Virginia Persons of Note in LGBTQ History: Part 1

During the summer of 2015, VCU student Emily Buss compiled a list of persons associated with Virginia’s LGBTQ heritage from the 19th century to the early 21st century. A brief biographical note explains each individual’s contributions. A bibliography of sources used to compile this information is provided at the end of the list.

Keri Abrams is a mechanic who also counsels transgender people, as she is a male to female transgender herself who understands internally what it means to be transgender.

Hunter “Patch” Adams, as a twenty-three year old sophomore at the Medical College of Virginia, wrote what may have been the first written protest against anti-gay action in Richmond to the Richmond Times Dispatch on March 24, 1969, after the Virginia Board of Alcohol and Beverage Control’s decision to revoke the alcohol license for Renee’s and Rathskeller’s, both owned by Robert Gene Baldwin. He wrote, “I find myself too humble to be presumptuous enough to think I’m more deserving a beer than a homosexual is. I’m afraid that in the atomic powered age, I feel no safer drinking with heterosexuals, especially those harboring paranit (sic) of the homosexuals in the next booth.”

Carl Archacki became involved with Dignity/Integrity, where he served as Vice President and President of the Richmond chapter, and the Sexual Minorities Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond. He helped establish the National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian and Gay Ministries.

Grace Arents used the wealth from her uncle to benefit the poor, as she worked for social justice in Richmond. She gave generous donations to the Grace Arents’ Free Public Library, the Arents’ Public School (now St. Andrew’s School), and St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church. She sold her uncle’s house at 901 West Franklin, and moved to the north of Richmond to Bloemendaal house to live with her close companion, Mary Garland Smith. Her will provided that one-third of her fortune would go to Smith and allowed her to live in Bloemendaal house until she died, when the property would transfer to the City of Richmond to be used as a formal, public garden named after her uncle.

Butch Chilton edited the Gap Rap, the first newspaper for the gay community of Richmond.

Dr. Waverly Cole and Dr. John Cook, partners in philanthropy, were the first gay couple to live openly in the City of Richmond. In 1985, they established the first AIDS Fund to care for young Virginian victims of HIV. They have become charter members and supporters of organizations dedicated to improving the lives and equality of members of the LGBTQ
community, such as Equality Virginia, ROSMY, Lambda Legal, Human Rights Campaign, Servicemembers Legal Defense Fund, and GLSEN.

**Dr. Donnie Conner** is a marriage and family counselor in Virginia, using his experience as a caseworker with troubled youth to meet the mental health needs of Richmond’s gay community. He and two partners formed Commonwealth Professional Services in the mid-1980s as a self-identified “gay practice.” The practice specializes in serving HIV-positive clients. He also helped launch the Richmond AIDS Information Network and began seeing patients at the Fan Free Clinic. He was surprised along with his professional partner, Stephen Lenton, to first and foremost to be nominated and then win the Humanitarian Award from the American Counseling Association. More honors and awards were to follow from other institutions in the years to come. Dr. Conner became an expert in the needs of drug-addicted HIV patients. He also counseled gay youth on coming out. The first meeting of the Richmond Organization for Sexual Minority Youth (ROSMY) took place in his practice’s group room, and he later served on their board. He became the Virginia Board of Professional Counseling’s first openly gay member.

**Adam Ebbin** became the first openly gay member of Virginia’s General Assembly when he was elected in 2003. He was a founder of the Virginia Partisans Gay and Lesbian Democratic Club in the early 1990s.

**Jay Fisette** was the first openly gay elected official in Virginia history, when he was elected to the Arlington County Board in 1997.

**Bruce Garnett** was the first openly gay man to lobby the General Assembly for LGBTQ rights. Garnett along with Neal Parsons confronted Anita Bryant together questioning her beliefs. Garnett managed to get by security wearing a “Gay and Proud” t-shirt under his suit coat. He displayed his shirt to her upon meeting her. She signed a business card for Garnette and a $5 bill for Parsons. On both items, she wrote “Phil 4:13” referring to a Bible verse, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

**Claire Guthrie Gastañaga** is an advocate for LGBTQ Virginians at Equality Virginia. She encouraged the establishment of Equality Virginia’s OUTstanding Virginians program to help Virginians get to know more people who happen to be LGBTQ.

