

Cranes lift towers high above the Inner Harbor

Old Allied Signal property undergoes a transformation

From near Federal Hill, I recently caught sight of construction cranes working busily along the harbor's edge across the water, so I caught a cab to investigate.

The upward expansion of the Four Seasons Hotel for added floors of luxury condominiums is now well underway. This is an odd construction project. On the ground level, near Lancaster Street at the foot of President Street, you are unaware that the hotel building is being enlarged substantially.

Every time I return to Harbor East, I shake my head in amazement. The continuing and dramatic transformation of this neighborhood only prompts me to recall what a barren wasteland it was. What is now a world of Under Armour Brand House and Lululemon was once old warehouses and lumberyards.

The addition of more residences here underscores it's a residential neighborhood, too.

If the work at the Four Seasons is discreet, there is no mistaking the transformation in a nearby area now called Harbor Point. I circled around Caroline Street near Block Street.

It occurred to me that Fells Point is going to be nearly doubling in size. That is, if we think of this new neighborhood as Fells Point in the future. I somehow think not.

The controversy surrounding developer



Jacques Kelly
In the neighborhood

Michael Beatty's plans to build Harbor Point on the old Allied Signal property now seems old news. It's been only about six months since the groundbreaking ceremony there, but there is no mistaking the immense change. I stood nearby and tried to process what I was seeing. I blinked my eyes, and there was an Exelon building rapidly nearing completion.

The Harbor Point land, a kind of hook or a very big toe off Caroline Street, was off-limits to visitors or anyone who didn't work here when it was a chemical manufacturing plant.

For decades, it bore the sign of Baugh Chemicals and was one of Baltimore's burly industrial presences. On a cold winter morning in the 1970s, steam and vapors escaped from this metal-clad building. It was one of those experiences that defined our working waterfront.

Visitors were not welcome, and the streets all ended at the harbor's edge. You just didn't go there.

It was not an inviting place. The neighboring lumberyards and mills suffered intense blazes that on windy nights tormented firefighters and threatened the oldest parts of Fells Point.

This mini-peninsula began as an industrial workhorse about 1845 when industrialist Isaac Tyson (1792-1861) founded his Baltimore Chrome Works here. Tyson



ALGERINA PERNA/BALTIMORE SUN

More floors are being added to the Four Seasons Hotel in Harbor East as new buildings tower over the former manufacturing site.

learned his geology and chemistry in France and found that some greenish-blackish rocks found off the Falls Road at Bare Hills in Baltimore County could be turned into money.

The chemical-rich dark stone, known as serpentine, turns up in local buildings such as the Mount Vernon United Methodist Church facing the Washington Monument.

He became a tycoon. His chemicals became the basis of ocher, a dark yellow paint pigment. Highway marker lines were once painted yellow with the chromium-yellow palette. We also know chrome on

auto trim. It's used in leather tanning as well.

The Fells Point plant stayed busy until 1985 and was last known as an Allied Signal operation.

I recall seeing workers dressed in protective suits take the old plant apart and build a protective cap over it.

Tyson rests near Clifton Park at the Friends Burial Ground in the 2500 block of Harford Road.

He was inducted into the National Mining Hall of Fame in 1996. jacques.kelly@baltsun.com