

Valentine Richmond History Walks

Self-Guided Walk of The Fan

Text-Only Version

This tour is for personal educational use. The Valentine is not liable for any injury, incident or consequential damages resulting from the use of these materials. Participants are encouraged to follow traffic rules, bring water and wear comfortable shoes.

All directions are in italics. The tour starts at the east end of Kensington Avenue, where it meets Stafford Avenue. (Note: There are weekday 1-hour parking limits for nonresidents on most streets in The Fan District east of Meadow Street.) Please use caution while walking and crossing streets. Many of The Fan's concrete sidewalks and brick alleyways have uneven spots.

This tour will introduce you to some of Richmond's most colorful architecture, and give you a good sense of the city's history and growth – particularly with regards to parks, churches and schools – as residents moved westward from the central downtown area.

Richmond's Fan District is bordered by Monument Avenue to the north, Monroe Park to the east, Floyd Avenue to the south and Arthur Ashe Boulevard to the west. Construction in the area took off in the late 1880s, creating a roughly one-square-mile residential neighborhood filled with houses in the Queen Anne, Italianate, Richardsonian Romanesque, Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, Second Empire, Art Deco and Beaux-Arts styles. Development plans also included apartment buildings, businesses and small urban green spaces known as "pocket parks." The area was popular with both upper- and middle-class white Richmonders, while real estate covenants during the 20th century prohibited African Americans from buying or renting property in some areas, including Monument Avenue.

As you walk through The Fan, see if you can notice examples of the area's incredible variety of architectural house styles, colors and features such as stained-glass windows, tiled porches and decorative wrought iron. You may also notice brass plaques next to the front door of some houses, indicating the year the house was built. In some cases, there may be an additional plaque commemorating a property's inclusion in The Fan's Holiday House Tour, which is held in mid-December, or The Fan Woman's Club Kitchen & Garden Tour held each spring.

Walk across Stafford Avenue and continue east through the alley directly opposite Kensington Avenue to Scuffletown Park, which will be on your right.

Scuffletown

The land that encompasses The Fan was originally part of the Richmond estate that William Byrd III inherited in

1744 from his father, William Byrd II, and then sold to investors via a 1768 land lottery. By 1791, the area around this park had become popularly known as Scuffletown, most likely due to a minor scuffle between American militia and Benedict Arnold's British troops that took place nearby in 1781.

In 1795, Scuffletown had about a dozen structures, including a roadside inn called Scuffletown Tavern, but travelers decreased in the early 1800s with the construction of new turnpikes along present-day Broad Street and West Cary Street and the building of the James River and Kanawha Canal. In 1816, area developers hoped to build a new town called Sydney, and although the project was thwarted by a national economic downturn, the plans for Sydney laid out the fan-shaped street pattern that exists today.

Residential construction finally took off around 1889, when Richmond's new electric streetcar system tied the area to downtown Richmond, and by the 1920s, this area was fully developed. Scuffletown Tavern, the last remaining vestige of Scuffletown, was demolished in 1912 to make way for new houses. In the 1950s, residents re-branded the area as The Fan District, based on the way its streets extend out in a triangular fan shape from Monroe Park westward to Arthur Ashe Boulevard.

Scuffletown Park, which is located just south of the former Scuffletown Tavern site, was built by the City of Richmond in 1974. Organized volunteers worked with the city in 1999 to redesign the park as a welcoming and restful greenspace.

Continue walking east through the alley until it ends at Strawberry Street, then turn left. Walk north on Strawberry Street to the end of the block at Park Avenue, then turn right. Walk east on Park Avenue for three blocks to the corner of Park Avenue and Meadow Street.

First Church of Christ, Scientist

As Richmond residents slowly moved west of the city into The Fan during the late 19th century, churches were established to serve the area's growing spiritual needs. The First Church of Christ, Scientist, located on the northeast corner of Park Avenue and Meadow Street, was built in 1907 in the Classical Revival style. In 1929, the congregation sold the building to the Society of Friends and moved to a new Classical Revival church at 2201 Monument Ave., where it remains active today.

