

Valentine Richmond History Walks

Self-Guided Walk of the Virginia State Capitol Square Grounds

Text-Only Version

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All directions are in italics. Enter the Capitol grounds at any entrance, head toward the Washington Equestrian Statue in the NW corner of the grounds, your tour will start there.

Welcome to Capitol Square

On this tour of the grounds, you will see the buildings, monuments and memorials of Capitol Square. As you explore this space, it is interesting to note who is honored, why they honored and when their statues were erected. The first monument to feature people of color and women was not erected on the grounds until 2008. We encourage you to take time to reflect as you move through this space. In light of recent events, protests and removal of statues in Richmond, will the Capitol grounds look different in the near future? How do you feel about those who are honored? What changes would you make? Who would you like to see remembered on the grounds?

In 1779 the capitol of Virginia was moved from Williamsburg to Richmond. The legislature met in wood framed buildings at 14th and Cary streets. Six squares of land were selected to house the Capitol grounds. The cornerstone of the Capitol building was laid in 1785 and by 1788 it was ready for the legislature to move in.

At the Washington Equestrian Statue look for John Marshall on the second tier of statues, walk counter clockwise around the statue.

Washington Equestrian Monument

The Washington Equestrian Monument was built to honor George Washington, Commander of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War and our country's first President. This monument was designed and partially sculpted by Thomas Crawford. The cornerstone was laid in 1850, Crawford died in 1857 and the statue was finally completed by Randolph Rogers in 1869. It was originally built to hold the remains of Washington, but his family did not want his remains to leave Washington's home and burial place at Mt. Vernon.

Virginia's prominent role in the revolution is represented by the bronze statues of six historic figures with smaller allegorical figures reflecting the person's revolutionary contribution.

View the second tier of statues on the Washington Equestrian Monument, starting at Marshall and walking counter clockwise.

John Marshall, Justice

Marshall served as an officer in the Revolutionary War, but his real contribution to the country was his position as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court for over 30 years.

Andrew Lewis, Colonial Times

Andrew Lewis served under Washington in the French and Indian War and then served as Brigadier General during the Revolutionary War.

Patrick Henry, Revolution

Henry gave one of the most famous speeches calling for revolution nearby at St. John's in Church Hill stating, "Give me liberty or give me death."

George Mason, Bill of Rights

He authored the Virginia Bill of Rights which became the basis for the U.S. Bill of Rights.

Thomas Jefferson, Independence

Among other things, Jefferson was author of the Declaration of Independence and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, founder of the University of Virginia, and 3rd President of the United States.

Thomas Nelson Jr., Finance

A signer of the Declaration of Independence and Brigadier General in the Virginia militia.

When you return to Marshall, turn around; take the path to your left.

Zero Mile Marker

Placed here in 1929, this marker is the official Virginia highway point of measurement. When you see highway signs with miles to Richmond, have you ever wondered which point is used to measure the distance? This is the spot.

Continue on the path to almost to the fence, the Poe statue is on the left.

Edgar Allan Poe Statue

Poe was born to traveling actors in 1809. His parents died when he was young and Poe was taken in by Richmond's Allan family. Mr. Allan hoped Poe would be a businessman, but Poe had dreams of being a writer. He attended the University of Virginia, but when he could not afford the tuition and his adopted father would not cover his expenses, Poe and Allan had a falling out and the relationship never recovered. Poe began publishing stories and poetry at 18. He was the editor of The Southern Literary Messenger, the most popular magazine in the south. Poe went on to publish *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Raven* and is credited with inventing the modern detective story with *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*.

Retrace your steps and on your left.

Harry Flood Byrd Statue

This monument was placed in 1976 to honor Harry F. Byrd Sr., who was a Virginia state Senator, Governor of Virginia, United States Senator, and for forty years led the Democratic political machine known as the Byrd Organization. As Governor, he instituted a popular downsizing of state government that built roads and stimulated economic development, but this "pay-as-you-go" policy also led to crowded colleges and inadequate hospital and social services. The end of Byrd's career was marked by his infamous "massive resistance" to federally mandated school desegregation. Massive resistance produced racial intolerance, bitterness, and, in the case of Prince Edward County, denied African American children an education for five years.

You will now follow the road heading toward the Governor's Mansion at the end of the street. There is a line of statues on your left making your way to the Mansion. First up...