**Lewis Ginter** was Richmond’s premiere tobacco mogul, neighborhood developer, and philanthropist. During the era he lived, it was acceptable for two men to be in the company of each other, although these relationships were not always sexual. He adopted John Pope, and they were almost always together, as neither ever got married.
Ellen Glasgow earned the Pulitzer Prize in 1942 for *In This World Our Life*. She was part of the Richmond literary circle. She never married, but she had many close relationships with women. Anne Virginia Bennett was a companion of hers for 30 years. She also kept the company of Radclyffe Hall, author of one of the earliest lesbian novels. Her family bought a home in 1887, and it served as a meeting place for the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia.

Michael Gooding created the only full-time professional theater in the mid-Atlantic region dealing with LGBTQ concerns, the Richmond Triangle Players. He met Steve Earle, a local actor who struggled with the lack of opportunities for gay theater in Richmond. Michael found Steve a place to produce his work first at an evening of one-act plays to benefit local AIDS causes on the top floor of a local gay club. The show was a hit, and Michael’s mission of staging theater for the LGBTQ community launched.

Reverend Edward Meeks “Pope” Gregory fought racism and advocated for racial and sexual equality in Richmond. He held the first gay marriage ceremony in August 1978 in Virginia on the lawn of St. Peter’s Church in Richmond. He was the advisor to homosexuals through Dignity/Integrity, a national organization with a chapter in Richmond, sponsored by his Episcopal diocese and the Catholic Diocese of Richmond.

Billy Haines was the first openly gay Hollywood actor during the silent movie era. He lived in Richmond before becoming a famous actor. His movie, *West Point*, with Joan Crawford was the first to be shown at Loew’s Theater (the Carpenter Center).

William Hall was the first openly gay officer of Dominion (then Virginia Power). When he retired in 2013 as Vice President of Executive Communication, he became active in efforts for bettering healthcare for AIDS and public acceptance. He helped lead the capital campaign for a new Fan Free Clinic building in Richmond. He then became a board member and chair of Equality Virginia, fighting for hospital access rights, appointment of gay judges, and marriage equality.

Greta Harris runs the region’s largest housing nonprofit, the Richmond-based Better Housing Coalition.

Ted Heck, himself a female to male transgender, has a career in public health advancing in transgender services. He has worked for the Virginia Department of Health as an HIV Prevention Contract Monitor. He has worked on implementing a Transgender Health Initiative Survey and developing a Clinicians Guide to Transgender Risk Assessment and a Transgender Resource and Referral for Virginia. He also offers provider training on transgender issues and publishes the *Virginia Transgender Health Newsletter*. 
**Willoughby Ions and Adele Clark** worked to improve women’s rights, child labor legislation, and the formal arts in Richmond. The two were cousins, and they lived together in Clark’s residence on Chamberlayne Avenue after her companion, Nora Houston, who she met at the Art School of Richmond, died. The two were artists, and Willoughby Ions has work displayed in the National Gallery of Art.

**Karla Jay**, author and gay rights activist, was the keynote speaker at the First Gay Rights Rally.

**Dr. Lisa Kaplowitz** is a leading activist for AIDS care in help and legislation. She helped develop the first state-funded HIV/AIDS testing location as well as several HIV/AIDS clinics. As the first Director of the HIV/AIDS Center at VCU, she established new health care and public health programs, as she directed the program for 20 years.

**Guy M. Kinman, Jr.** is a longtime Richmond-based LGBTQ activist who in the 1980s, as president of the Richmond Virginia Gay Alliance, initiated the Billboard Project, inspired by a similar act in the Lynchburg/Roanoke area, to educate the Richmond community about LGBTQ issues. One of the more famous billboards stated: “Someone You Know Is Gay…Maybe Someone You Love.”

**Jon Klein** established the Richmond Organization for Sexual Minority Youth (ROSMY) and founded Diversity Thrift. He has donated thousands of dollars to LGBTQ and other worthy non-profit organizations. He also started the Richmond Street Outreach Project, with which he and other volunteers went out at night to inform men on the street of safe sex practices to protect themselves from contracting AIDS. The project also had more experienced workers who brought assistance to drug users.

**Stephen Lenton** was the Assistant Dean of Students at Virginia Commonwealth University. He was also a key activist in gay rights who helped start the Gay Alliance of Students and then risked his job fighting alongside students in the court case *Gay Alliance of Students v. Matthews, et al*, which won LGBTQ student groups the same rights as other student groups on campus. He was also involved in the Gay Rights Association, GAP, and RAM. He left the university to become a private counselor. As a devout Catholic, he also served on many parish committees, such as the Richmond diocese’s Sexual Minorities Commission.

