

Valentine Richmond History Walks

Self-Guided Walk of the Court End Neighborhood - Text Only Version

All directions are in italics. The tour starts at East Clay and 11th streets, in front of the Wickham House. Please use caution while walking and crossing streets.

Welcome to Court End!

This residential neighborhood flourished following the move of the state capital from Williamsburg to Richmond and the completion of the Virginia State Capitol building in 1788. Court End took its name from its proximity to the court building. With all three branches of government nearby during the 19th century, many professionals chose to live close to the action.

1 The Wickham House | EAST CLAY AND 11TH STREETS

This house, built for John and Elizabeth Wickham in 1812, was designed by architect Alexander Parris, who was in town to design the Governor's mansion. Fun fact: the Wickham's house was much more opulent than the Governor's mansion and cost twice as much! This Neoclassical structure was inhabited by the Wickham's, their 19 children and more than 15 enslaved African Americans. Labor provided by the enslaved workforce enabled the Wickham's to live a lavish lifestyle like many wealthy White Southerners at the time.

In 1882, entrepreneur Mann S. Valentine II purchased the property and displayed his archaeological and ethnographic collections here. In 1898, the house became the first home of the Valentine Museum. Visit thevalentine.org for a virtual tour!

Directly across the street is the Maupin Maury House, 1016 East Clay Street.

2 Maupin Maury House | 1016 EAST CLAY STREET

This Greek Revival house was originally located at 1105 East Clay Street and was built in 1846 by Dr. Socrates Maupin, a founder of the medical department of Hampden-Sydney College that later became the Medical College of Virginia, now Virginia Commonwealth Medical Center.

Turn right on Clay and walk to the White House of the Confederacy, 1201 East Clay Street.

3 The White House of the Confederacy | 1201 EAST CLAY STREET

Dr. John Brockenborough, President of the Bank of Virginia, built this home in 1818.

Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, resided here from 1861-1865. Union forces seized the home on April 3, 1865 and Abraham Lincoln briefly visited the following day. The U.S. government held the property until 1870 when it became a public school. In 1893, it was acquired by the Confederate Memorial Literary Society to serve as a museum of Confederate memorabilia, now part of the American Civil War Museum.

Backtrack on Clay and cross 11th Street. Turn left on 11th Street and walk to the intersection with Marshall Street.

4 Stephen Putney and Samuel Putney Houses | 1010 and 1012 EAST MARSHALL STREET

The two-tiered, cast-iron veranda on the Stephen Putney House was produced locally by Phoenix Iron Works, an ambitious example of domestic ironwork in a city famed for cast iron. Ironwork was Virginia's third major industry behind tobacco and flour, principally due to the industrial slavery of Black skilled laborers.

Today part of the Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center campus, these homes were originally built in 1859. From 1862-1894, they were the residences of Samuel and Stephen Putney, father and son shoe manufacturers of Battle Axe Shoes.

Directly across 11th Street, is the site on which Congregation Beth Ahabah founded Richmond's first Jewish school in 1846 and built its first synagogue in 1848. Members of the Jewish community were working in the Virginia Territory as early as 1650, and by the 1760s, they began to settle in Richmond. In 1789, Jewish residents numbered about 100 of the city's 3,700 residents.

Turn left on on Marshall Street and continue to the South side of the street one block to the Egyptian Building.

5 The Egyptian Building | 1223 EAST MARSHALL STREET

Built in 1845, this is the first permanent home of the VCU Medical Center, and it is considered one of the finest examples of Egyptian Revival architecture. The Egyptian style was chosen because the origins of modern medicine can be traced back to Egypt. The building was designed by architect Thomas Stewart. As you pass, check out the fence outside the Egyptian Building and keep an eye out for decorative mummy casings with adorable mummy toes!

Take a left on College Street. Continue to the corner of Broad and College streets.

6 Randolph Minor Hall / First African Baptist Church | 301 COLLEGE STREET

First Baptist Church was founded in 1780. The early church ministered a mixed-race congregation. In the mid-1800s, the congregation separated and the white members moved two blocks up the street. State law required that an all-white committee oversee the Black congregation and a white minister serve as pastor. However, after the fall of the Confederacy, Dr. James H. Holmes was elected the first Black pastor in 1867, serving for thirty-two years. This building was built in 1876; in 1953, the church relocated and the building was sold to VCU Medical Center.

Turn right on Broad Street and continue to Monumental Church.

