



Historic Downtown Point Richmond



The mission of the Richmond Convention & Visitors Bureau is to develop and promote Richmond and its amenities as a destination, thereby contributing to our community's economic growth and enhancement of its public image.

The Richmond Convention & Visitors Bureau is here to assist those planning a convention, meeting, family reunion, or any other special event which may need accommodations or function facilities. If you are planning an event, call us at 510-307-4470 or toll free at 877-CVB-0060. We are located at 3925 Macdonald Avenue.

More information about Richmond's colorful history is available from the following resources:

Point Richmond History Association
139½ Washington Avenue
www.pointrichmondhistory.org 510-235-1336

Richmond Museum of History
400 Nevin Avenue
www.richmondmuseumofhistory.org 510-235-7387

Richmond Public Library Main Branch
325 Civic Center Plaza
www.richmondlibrary.org 510-620-6561

Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park
www.rosietheriveter.org 510-232-5050

S.S. Red Oak Victory
1337 Canal Blvd, Berth 6A
www.ssredoakvictory.org 510-237-2933

Train history buffs won't want to miss:

Golden State Model Railroad Museum
900 Dornan Drive
www.gsmrm.org 510-234-4884

Printing sponsored by
Richard Lompa

Graphic design by Spokewise
donated in fond memory of Paul Harlow—
Richmond's consummate walker.

Special thanks to
Andrew Butt, AIA, for the Point Richmond landmark sketches
Bonnie Jo Cullison, Archivist, Point Richmond History Association
and Donna Roselius, whose work was our historic reference

It's a perfect day for walking

HISTORIC POINT Richmond



HISTORIC DOWNTOWN POINT RICHMOND

A Short Walking Tour

Welcome to Point Richmond.¹ In the early 1800s, this area was part of the 1,700-acre Rancho San Pablo, a cattle and hay ranch owned by Don Francisco Castro. Prior to that, the land had been inhabited by American Indians for many thousands of years. By the late 1890s, 57 acres of Point Richmond and adjacent land were purchased by the San Francisco and San Joaquin Valley Railway which built a railroad. In 1900, the completed project was purchased by the Santa Fe Railroad. In 1901, the Pacific Coast Oil Company, which soon became the Standard Oil Company, began constructing a refinery here. Families of employees of both the refinery and the railroad formed much of the community of Point Richmond in its early years.

1 The first stop on this short tour is the Point Richmond History Museum, at 139½ Washington Avenue. This little building was originally situated at 139 West Richmond Avenue. Business started here in 1903 when J.Q. Black began his coal, wood, hay and grain delivery. In 1909 Robert Dornan and Art Whitesides bought out Black and operated the Richmond Supply Co. here for several decades until it expanded into 145 West Richmond. The last business to occupy this building was the Point Richmond Real Estate and Income Tax Service of Hazel Carr. In 1989, the building was scheduled to be demolished to make room for a new development, but due to quick and impressive community action, it was relocated to its present spot and lovingly restored to its original turn-of-the-century look. The building now houses the Point Richmond History Museum.

2 Heading north to the corner of Washington and Park Place is a small triangular park with a statue of an Indian. The original bronze Indian Statue stood atop an elaborate drinking fountain placed here by the Westside Women's Improvement Club (still active in Point Richmond) in 1909. In 1942, it was knocked over by an automobile, and the metal was salvaged for reuse during WWII. The base of the current statue was moved from another park in Richmond which was undergoing renovation, and a new Indian figure was paid for with funds raised by local residents and businesses.

3 Across the street, at 105 Park Place, is a building constructed prior to 1907. It was a grocery store continuously until 1955. The local Richmond Daily Independent newspaper was also published here. In 1955 it became home to the Richmond Community Theater Group. Today the Masquer's Playhouse offers outstanding performances.

4 Continuing south on Park Place, you'll pass a variety of store fronts that date back to the early 1900s. At 135 Park Place is The Baltic, a saloon and billiard hall which was built around 1904. Even during prohibition, The Baltic kept its bar open by serving soft drinks.

5 Right next door at 145 Park Place was Richmond's first firehouse and jail built in 1910. The firehouse was staffed for many years by a volunteer crew and was not a fully paid department until 1915. The Police Department, located behind the firehouse, consisted of four cells and a "drunk tank" which sometimes housed as many as 60 or 70 inebriated individuals. Eventually, the Police Dept. expanded into the adjoining building. In 1949 it moved to the Civic Center in downtown Richmond. If you peek in the window of the old jail, you can see the original cell bars and even some of the 'art' that was drawn on the walls by the 'patrons'.

