

How the 'Pride,' home again tomorrow, became a Baltimore symbol

STARTING TOMORROW, after celebrating the end of her 17,000 mile voyage to the Pacific Northwest, the *Pride of Baltimore* can take her place beside the classic symbols of other great cities: the Lion Gate of Mycenae, the she-wolf of Rome, New York's Empire State Building, the Eiffel Tower, yet it is hard to believe that any of these was so perfectly suited to express the spirit of a city in its time.

It is a frankly emotional, even sentimental, expression of local self-esteem, yet the *Pride* evokes banner headlines and public adulation when she arrives in the most sophisticated of other cities on both coasts. Possibly the story of how this came about, how the *Pride* was created and why, has never really been told.

When Baltimore first created Charles Center-Inner Harbor Management, Inc., the "delivery system" for the Inner Harbor redevelopment process, it seemed natural to those of us who were brought up on history books chronicling the exploits of the privateers in the War of 1812, to think that a Baltimore Clipper schooner should be one of the primary exhibits in the creation of a new Inner Harbor. Consequently, a search was launched for an authentic Baltimore Clipper. This proved futile: apparently there were none left, although Charles Center-Inner Harbor continued to follow up leads ranging from Nova Scotia to Mexico.

By 1974, it had become clear that if the city wanted a Baltimore Clipper, we would have to build one: so a second search was launched to find authentic plans from which a replica of an actual clipper could be built, a naval architect

to execute the project, and a shipyard with enough experience with large wooden ships to build it.

There were reminders that 1976 — the nation's Bicentennial — was approaching, and the Inner Harbor still did not have a project that would suitably commemorate that great year-long celebration. The shipyards were far away, and it was too late to complete all of the advance arrangements, plus the design and construction period, for a replica of a clipper ship in time for the Fourth of July, 1976.

The dilemma was cured by a solution that was beautiful in its simplicity: if we could arrange to construct a real clipper right on the shoreline of the Inner Harbor, starting early in 1976, then the process of construction would serve as an attraction for Baltimoreans and tourists to watch and enjoy — not just on the Fourth, but all year long.

The Charles Center-Inner Harbor team received the blessing of Mayor William Donald Schaefer and Development Commissioner Robert C. Embry, Jr., to proceed with such a plan. Those who participated at the time attribute the original idea to this writer, but credit for its execution belongs to Albert M. Copp, executive vice president of Charles Center-Inner Harbor, and Jay H. Scattergood, who was then project director of the shoreline activities.

The first problem was to cut short the usual three-to-six-month bidding time for city construction contracts. It was determined that a ship falls legally into the category of personal property, so the project could be advertised for bids by the city Bureau of Purchases. As the bid proposals turned out, only one shipbuilding design/construction team was willing and able to execute the project on the



shoreline, instead of relying on a far-off shipyard.

This was Melbourne Smith's International Historic Watercraft Society, Inc., and Naval Architect Thomas C. Gillmer, both of Annapolis. Their proposal had a new dimension: not to build a replica of a known vessel, but to construct an original ship of the clipper schooner class, which would have its own identity and be able to take its own place in the long history of such ships.

The final hurdle was funding the bid price of \$365,000. In 1971, when a \$6 million contract had been awarded for con-

struction of the new bulkhead around the Inner Harbor, the city had been asked to reserve the permitted allowance of 1 per cent for art until a later date, when a suitable subject could be found. The clipper ship filled this requirement, so urban renewal bonds that had been approved by the voters for the Inner Harbor in 1972 were available. The contract was approved by the Board of Estimates on Oct. 22, 1975.

The building site was dedicated by Mayor Schaefer on June 14, 1976, and by July 4, the new attraction was in full swing. Melbourne Smith assembled a team of wooden-ship builders who could not only construct an authentic clipper on the shoreline, but do it using authentic hand tools and methods of the early 1800s. Simeon Young, a shipwright from British Honduras, fashioned the keel with a hand adze, and the ship's blacksmith, an Englishman named Gerald Trobridge, operated an outdoor forge while he fascinated visitors with tales of his own solo sailing trips around the world.

The visit of the Tall Ships on July 10 to 18, 1976, marked a major turning point in the Baltimore renaissance; it was the time when the Inner Harbor first attracted visitors from the suburbs in the hundreds of thousands, and the shoreline became a regional as well as a city playground.

The Tall Ships also marked a turning point for the clipper project: they made it clear that there was an exciting potential for her to serve as Baltimore's goodwill ambassador, by sailing on visits to other major port cities. This meant schedules could not have to be kept, and sails alone could not produce a reliable timetable; reluctantly, the decision was made to add an un-authentic engine (carefully camouflaged below decks) and strengthen some

of the timbers for ocean sailing. The contract was increased to \$475,000 — still well below the one-per-cent limit.

Slevens Bunker, a folk historian of the 19th century who was working aboard the replica of a Boston Tea Party ship in Boston, was recruited to come to Baltimore to act as curator of the clipper project. He created an interpretive program that went into scores of Baltimore schools during the construction period.

An emotional moment for the project came in October, 1976, when the clipper's name was carved on the stern and unveiled in ceremonies at the shoreline boatyard. The perfect name — *Pride of Baltimore* — is attributed to Jay Scattergood. It placed the last link in the symbolism of the beautiful clipper form that was emerging at the water's edge.

On Feb. 27, 1977, the *Pride of Baltimore* was launched by a crane borrowed from the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, and christened with appropriate fanfare by Mayor Schaefer and Congresswoman Barbara Mikulski. Although only one small paragraph had appeared in the press, 10,000 people braved the bleak February weather to be on hand.

The number of people attracted by the birth of the *Pride* was an accurate augury of the great events that were to come: within the next nine months, the city saw ground broken for the Baltimore Convention Center and the National Aquarium; the Rouse Company made public its agreement with the Chicago developers to build the Hyatt Regency Baltimore hotel.

The pride of Baltimore, clearly, was ready to swell to heroic proportions in the days immediately ahead.

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