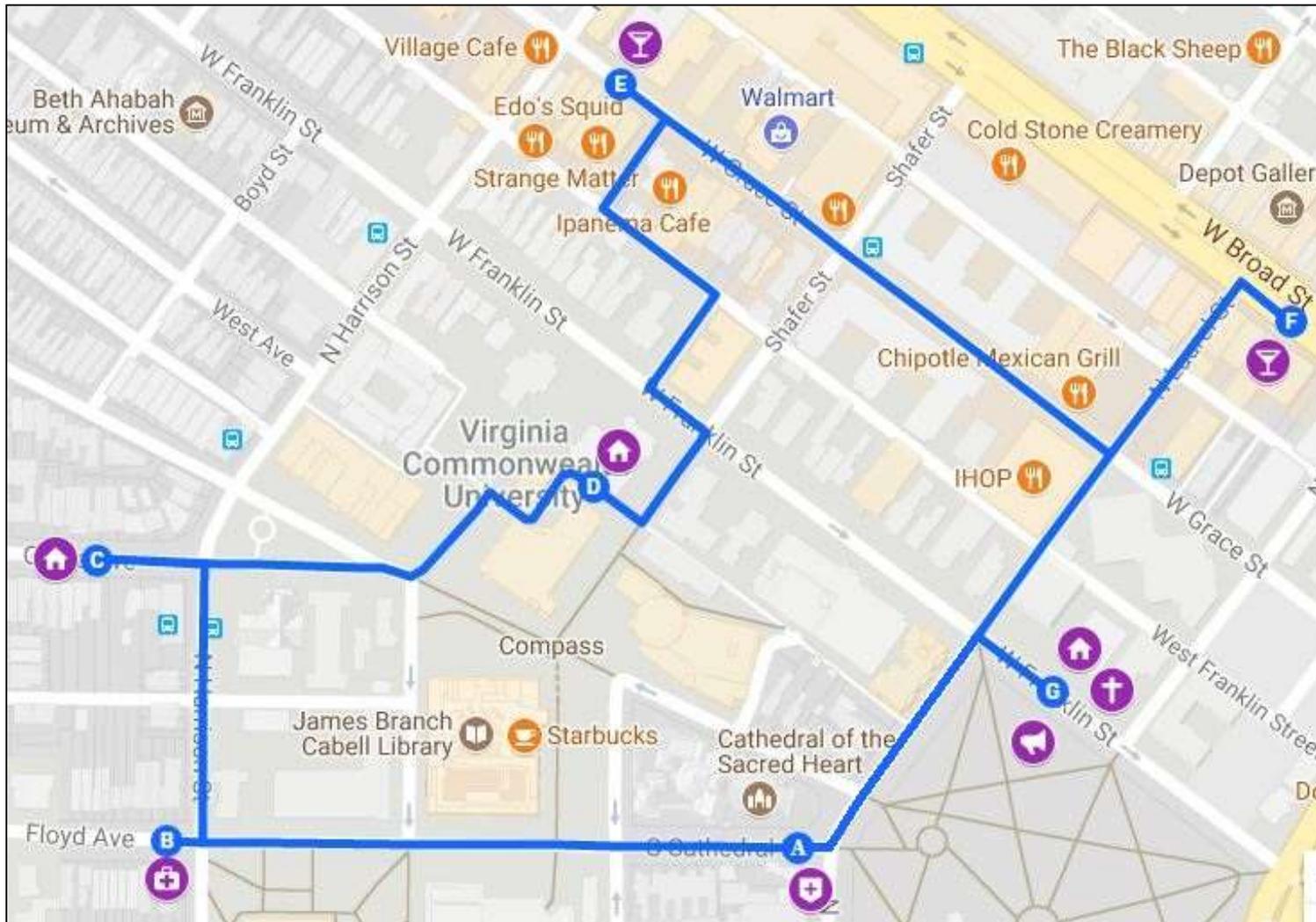


Virginia Commonwealth University Area LGBTQ History Walking Tour



Many significant events associated with Richmond's LGBTQ past occurred on or near the campus of Virginia Commonwealth University. The seven sites on this tour include LGBTQ-associated places dating from the Victorian period to the late twentieth century. The route covers 1.25 miles and takes approximately 40 minutes to complete a full circuit.