**Rodney Lofton** established a retreat for people with HIV/AIDS called Transformation Retreats, and the name of the organization is The Renewal Projects. Before he started the organization, he worked for a theater group that taught HIV prevention to teens.
Elizabeth Marschak, author, historian, and activist, was the first openly lesbian women to lobby the General Assembly for LGBTQ rights. She worked with Womensbooks, the Richmond Lesbian Feminists, which she helped co-found with Stephanie Myers, the Human Rights Coalition, the Women’s Political Caucus at the state and national levels, on the board of the YWCA, and the Richmond Lesbian and Gay Pride Coalition. In 1988, she served as the first out Virginia delegate to a national presidential convention. She has won a multitude of awards for her work and advocacy. With Alex Lorch, she co-authored the book, Lesbian and Gay Richmond (2008). On November 1, 2008, she conducted the first ever bus tour featuring the history of Richmond’s LGBTQ community for the Valentine Richmond History Center.

Neal Parsons helped form Richmond’s Gay Rights Association. Meetings were held at his home at 1406 Floyd Avenue in Richmond.

Kenneth Pederson, VCU alumni, offered up his home as the meeting place for the Gay Liberation Front, formed in 1971. He was the unofficial leader of the organization. The group sponsored two dances at the String Factory in 1971.

Jude Proctor and Brian Burns started “The Rainbow Minute” radio show shortly after the 2004 Presidential election because they were upset over the way that gay marriage had been used as a political scare tactic, and they wanted the public to become more aware. They decided to tell the untold or forgotten stories of LGBTQ people on air. They were among the first legally married same-sex couples living in Virginia (after they were married in Massachusetts in 2006). Brian Burns also wrote a biography about Lewis Ginter.

Mary Wingfield Scott was an architectural historian who wrote two books on Richmond: Old Richmond Neighborhoods and Old Richmond. She owned property outside the city, in Wytheville, where she escaped with her companion, Virginia Reese Withers.

Jean Segner is a banking executive in Richmond. She became the director and then president of The Guild until it disbanded in 2004. She became active, through The Guild, in statewide political fundraising for LGBTQ-friendly candidates and against the Marriage Amendment. She became the first board member and then Interim Executive Director of Equality Virginia.

Tony Segura was the founder of the Mattachine Society in New York in the 1950s, the first national LGBTQ organization. He moved to Richmond in 1959, and was unsuccessful in starting a Mattachine chapter in Richmond. He was heavily involved in the early years of gay organizations in Richmond, such as founding the Richmond Gay Rights Association. During the 1970s, he was a writer for the Richmond Pride. His partner, Marsh Harris Segura, was an author of gay pulp fiction.
L.A. “Shep” Shepherd and Norma Hofheimer played an active role in the Women’s Political Caucus, Richmond Lesbian Feminists, and WomensBooks.

Jay Squires served as the President and CEO of the Gay Community Center of Richmond. He traveled around Virginia in the NoMobile rallying opposition to the Marshall-Newman Amendment.

Hunter Stagg, although unsure if he was gay, became very successful through his work on the Reviewer. He had two houses where he would throw large parties that attracted the era’s most famous authors. Avant-garde and gay writers shared ideas with him at these “salons.” He even invited Langston Hughes, emerging poet of the Harlem Renaissance whose poetry hints at homosexuality, to a party at his home the night before he spoke at the Virginia Union University Chapel on November 19, 1926, which may have been the school’s first interracial social gathering.

Gertrude Stein visited Richmond with her partner, Alice B. Toklas, and Carl Van Vechten, one of the best writers of the 1920s. She spoke at the University of Richmond and the Richmond Women’s Club.

Mary Dallas Street, one of the four co-founders of the Reviewer and the only one of the four to publish a novel, made no secret of her homosexuality. Her parents left her with enough money to live on her own. She drove a pale-blue Packard. Her love interest was Gertrude Maxton Lewis, a teacher at Miss Jennie’s School. Only those who frequented her parties at 815 Franklin Street knew of their relationship.

Bishop Walter Sullivan formed the Sexual Minorities Commission to provide inclusivity in religious organizations.

Tracy Thorne-Begland is a judge on the General District Court of Richmond, Virginia (appointed in 2012). He was the first openly gay jurist elected by the Virginia General Assembly. After graduating, he served in a jet combat squadron for the United States Navy. In 1992, he appeared on Nightline where he came out as gay. He was discharged from the service. He took up an interest in law and obtained a law degree from the University of Richmond, serving as a prosecutor for 12 years in Richmond. He served for a time on the board of Equity Virginia, a gay rights advocacy organization located in Richmond.

