

The Admiral Fell INN



THE LEGEND OF THE ADMIRAL FELL INN

Entering the Admiral Fell Inn is stepping into history. Named in honor of Edward Fell, one of Baltimore's earliest developers, the hotel is comprised of eight adjoining buildings, some dating as far back as the 1760's. Over the last two hundred years, the site has seen its fair share of various incarnations.

Edward Fell was never awarded the naval designation of Admiral but was the Colonel of the Provincial Forces. He inherited the tract of land known as Fell's Prospect from his father, an English Quaker and captain of commerce who was deeded the land in 1730. Edwards wife, Ann Bond, designed and sold the parcels of land to area merchants. She also brought the flavor of Britain to the "Point" by naming many of the streets, such as Shakespeare, Bond, Fleet, Lancaster and Philpot. The "Thames" in Thames Street rhymes with "Names" and this designation was made in an effort to "properly" pronounce the word as it was originally intended. It was not until King George I, who wasn't British, pronounced the word with difficulty that the word Thames began to sound like "Temms". As it was improper to correct royalty, the people of Britain adopted the new fashionable pronunciation. The citizens of Fells Point, however, had no problem thumbing their noses at the King and restoring the original pronunciation.

With deep water almost at it's shoreline, Fells Point served as Baltimore's original port and was central to the city's economy from the mid-1700s to 1860. Goods flowed through its wharves and warehouses and at one time there were as many as eighteen shipyards operating in the area, building hundreds of sailing vessels. The most famous of these was the USS Constellation, constructed in the shipyard of William Stoddard, off of what is now Boston Street. Also notable were the highly maneuverable Baltimore Schooners that, operating as "privateers" during the War of 1812, broke the English blockade of American ports. These shipyards were world famous and included the shipyard of Joseph Meyers, the first African-American owned shipyard in America.

The Anchorage Hotel is the most notable venue, and the central building, of the Admiral Fell Inn. Opening in 1900, the Anchorage was a 26-room hospice for sailors run by the Port Mission Women's Auxillary, a lay order of women missionaries. In 1929, the Anchorage site was leased to the YMCA as a 105 bed sailor's boarding house and functioned into the 1950s. Other buildings in the complex have been utilized as: a livery (where animals were kept and cared for daily), a ship's chandlery, a coffee house (once owned and operated by a former mayor of Baltimore) and, of all things, a vinegar bottling factory in the 1970s.

As Fells Point was once a very rough part of town, The Anchorage was deemed a safe haven for those in fear of being "shanghaied" or kidnapped and forced to serve on a ship or boat. However, for all the comfort it offered, it was not quite safe enough for one unfortunate fellow in the 1950s. After being de-loused upon check in, as was custom at the time, a young sailor took up board at the Anchorage. He awoke the next day on a ship in the middle of the harbor, bound for China. Although his name has been lost, this was the last documented case of this practice in America.

The north side of the Inn is bounded by Shakespeare Street, a favorite location for the homes of ship's Captains. At one time, thirteen Captains had homes on Shakespeare Street. The street is also rumored to be the site of the original Fell Manor and contains a memorial to the original founders of the community. The Inn honors their contributions to history as well as that of many other prominent Baltimoreans by naming our guest rooms in honor of them. Their stories adorn our historic hallways.

In the late 1960s, as Fells Point was in the midst of the radical decline, many properties were condemned to make way for a proposed interstate highway. A grassroots effort resulted in the designation of Fells Point as Maryland's first National Historic District. Federal funds for the construction of the highway were disallowed and Fells Point was saved! The neighborhood began to rebuild, a process which continues today, with many eclectic shops emerging along its streets of Belgian Block—bricks of granite used for ship ballast. The Admiral Fell Inn was first opened in 1985, boasting European-style comfort and intimate elegance. In 1989 the hotel became a charter member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Historic Hotels of America.