For more information on these and other topics related to Virginia's LGBTQ history, please visit our website:

<https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/survey-planning/lgbtq-heritage-in-virginia/>

A**Dignity USA, Richmond Chapter, 16 N. Laurel Street**

The local chapter of the pro-LGBTQ rights Catholic organization Dignity USA began at this address in 1989. Only steps from the neighboring Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, the chapter was not permitted to meet on Catholic property following a 1986 Vatican Letter banning groups opposed to the church teachings.

B**Fan Free Clinic, 1103 Floyd Avenue**

The First Unitarian Universalist Church opened the Fan Free Clinic in 1970. While the clinic initially focused on women's health, the Fan Free Clinic later became a primary clinic for HIV/AIDS care. The clinic continues to serve local LGBTQ residents today.

C**Kenneth Pederson Residence, 1100 Block of Grove Avenue**

VCU Alumni Kenneth Pederson, who lived on the 1100 block of Grove, led the local chapter of the Gay Liberation Front in the early 1970s. Organized in the wake of the 1969 Stonewall Inn Riots in New York, the Richmond branch of the Gay Liberation Front passed out leaflets aimed at destigmatizing same-sexuality and organized several events at nearby LGBTQ-friendly establishments. Pederson was later expelled from VCU for giving a guest lecture on LGBTQ issues at the School of Social Work.

D**Lewis Ginter House, 901 W. Franklin Street**

This imposing dwelling, which now houses administrative offices for VCU, was built in 1888 by tobacco magnate Major Lewis Ginter. As one of the city's wealthiest citizens, Ginter committed himself to improving Richmond through both widespread philanthropy and significant real estate ventures including the Ginter Park neighborhood and the Jefferson Hotel. Ginter shared his business and personal ventures with his partner of several decades, John Pope. Though never overtly romantic, Ginter and Pope's commitment and affection for one another was well-known among Richmond's Victorian-era elite.

E**Eton's, 224 E. Broad Street**

Eton's opened in 1962 and was one of several LGBTQ bars operating in close proximity to the Richmond Professional Institution (later renamed Virginia Commonwealth University). At this time, both the university and the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control office maintained strict regulations against establishments that served or employed gay men. Police frequently raided LGBTQ-friendly establishments. Eton's shut down in 1967 following one such raid.

F**Cha Cha Club, 719 W. Broad Street**

The Cha Cha Club opened in 1975 as a LGBTQ-oriented nightclub. Two doors down, a counter culture bar called The String Factory frequently hosted dances for queer VCU students. With its high concentration of LGBTQ establishments, the area roughly bound by Broad Street and W. Grace Street between the VCU campus and downtown Richmond became known as "The Block" and served as the center of gay subculture for much of the mid-20th century. Most patrons of venues like Cha Cha Club or The String Factory were white men; black queer Richmonders patronized bars in Jackson Ward and the East End, including Lulu's in Church Hill.

G**Monroe Park, Rhoads Hall, Pace Memorial United Methodist Church, Corner of W. Franklin Street and N. Pine Street**

Much of the early LGBTQ activism by VCU students occurred in shared campus spaces such as churches, academic buildings, and parks. After a speech by lesbian author Rita Mae Brown at Rhoads Hall in 1974, students formed the Gay Awareness in Perspectives (GAP) organization. The group met next door at Pace Memorial United Methodist Church and published the area's first LGBTQ-themed monthly newspaper, called the GAP Rap. Richmond's first organized gay rights rally occurred at Monroe Park on October 7, 1977, to protest a nearby concert by the adamantly anti-LGBTQ singer Anita Jane Bryant. The rally's keynote speech was given by author and activist Karla Jay. Lynn Frizzel performed his song "Hurricane Anita" poking fun at Bryant. Enthusiasm surrounding the protest led to the formation of the Richmond Gay Rights Association two weeks later.

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