Carl Van Vechten allowed news of his secret that he was gay to be released through personal correspondence made public after his death. He corresponded with a number of Richmonders
through his friendship with James Branch Cabell, including Hunter Stagg (co-founder of the *Reviewer*) and Ellen Glasgow.

**Lawrence Webb** was the first openly gay black elected official in Virginia when he was elected Falls Church City Council member in 2008.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**Books**


**Online encyclopedia**
OutHistory - [http://www.outhistory.org/exhibits/show/rainbow-richmond](http://www.outhistory.org/exhibits/show/rainbow-richmond)

**Articles**
GayRVA

Style Weekly

Equality Virginia
“OUTstanding Virginians” recognized from 2009-2014

**Repositories**
The Valentine Richmond History Center, Richmond, VA.

Virginia Commonwealth University, VCU Libraries, Special Collections.
[http://www.library.vcu.edu/research/special-collections/university-archives/](http://www.library.vcu.edu/research/special-collections/university-archives/)

Guy Kinman, Jr. box includes flyers and newspaper clippings about gay men in the military.

Richmond Lesbian and Gay Pride Coalition box includes flyers and Gayellow Pages.
Pope Gregory box includes photographs, copies of *The Voice* newsletter, publications, and newspaper clippings.

Carl Archacki box includes newspaper clippings, photographs from multiple years of March on Washington and fundraising events such as the Human Rights Campaign, flyers for the annual mass at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.

Gay Alliance of Students box includes court documents, magazine and newspaper clippings, photographs, and fundraising events such as ChaCha Palace.

ROSMY box includes published news, memorabilia, and posters.

Fan Free Clinic box includes photographs, newspaper clippings, and memorabilia.

**Documentaries and Films**

“Out and About” special on Richmond Triangle Players

**Interview with Biff Downy by Emily Buss**

Mr. Downy provided information about many gay-friendly establishments in Richmond in the 1970-1980s and explained that many were open one day and closed the next because the Virginia ABC Board revoked the license of many establishments for serving alcohol to homosexuals.
Virginia Persons of Note in LGBTQ History: Part 2

Additional research by DHR staff has identified the following persons important to Virginia’s LGBTQ heritage. Hyperlinks to online source materials are provided with each biographical entry. This list is a work-in-progress, and will be periodically updated as additional information becomes available. Please report broken links to lena.mcdonald@dhr.virginia.gov.

20th Century
Sharon Bottoms

http://www.advocate.com/arts-entertainment/advocate-45/2012/08/22/court-cases-changed-our-world

Bottoms v. Bottoms, the landmark 1993 ruling by a Virginia judge that denied a lesbian custody of her biological son because her sexual orientation made her “unfit” as a parent, focused national media attention on same-sex-headed families. The court battle was a crucial early test of legal equality and gay parents’ rights. In Bottoms v. Bottoms, custody of Tyler Doustou was awarded not to his mother, Sharon Bottoms, but to his grandmother, Kay Bottoms, who was “sickened” by the fact that her daughter was a lesbian and had had a commitment ceremony with another woman, April Wade. Numerous witnesses testified that Sharon, a grocery store cashier at the time, was a good mother; Sharon’s ex-husband, Dennis Doustou, even testified on her behalf, later telling reporters that Kay was “totally wrong” to take Tyler from his mother. Sharon also testified that her mother’s live-in boyfriend had molested her as a child.

Still, Judge Buford Parsons forced Sharon to explain on the witness stand what lesbians do in bed, and then Parsons ruled that Sharon was an unfit mother because she and Wade had oral sex, illegal in Virginia at the time. Sharon was given two days a week of visitation with Tyler, but he was not allowed in Sharon’s home and not allowed to have any contact with Wade, with whom he had already bonded.

The ruling galvanized gay activists — many of them lesbian moms like Sharon — who held stroll-ins (rallies with empty baby strollers) and protests in Virginia and outside the state. While Sharon became the unexpected poster child for gay custody issues, she wasn’t the first lesbian seeking custody of her child. In 1972, Camille Mitchell of San Jose, Calif., became the country’s first acknowledged lesbian to win custody of her children. The victory came in divorce proceedings against her husband of 15 years. Sharon’s case resonated, though, because of the ordinariness of Sharon and Wade, two working-class women who wanted the American dream more than they sought headlines and activist mantles.

