue, in the heart of Highlandtown and that many of these new immigrants also make their first homes in the U.S. in Southeast Baltimore. In this way, as city and state leaders had done more than a century earlier, Rawlings-Blake, the City Council, and the business community views immigration as an crucial factor in growing the city’s population, economy, and tax base.

In fact, one the last assimilation steps for Baltimore’s newest immigrant groups from Mexico and Central America is political: to earn a representation—a seat on the City Council or in Baltimore’s elected state delegation. To date, there are no Hispanic legislators on the Baltimore City Council, Baltimore County Council, or Hispanic state or federal legislators from Baltimore City or Baltimore County.

Once that is accomplished, the journey that so many other immigrant groups have taken through Baltimore will be complete.

---


BIBLIOGRAPHY


“German Marylanders. “German Newspapers.”


Gorelick, Richard. “In sausage news, no changes at the other Ostrowski's.” The

Greektown Community Development Corporation. “Restaurants.”
2016.

Historiana. “Comments about German immigration to the U.S.”
http://historiana.eu/case-study/political-emigration-germany-america-
19th-century-example/comments-about-german-immigration-us.


Hollowak, Thomas L. Baltimore's Polish Language Newspapers: Historical and


Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church. “Parish History.”
2016.

The Jewish Museum of Maryland. “Immigrant Experience.”
https://jewishmuseummd.org/wp-
content/themes/jmm_html/default/files/ImmigrantExperience_001.
[Accessed: February 20, 2016].

The Jewish Museum of Maryland. “Lloyd Street Synagogue.”
https://jewishmuseummd.org/visiting/lloyd-street-synagogue/. Accessed:
February 20, 2016.


Kenny, Kevin. IIP Digital U.S. Embassy.
http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/publication/2008/03/20080307131416eb
yessedo0.6800043.html#axzz3yCVwyphU. Accessed: January 3, 2016.


University Press, 2011.

Klinger, Jerry. “America Jews are vanishing.”

Lambert, Jack. “Harbor Point design gets support from city panel.” Baltimore
Business Journal, November 29, 2912.

Levine, Yitzchok. “History of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation.”
http://personal.stevens.edu/~llevine/History%20of%20the%Baltimore%20Hebrew

2016.

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presen

Library of Congress. “Irish-Catholic immigration to America.”
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presen
Library of Congress. “A New Surge in Growth.”


Maryland Department of Human Resources. “Maryland’s Resettlement Centers.”

Maryland Department of Planning. “Foreign Born by Citizenship Status.”


Maryland Historical Society. “Maryland’s Immigrant History.”

Maryland Historical Society.

Maryland Manual Online.

Maryland Port Administration.

Maryland State Archives. “Locust Point Historic District.”

91


Orange County Jewish Life. “Orange Country’s Jewish History.”

The Painted Screen Society of Baltimore. “History.”

Port of Baltimore.


Printing History. “Linotype Invented and Built in Baltimore.”


Vill, Martha J. Land Tenure, Property Ownership and Home Mortgages in the Late Nineteenth Century, a Case Study of Baltimore’s German. University of Maryland, diss., 1976.