Governor William Smith Statue

William Smith twice served as Governor of Virginia, as well as a U.S. Congressman, a state senator, and a general in the Confederate Army. He earned the nickname "Extra Billy" in 1831 for repeatedly requesting extra compensation as a mail carrier from Washington, D.C. to Milledgeville, Georgia. The statue was unveiled in 1906.

Who do you think should have a statue on Virginia's Capitol Square?

Continue to the next statue on the left.

Dr. Hunter Holmes McGuire

A prominent doctor during the Civil War, this memorial for Dr. Hunter Holmes McGuire's was erected in 1904. After the Civil War ended, Dr. McGuire returned to Richmond, Virginia where he became chair of surgery at the Medical College of Virginia. During his career, Dr. McGuire was president of the American Medical Association, founded St. Luke's Hospital and Training School for Nurses and helped found the Medical Society of Virginia.

Continue to the last memorial on the left.

Virginia Civil Rights Memorial

The Civil Rights Memorial was installed in 2008 to commemorate the actions of a brave 16-year-old African American girl named Barbara Johns. In 1951, Johns led a walkout at her high school in Farmville, Virginia, to protest the intolerable conditions at the school as a result of the "separate but equal" Jim Crow era policy. The African American Moton High had twice the number of students it was designed for, no cafeteria or gymnasium facilities and its teachers were poorly compensated. That year, two civil rights attorneys from Virginia, Oliver White Hill and Spottswood Robinson III, filed suit in Federal District Court in Richmond for the immediate integration of Prince Edward County schools. That case was eventually joined with four other cases to become *Brown V. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. The resulting unanimous Supreme Court decision in 1954 struck down the separate but equal racial doctrine that governed school policy and much of Southern life.

Continue on the path to the Governor's Mansion.

Virginia Executive Mansion

The Governor's Mansion was designed by Alexander Parris and was completed in 1813 at the cost of roughly \$20,000. It is the oldest continually occupied Governor's mansion. The Mansion, which is both a Virginia and National Historic Landmark, was restored and furnished with antiques in the early 20th century.

Virginia governors may serve multiple terms, but they may not be consecutive.

Continue on the path to the right, around to the front of the Capitol Building. The State Seal is at the base of the steps.

Virginia State Seal

The Virginia State Seal was designed in 1779, and has remained largely unchanged since. It includes Virginia's motto, "Sic Semper Tyrannis," which means "Thus Always to Tyrants."

The two figures depict an allegory of the motto - the first, Virtus, dressed as a warrior and representing Virginia, stands dominant over a second fallen figure, meant to represent King George III and Great Britain. The fallen figure holds the tools of the tyrant, a whip and chain. His fallen crown is nearby, symbolizing American's victory over Britain.

Virginia State Capitol

Thomas Jefferson designed the Virginia State Capitol, modeling it after the Maison Carrée, a classical Roman temple in southern France. The Virginia State Capitol was Jefferson's declaration of independence from British architecture. It is the first Roman temple style building in the United States.

The Capitol was built with a mix of tradesman and laborers, both free and enslaved. Records show that free Black workers and white workers received payment for their labor. The enslaved workforce was not paid for their labor; rather their owners profited from loaning them to perform labor for the Capitol's construction.

The center section of the Capitol was completed in 1788 and since then it has housed the General Assembly, the oldest elected legislature operating in the Western Hemisphere. During the Civil War this building held both the Virginia legislature and the legislature of the Confederacy. The wings were added in the early 20th century. The right wing houses the House of Delegates, the left wing houses the Senate.

Walk down the steps for a great view of the Capitol building. Turn right on the brick pathway towards the fountain.

Capitol Square Fountain

In the early years, Capitol Square was a weed filled open space, where animals grazed. In 1816, the Virginia General Assembly hired Maximilian Godefroy to lay out a formal garden. In 1818, this space was enclosed in the wrought iron fence still standing today. In 1850, John Notman redesigned the landscape, introducing native plants and curved walkways. Notman channeled springs to supply two fountains near its southeast and southwest corners. These fountains are now fed by the city water supply.

Given its park-like atmosphere, many people enjoy visiting the square. In addition, this space is often used by protestors to make demands of their elected officials.

Continue around the fountain to the bell tower.