6 Walk south on Park Place to its intersection with West Richmond, and continue east to the corner of Railroad Avenue and West Richmond. Across the tracks on the south side of West Richmond, you can see the Municipal Natatorium, known by decades of swimmers and non-swimmers alike as *The Plunge*. It was built in 1925 by John Nicholl who unsuccessfully drilled for oil on this lot. Having drilled to a depth of 1,232 feet and finding nothing but water - 250,000 gallons per day - he gave up his quest for oil and donated the land to the city for a swimming pool. Water from the well was mixed with salt water to provide swimming pleasure for many years. *The Plunge* remained one of the last great indoor aquatic emporiums until 2001 when it was deemed seismically unsafe. Today it is still closed awaiting funding for necessary repairs.

7 Before heading west on West Richmond, notice the black and white wig-wags. These old fashioned crossing signals may be the only working ones remaining in the country. They were recently replaced by modern crossing gates for daily use, but thanks to a tremendous effort by many residents, they remain operational and will be used on special occasions. This is where the railroad crossed the first street, and thus may be the historical center of Point Richmond. †

8 Proceed west on West Richmond toward Washington. At the southwest corner of Washington and West Richmond is the old Bank of Richmond building built in 1902. Above the bank were offices which housed, among others, the coroner, Dr. Abbott. In 1914, Dr. Abbott operated his Emergency Hospital here. Since the 1920s, the building has had many occupants, including Bank Club Billiards in the 1940s, and Sherry and Bob's, an apparel store located here for nearly 30 years. The exterior is being restored for new business. †

9 Next door to the bank building, at 210 Washington, was Richmond's second City Hall. It was built by John Nicholl in 1906 when the City Government had outgrown the Critchett Hotel. He had his offices upstairs and leased the ground floor to the city for \$50 a month. The original building had a bell tower with a flag pole, ornate terra cotta ornamentation, and a glazed brick facade. This City Hall was in use from 1906 to 1915 when it moved to a larger building in central Richmond at 25th Street and Nevin Avenue. The building also housed the Masonic Lodge for several years. In preparation for restoration, new owners removed the stucco on the facade, revealing what's left of the old brick underneath. † *At the corner of Washington and West Richmond, walk west on West Richmond to the next block where two historic churches are situated.*

10 The first buildings you will come to are the Catholic Church and its church Rectory. Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church was dedicated in 1903. At that time, its attendance was approximately 200 families, though that expanded greatly when refugees from the 1906 San Francisco earthquake moved into this area. The church was originally constructed in an ornate Victorian Architectural style. Due to moisture damage, it was changed to the more boxy, shingled look that it has today. The spectacular original rose window remains. †

11 At the corner of West Richmond and Martina Street is the First United Methodist Church. The original building was a wood-frame structure built in 1900 that also housed Richmond's first schoolhouse. Within a few

years, the congregation outgrew the church and constructed this one which was completed in 1906, in time to shelter victims of the 1906 earthquake. The wood-framed building is covered by a veneer of Richmond Common Brick produced at the Richmond Pressed Brick Co., located where Brickyard Landing is now. †

12 Across the street, at the corner of West Richmond and Santa Fe Avenue, is the original Abbott Hospital building. Originally built as a 2-story structure, a third story was added around 1910. When the hospital moved, the building became a rooming house and hotel.

13 Back at the corner of West Richmond and Washington, on the north side of the street (now the Point Richmond Market) is the location of the old Critchett Hotel. Built in 1900 by John Nicholl as a "first class mechanics hotel," it had 25 rooms and a dining hall. It served as the first City Hall in 1905, where the Board of Trustees met for the first time. †

14 Continue the tour by walking north on Washington. At the corner of Washington and Cottage is the Hotel Mac. This was originally the Colonial Hotel, constructed in 1911. A newspaper article at the time announced that "it promises to be one of the finest in the country." The Hotel restaurant did have a fine reputation. Incidentally, George Allen, brother of Gracie Allen, was a waiter here. In the 1930s it became the Mac Hotel. A fire gutted the building in the 1970s but it was fully restored to its original splendor in 1978, and once again has a fine reputation. Seven luxurious guest rooms were recently reopened for overnight guests.

***** Return to our starting point at the Point Richmond History Museum, and inside you will find much more information about many of the older buildings you passed on your short walking tour. There are photo albums with pictures of the Point dating from 1900, and several publications for sale. *Please come in and come back to learn more about this historic community. The Museum is open Thursday and Saturday from 11:30 AM - 2 PM.*

¹ Point Richmond was designated a Historic District in 1979 and appears on the National Register of Historic Places.

† Site of historic plaque.