Continue walking east one block to the corner of Park Avenue and Granby Street.

Meadow Park and the First Regiment of Virginia Monument

Meadow Park is located in a triangular wedge formed by Park Avenue, Stuart Avenue and Meadow Street. As part of the city's efforts to help expand residential development westward, Richmond acquired the land for Meadow Park through condemnation proceedings in 1904. It was initially called Cutshaw Park after Wilfred Cutshaw, who served as Richmond's city engineer from 1873 until his death in 1907 and planned many of Richmond's public green spaces, but that name never caught on with area residents.

The stone pedestal you see is part of the monument that was erected in 1930 to honor the First Regiment of Virginia, a state militia unit formed in 1754, whose members included George Washington and Patrick Henry. The inscriptions on the base of the monument detail the heroic actions of the First Regiment throughout seven wars: the French & Indian War, the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War and World War I. The seven-foot-tall bronze statue of a colonial infantryman was pulled off the stone base during a protest on the night of June 19, 2020, and was then removed by the city.

Continue walking east on Park Avenue one block to the corner of Park and Allen avenues.

Monument Methodist Church

In 1911, a Methodist congregation that previously worshipped a few blocks away erected a new church building on the southwest corner of Park and Allen avenues and named it Monument Methodist Church. The Greek Revival building featured a prominent temple-like portico and a domed sanctuary. The church was extensively damaged by a fire in 1950, and the congregation then merged with another group to create Reveille United Methodist Church on Cary Street Road. The church was rebuilt in 1952 and used by several other groups over the years, including Park Avenue Methodist Church and Community Church of God in Christ. As of July 2020, the building has been decommissioned as a church and is listed for sale.

(Note: The Lee Monument at Monument and Allen avenues has become an evolving focal point for local Black Lives Matter protests. If you wish to take a detour from this tour to see Monument Avenue, turn left on Allen Avenue and walk north one block to the Lee Monument.)

Continue walking east on Park Avenue two blocks to the corner of Park Avenue and Lombardy Street.

Lombardy and Park Avenue Triangle Park

The triangular green space created by the juncture of Lombardy Street and Park and Hanover avenues is a popular destination for families with children. Created in 1991, Lombardy & Park Avenue Triangle Park (often called Lombardy Park) is surrounded by a low brick wall, with wrought-iron gate access on each side. The park contains a large playground, a sandbox and benches. Each autumn, the park hosts a family pumpkin carving event. (Note: Dogs are not allowed inside this park.)

Turn right and walk south on Lombardy Street for one-and-a-half blocks to 205 N. Lombardy St.

Scott-Talcott School

As more families moved into The Fan at the turn of the 20th century, both public and private schools were established for the benefit of area children. The building at 205 N. Lombardy St.,

which was constructed in 1905, originally housed the Scott-Talcott School, a private primary school for boys and girls. It has now been renovated into a multi-unit apartment building.

Continue walking south on Lombardy Street for a half-block to Grove Avenue. Turn right on Grove Avenue and walk one block west to 1621 Grove Ave., at the corner of Grove and Vine avenues.

Protestant Episcopal Church Home for Ladies

A number of homes for elderly women were established in The Fan at the turn of the 20th century. The Protestant Episcopal Church Home for Ladies (1875-1975) operated at the southeast corner of Grove and Vine avenues from 1909 to 1956, erecting this Classical Revival building in 1920. Today, the building is known as The Columns on Grove and provides affordable apartment living for people aged 55 and older.

Turn left on Vine Avenue, cross the street and walk a half-block south to the alley you'll see on your right. Turn right and walk west down the alley to Paradise Park, which will be on your left.