A year later an appeals court ruled in Sharon’s favor, overturning Parsons’s verdict. Sadly, in 1995, the Virginia Supreme Court took on the case, ruling in favor of the grandmother, citing that Sharon and Wade’s relationship involved “fondling” and “oral sex” and concluding that “the record shows a mother who, although devoted to her son, refuses to subordinate her own desires and priorities to the child’s welfare.” The court also ruled that “living daily under conditions stemming from active lesbianism practiced in the home may impose a burden upon a child by reason of the ‘social condemnation’ attached to such an arrangement, which will inevitably afflict the child’s relationships with its ‘peers and with the community at large.’”

Media attention around the case, though, helped move courts and advocates on lesbian custody
issues. Bottoms’s story because a TV movie, *Two Moms for Zachary*, and though she never regained custody of her son (she was granted very limited visitation), there was significant movement on custody issues following the case. In 1970, in only 1% of contested cases involving the children of a lesbian and a straight husband was custody awarded to the gay parent.

Son of the Chrysler Corporation founder. In 1971, he donated his vast art collection to the Norfolk (Virginia) Academy of Arts and Sciences (which was immediately renamed Chrysler Museum of Art). Outed by *Confidential* magazine in 1956, Chrysler apparently was known to have been gay in at least some circles since the 1930s. He had two opposite-sex marriages; his second wife was from Norfolk and thus provided Chrysler’s connection to the city. [http://gayinfluence.blogspot.com/search/label/Walter%20P.%20Chrysler%20Jr.](http://gayinfluence.blogspot.com/search/label/Walter%20P.%20Chrysler%20Jr.)

**Julian Wood Glass, Jr. (____-1992)**
From the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley website ([http://themsv.org/julian-wood-glass-jr-1](http://themsv.org/julian-wood-glass-jr-1)): MSV benefactor Julian Wood Glass Jr. was a descendent of Mary and James Wood, who settled the site now called Glen Burnie in the late 1730s and founded the city of Winchester—then called Frederick Town—in 1744. Julian and his half-sister, Sunny, grew up in Nowata, Oklahoma, where their father had moved from Winchester and achieved financial success in the oil industry. The Glass family enjoyed a gracious lifestyle that exposed Julian to European travel and the arts.

As a young boy, Julian saved his allowance to buy art. This collecting passion continued throughout his life. He eventually amassed a significant collection of English and American paintings and decorative arts. He displayed his collection in his homes in Oklahoma and New York, as well as in Glen Burnie, which he acquired in the 1950s. A gay man, Julian Glass at the time was in a committed relationship with R. Lee Taylor, whom he met in New York City in 1947. In the late 1950s, Julian, aided by Lee, undertook an extensive renovation of the Glen Burnie House, which by then was in serious disrepair. The couple turned the house into a showplace and surrounded it with six acres of formal gardens.

The men’s relationship dissolved in the 1970s. However, Julian continued to use Glen Burnie as a retreat in which to entertain. Lee lived in a small apartment in the house and managed the site. Prior to his death in 1992, Julian established the Glass–Glen Burnie Foundation to assure that his collection, Glen Burnie, and nearby Rose Hill—the Glass ancestral homestead—would be preserved for public enjoyment. The Glen Burnie Historic House and Gardens opened in 1997, with Lee Taylor as curator of gardens until his death in 2000. In 2005, the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley opened on the site, and today it presents Julian’s impressive collection through changing exhibitions on a variety of topics.

**William “Billy” Haynes**
Born in Staunton, Virginia, on January 1, 1900, Billy Haynes briefly operated a dance hall in Hopewell during the 1910s. Haynes went on to have a successful acting career in Hollywood and appeared in 50 movies, apparently while living as openly gay. He later switched to a very successful career in interior design. He died in 1973. [http://gayinfluence.blogspot.com/search/label/William%20Haines](http://gayinfluence.blogspot.com/search/label/William%20Haines)
**Frank McCarthy (1912-1986)**
Film producer Frank McCarthy was the life partner of publicist Rupert Allan. A retired brigadier general who had served with General George C. Marshall, in 1945 McCarthy became the youngest ever appointed Assistant Secretary of State. He won an Oscar in 1970 for producing the movie *Patton*. McCarthy was an alumnus of Virginia Military Institute (graduated 1933) and taught English at VMI for a while before becoming a reporter. His wartime papers (1941-1949) are at VMI’s George C. Marshall Research Foundation.

http://gayinfluence.blogspot.com/search/label/Frank%20McCarthy

**Rob Morris**
Architect, designer, and builder Rob Morris is noted for co-authoring *House and Home* (1996) with Congressman (and his then-partner) Steve Gunderson. Morris’s firm is based in McLean.