Bell Tower

The red brick bell tower has stood since 1824, when it replaced an earlier wooden bell tower that was closer to the Capitol. It was once used as a guard house and the bell warned of fires. During the Civil War, the bell sounded when Union troops approached the city. Since the 1930s the bell is rung to call the Virginia General Assembly into session. The building is also the home of the Virginia Capitol Foundation, an organization that supports the restoration and preservation of historic capitol square.

Take an immediate right, follow the circular path.

The Mantle

Designed by Alan Michelson, a Mohawk member of Six Nations of the Grand River, *Mantle*, was dedicated in 2018 and incorporates a spiraling walk that leads to a meditation circle and fountain engraved with the names of the 11 tribes recognized by Virginia and 20 rivers associated with them. *Mantle's* spiral shape derives from Chief Powhatan's Mantle, a large deerskin vest embroidered with snail shells sewn in spiral clusters thought to represent the 34 tribes of the Powhatan chiefdom.

Retrace your steps out of the spiral, turn left uphill, at the fork take a right.

Voices from the Garden: Virginia Women's Monument

“Voices from the Garden,” the Virginia Women's Monument, was dedicated in 2019, with the unveiling of the first seven of twelve statues. In the United States less than 10% of statues are of women. These statues and the Wall of Honor, listing more than 200 women, help tell a more complete story of Virginia over the past 400 years. Starting with Adele Clark (holding the Vote for Women Banner) and moving clockwise.

Adèle Clark, Suffragist

The Equal Suffrage League was co-founded by Clark in 1909 and became one of the most vital suffrage organizations in the South. After years of lobbying, the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution was passed in 1920, giving women the right to vote.

Laura Lu Scherer Copenhaver, Entrepreneur

Copenhaver was raised in Smyth County, graduated from Marion College and taught there for over 20 years. In the 1920s as Director of Information for the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, she emphasized the importance of cooperative marketing of farm products to improve the standard of living for farm families. Copenhaver started a company called Rosemont out of her home, hiring local women to produce textiles and other household items. The popular business attracted customers from throughout the United States and abroad. Copenhaver oversaw the business until her death in 1940.

Elizabeth Hobbs Keckly, Seamstress

Born into slavery in Dinwiddie County, Keckly became an accomplished seamstress and in 1855 she purchased her and her son's freedom. She moved to Washington, DC and established a business, eventually becoming the dressmaker for Mary Todd Lincoln. Keckly published her autobiography, *Behind the Scenes, Or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House* in 1868.

Mary Draper Ingles, Frontierswoman

Mary's family lived in a farming settlement called Draper's Meadow. During the French and Indian War, their settlement was attacked by Shawnee warriors. Mary and others were taken captive and they were marched to the Shawnee village in Ohio. Mary and another woman planned an escape. With winter coming, the women made their escape without supplies and travelled more than 500 miles to reach home. Ten years after her death at 83, her son, Col. John Ingles, wrote about his mother's harrowing journey.

Cockacoeske, Queen of Pamunkey Tribe

Little is known about the life of Cockacoeske before she succeeded her husband as Pamunkey Chief in 1656. Cockacoeske, an astute leader and skillful politician, ensured that several tribes were united under her authority for the 1677 signing of the Treaty of Middle Plantation. She ruled the Pamunkey until her death in 1686.

Anne Burras Laydon, Jamestown Colonist

Burras, age 14, arrived in Jamestown, Virginia in 1608 as an indentured maid for her employer, Mistress Forrest. They are the first two known English women in the Jamestown colony. Burras would marry one of the original settlers, John Laydon, in December 1608. This strong young woman survived disease, the starving time and a war with the Powhatan Indians.

Virginia Estelle Randolph, Educator

The child of formerly enslaved people, Randolph completed her education at the age of sixteen. In 1892 she began teaching and developed her unique approach to education; learning through doing. Randolph's work took her throughout the South and earned her a national and international reputation as a leader in education.

Post a picture of you with your favorite statue and tag us on social media! @theValentineRVA

This completes your walking tour of Capitol Square.

We hope you enjoyed learning about the Virginia State Capitol and the stories you can uncover on the grounds!

Visit thevalentine.org to find more guided Richmond history tours.

Explore Richmond Stories

Richmond's City history museum, the Valentine has been collecting, preserving and interpreting Richmond's 400-year history for over a century. Located in the heart of historic downtown, the Valentine is a place for residents and tourists to discover the diverse stories that tell the broader history of this important region.

Visit

Tuesday - Sunday | 10a.m. - 5p.m.

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