7 Monumental Church | 1224 EAST BROAD STREET

On the day after Christmas 1811, a theatre on this site was destroyed by a terrible fire. 71 people, mostly women and children, were killed in the tragedy, including the Governor of Virginia. Fatalities might have been greater if not for acts of heroism from such people as Dr. James D. McCaw, who lowered a dozen women from windows into the waiting arms of Gilbert Hunt, an enslaved blacksmith. The remains of the dead, including enslaved individuals who died in the fire, are buried together in a crypt underneath the altar of Monumental Church, which was erected as a memorial to the victims. Monumental Church was designed by America's first native-born architect, Robert Mills. A marble monument on the church's portico bears the names of those who were lost in the fire.

Continue west on Broad Street to the corner of Broad and 12th streets.

8 Hunton Student Center / First Baptist Church | 1110 EAST BROAD STREET

This Greek Revival building was completed in 1841 for the white congregation that split from the original First Baptist Church. The building was designed by architect Thomas Walter. VCU purchased the building in 1939 and in the 1940s, it became their student social center.

Cross Broad Street onto Governor's Street. Make your first right and enter the Capitol Grounds on the left. The Executive Mansion will be on your left.

9 Virginia Executive Mansion | CAPITOL SQUARE

The Governor's mansion was designed by architect Alexander Parris in the Federal style and was completed in 1813 at the cost of roughly \$20,000. It is the oldest continually occupied Governor's mansion in the country.

Exit the Capitol Grounds from the same gate you entered and return to Broad Street. Make a left and continue down Broad Street to 11th Street to Old City Hall. Cross to the south side of Broad Street for a great view of Old City Hall.

10 Old City Hall | 1001 EAST BROAD STREET

Built in 1886 from James River granite, Old City Hall is considered a masterpiece of Victorian Gothic design, noticeable in the arched windows and doorways. Asa Snyder, a master of cast iron architecture, designed a three story painted cast iron atrium for the ornate interior. With the completion of a new City Hall in 1971, Old City Hall closed its doors and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1969.

Continue west on Broad Street to the corner of Broad and 10th streets.

11 City Hall | 900 EAST BROAD STREET

Once the tallest building in Richmond, New City Hall, as many Richmonder's call it, boasts a wonderful observation deck on the 18th floor with a 360-degree view of the city, accessible anytime City Hall is open.

Continue on Broad Street, make a right on 9th Street and continue to the corner of 9th and Marshall streets.

12 John Marshall House | 818 EAST MARSHALL STREET

John Marshall served as Chief Justice on the Supreme Court from 1801-1835 and his influential decisions, such as *Marbury v. Madison*, helped shape the principle of judicial review. Marshall is credited with establishing the Supreme Court's role in the federal government.

Marshall had his home built in 1790 and lived here for forty-five years until his death. The home remained in the Marshall family until the Chief Justice's granddaughters sold the land to the City of Richmond in 1907. In 1911 to avoid demolition, it was placed in the care of Preservation Virginia to be restored and opened to the public.

Turn right on Marshall Street. Continue one block East and turn left on 10th Street. Make your first right on Clay Street.

13 Decatur Davis House | 1001 EAST CLAY STREET

As you turn onto Clay Street, notice how residential the street still looks. The 1000 block of East Clay Street is an excellent representation of how Court End would have appeared in the late-19th century. The Decatur Davis House was built in 1879 and designed by the architect Albert Lawrence West. Today, the house serves as the administrative offices of the Valentine Museum.

Continue down Clay Street.

14 Leigh House & William H. Grant House | 1000 EAST CLAY STREET & 1008 EAST CLAY STREET

Both the Leigh and Grant houses are representative of homes built in early-19th century Court End: big, square and right on the street, with details in the Italianate architectural style. After being residences, both homes eventually became part of Sheltering Arms Hospital now part of VCU.

15 The Valentine / Bransford-Cecil House | 1015 EAST CLAY STREET

Frederick Bransford, a commission merchant and tobacconist, originally built this imposing Greek Revival style house around 1840 on North 5th Street. The Valentine Museum purchased the house in 1954 and moved it to its present location to prevent its demolition. Next door is the Valentine Annex. These three townhouses were built around 1870 as investment properties. In 1938, they were bought and remodeled to display the Valentine Museum's collection.

This completes your Court End neighborhood walk. We hope you enjoyed exploring this historic part of Richmond!

Explore More 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.

1015 East Clay Street, Richmond, VA

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