http://gayinfluence.blogspot.com/search/label/Rob%20Morris

**Pauli Murray**
Pauli Murray was a civil rights and women’s rights activist, lawyer, educator, author and poet, and the first African-American woman to become an Episcopal priest. Born in Baltimore, Murray was raised in Durham by her aunt, Pauline Fitzgerald Dame, and her maternal grandparents. She graduated with distinction from Hillside High School and received an undergraduate degree from Hunter College in New York. In 1944 she graduated first in her class from Howard Law School, where she first encountered sexism. She received a masters of law from the University of California at Berkeley, and in 1965 she became the first African American to earned a doctorate in law from Yale. She was denied admission to the social work program at the University of North Carolina in 1938 because of her race, and to Harvard, because of her gender.

Murray was arrested and jailed in March 1940 for refusing to sit at the back of a bus in Virginia and participated in lunch counter sit-ins in Washington during her time at Howard. In 1950 she published *States’ Laws on Race and Color*, which Thurgood Marshall called “the Bible for civil rights lawyers.” The NAACP used some of her arguments in arguing the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education case that declared separate schools for blacks and whites unconstitutional. In 1956 Murray published *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family*, a biography of her grandparents and of her life as a child in Durham. In 1963 she became one of the first to criticize the sexism in the Civil Rights Movement. She taught at Brandeis University from 1968 to 1973 and was a founder of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in the early 1970s. In 1977 Murray performed her first service at the Chapel of the Cross in Chapel Hill, where her grandmother, a slave, had been baptized and had worshipped. In 2012 she was named a saint in the Episcopal Church.

Murray was a brilliant, complex, driven woman, and a friend of many of the most prominent people of her day, including First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Murray declared that “One person plus one typewriter constitutes a movement” and spent her life proving the truth of it.
Additional information about Pauli Murray:
https://www.law.berkeley.edu/9199.htm
https://paulimurrayproject.org/pauli-murray/timeline/
http://www.salon.com/2015/02/18/black_queer_feminist_erased_from_history_meet_the_most_important_legal_scholar_youve_likely_never_heard_of/
http://today.duke.edu/2012/07/saintmurray

George Quaintance (1902-1957)
George Quantaince was born and grew up in northwest Virginia, and began studying art in New York City by age 18. He is best known for homoerotic art, particularly paintings.
http://gayinfluence.blogspot.com/search/label/George%20Quaintance

Randolph Scott
Born in Orange County, VA in 1898, Randolph Scott was briefly married to Marion DuPont (owner of Montpelier at the time). Among the most prominent movie stars of the mid-20th century, Scott was a reputed romantic partner of Cary Grant.
http://gayinfluence.blogspot.com/search/label/Randolph%20Scott

R. Lee Taylor (1924-2000)
From the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley website (http://themsv.org/r-lee-taylor): Born on a Tennessee farm, R. Lee Taylor served in the U.S. Army during World War II. He moved to New York City after that, and there in 1947, he met Julian Wood Glass Jr. This began a 20-year relationship between the two gay men. In 1955, when Julian Wood Glass Jr. acquired his ancestral home, Glen Burnie, Lee aided in its extensive renovation. He also helped research the fine and decorative arts that Julian was collecting. By 1960, Lee had moved into the Glen Burnie House on a full-time basis to manage the site and create its surrounding gardens. The relationship between Lee and Julian dissolved in the 1970s. However, Lee continued to live in the Glen Burnie House and serve as site manager. Julian divided his time between his homes in Oklahoma, New York, and Glen Burnie, in which he enjoyed entertaining family and friends.

During those times, the relationship between the two men was strained, but their mutual regard for the house and gardens allowed the arrangement to work. Just before Julian’s death in 1992, the two men reconciled. The site opened as a museum five years later, with Lee Taylor then serving as curator of gardens and continuing to live in the upstairs section of the house. Beginning in the late 1970s, during the winter months Lee Taylor began creating a collection of miniature houses and rooms that were furnished in exact detail. Eventually he had 14 houses and
rooms, furnished with some 4,000 exquisite objects that represented more than 70 of the leading miniaturists of the day. R. Lee Taylor died in 2000, and his will bequeathed this miniatures collection to the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley. Today it is on permanent display in the R. Lee Taylor Miniatures Gallery. Many believe that Lee’s miniature of the Glen Burnie House—on view in the Glen Burnie House—is the masterpiece of his collection. Lee Taylor’s ashes are interred in a wall of the Glen Burnie Family Cemetery.