Paradise Park

Paradise Park, named for the large paradise tree in its center, is a hidden trove of whimsical, geometrical public art. It was completed in 1973 from a design by Williamsburg architect/artist Carlton Abbott, and has won several awards for its architecture and design. The park's brightly painted concrete features have been decorated in different ways by various artists over the years. As you look around the small area, you might notice shapes and borders painted to represent different environments, including a meadow, the desert, the ocean and outer space.

Continue walking west down the alley a half-block to Allen Avenue and turn right. Walk north on Allen Avenue for one-and-a-half blocks to the southeast corner of Allen and Hanover avenues.

Hanover Avenue Christian Church

The red brick church building located at 1723 Hanover Ave., at the corner of Hanover and Allen avenues, was erected in 1913 and was previously Hanover Avenue Christian Church. After almost 90 years of existence, Hanover Avenue Christian Church closed, and in 2004, the building was sold and converted into seven luxury units. The building is now called The Sydney Condominiums, in honor of the town that was once planned for this area. In April 2020, one of the condos at The Sydney sold for \$750,000.

Turn left and walk west on Hanover Avenue two blocks to the corner of Hanover Avenue and Meadow Street.

Halloween on Hanover

The seven blocks of Hanover Avenue between Lombardy and Strawberry streets are the location of Richmond's preeminent Halloween event, known as "Halloween on Hanover." As frightening urban legends about tainted candy swept through the United States in the 1970s, parents in the 2100 block of Hanover Avenue began the event as a way to let children safely enjoy trick-or-treating. Around 2006, the center of "Halloween on Hanover" shifted to the 1900 block.

Each Halloween, residents embrace the spirit of the holiday through costumes, elaborate house decorations and post-event parties. Trees lining the street are strung with orange lights, and the 1900 block is closed to traffic for a few hours. Residents donate money to cover the cost of insurance, signs, barricades and off-duty police security, and have been known to purchase as many as 5,000 pieces of candy for distribution each year. On Halloween night, an estimated 10,000 people of all ages come to Hanover Avenue from all over the city to experience the street that the Wall Street Journal in 2016 called one of the best places to trick-or-treat in the country.

Continue walking west on Hanover Avenue for three blocks to the southwest corner of Hanover Avenue and Strawberry Street.

Businesses in the Fan District

The building at 2225 Hanover Ave., on the southwest corner of Hanover Avenue and Strawberry Street, is an excellent example of the way architects integrated commercial properties into The Fan District. In order to maintain the area's residential appearance, businesses were placed on corners and designed to look like houses, with living space incorporated into part of the first floor and all of the second floor. The retail entrance prominently faced the intersection, while the residential space was accessed through a smaller "front door" on one side of the building. The most common types of businesses in The Fan at the turn of the 20th century were grocery stores and pharmacies. The store at 2225 Hanover Ave., which was built in 1911, was the home of Kern's Pharmacy (later renamed Kern's Drugstore).

(A similar building at 102 N. Lombardy, currently operating as a laundromat, began in 1910 as the Manuel Cleaning Company, and operated there until the owner passed away in 1957. Manuel Derderian's family immigrated to Richmond from Armenia in the early 1900s. The Manuel Cleaning Company had several locations in the city, but the Lombardy Street building served as its headquarters.)

Cross Hanover Avenue and continue walking west on Hanover Avenue for a half block to William F. Fox Elementary School, 2300 Hanover Ave.

William F. Fox Elementary School

William F. Fox (1836-1909) lived in The Fan District and served as superintendent of Richmond public schools from 1889 until shortly before his death. In 1911, this elementary school was built and named in his honor. An eight-room addition was constructed in 1922. The school serves an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse student body composed of approximately 450 students in pre-K through fifth grade. The school features a Spanish immersion program, in which some first- and second-grade classes in math and science are fully taught in Spanish.

Continue walking west on Hanover Avenue to the end of the block at Stafford Avenue. Turn right on Stafford Avenue and walk two blocks north to the corner of Stafford and Kensington avenues.

Thank you!

This completes your walking tour of The Fan. We hope you have enjoyed exploring this historic Richmond neighborhood. 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

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