

It's a perfect day for walking

HISTORIC POINT

Richmond



*W*elcome to Point Richmond.*

In the early 1800's this area was part of the 1700 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 1890's the San Francisco and San Joaquin Valley Railway bought 57 acres of soon-to-be Point Richmond and adjacent land and then built a railway. In 1900, the completed project was bought by the Santa Fe Railway.

In 1901, the Pacific Oil Company, which soon became the Standard Oil Company, began constructing a refinery here. Company families of both the refinery and the railroad formed much of the community of Point Richmond in its early years.

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN POINT RICHMOND *A Short Walking Tour*

1 The first stop on this short tour is the **Point Richmond History Museum** at 139 ½ Washington Ave. This little building was originally situated at 139 West Richmond Ave. 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. Then in 1911, Dornan bought out Whitesides 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. †

2 Walking north to the corner of Washington and Park Place, there 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 Women's Westside Improvement Club (still active in Point Richmond today) in 1908. In 1942, it was believed to have been 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 that 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 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 here.

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

4 Continuing south on Park Place, you will pass a variety of store fronts that date to the early 1900s. At 135 Park Place is **The Baltic**. Built in 1904, the Baltic Tavern was the first tavern in Point Richmond. The back bar and mirror were brought over from San Francisco prior to the 1906 earthquake. Over the years the Baltic has served the community as a saloon, city hall, residence, funeral parlor, speakeasy, house of prostitution, storage area and restaurant. Mentioned in the writings of Jack London, the Baltic Tavern retains a turn of the century atmosphere that reflects the flavor of Point Richmond history. †

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 Department 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 (left) to the corner of Railroad Ave. and West Richmond. Across the tracks on the south side of the street 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. In 2001 it was deemed seismically unsafe and was closed. Yeomen efforts by the Save the Plunge Committee, grant awards and donations

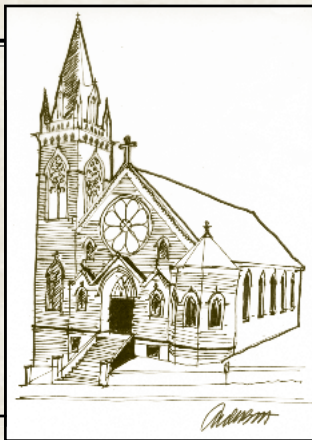
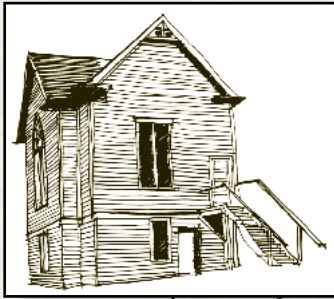
large and small ensured that The Plunge would survive and it was beautifully restored. Today it is a model of "green" operation with a solar heating system, electricity produced by photovoltaic panels, 200 operable windows to dehumidify and circulate air and water cleaned by ultraviolet light rather than chemicals. †

A plaque honoring John "Joe" Kenny is located at the corner of E. Richmond and Garrard Streets. Joe was a Richmond city councilman. Joe's father, John, was a signer of the papers incorporating the City of Richmond in 1905 and was one of Richmond's first council members. Joe Kenny died during WWII.

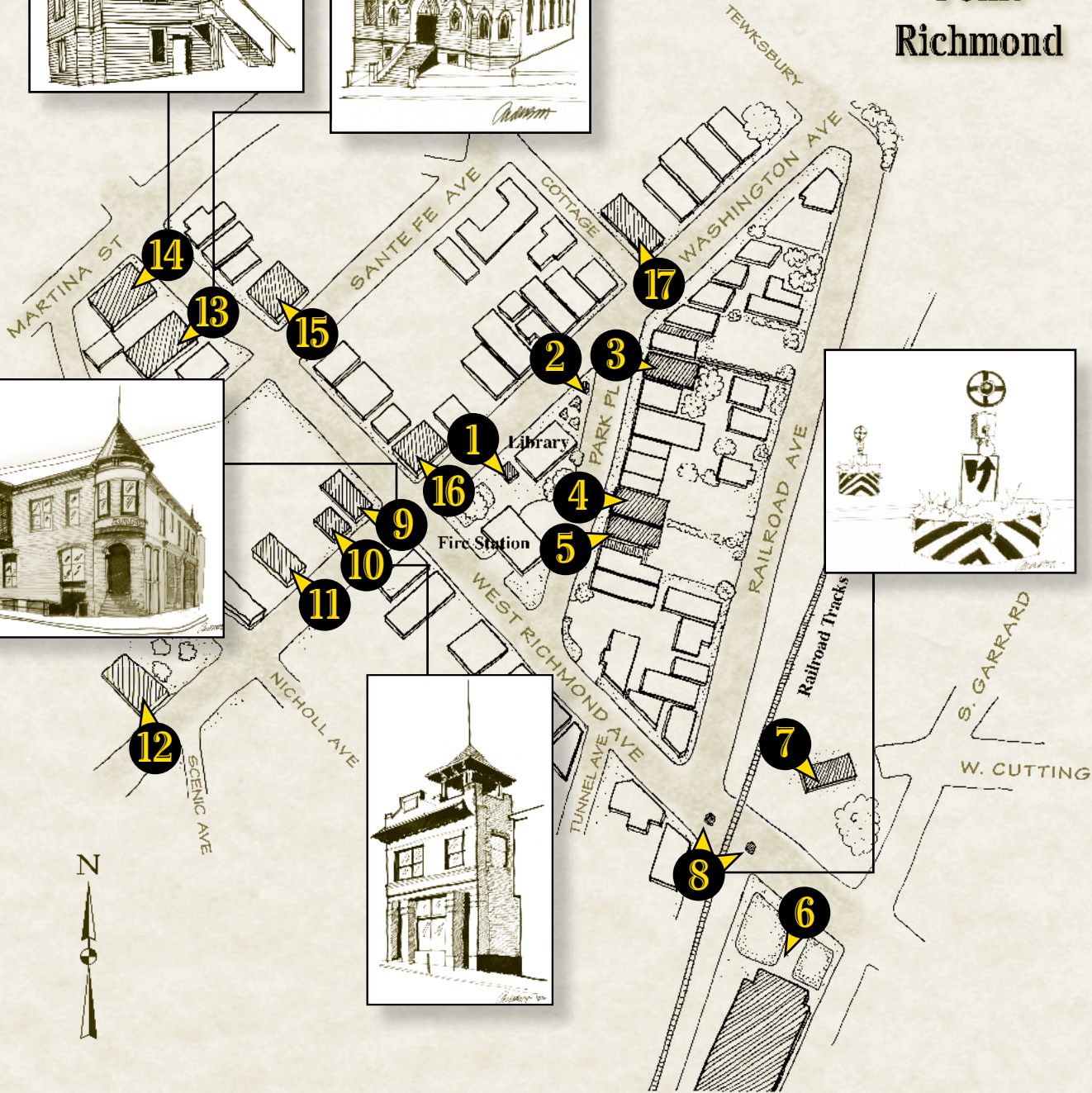
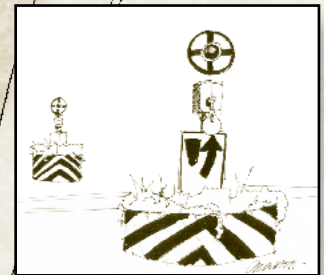
7 Across the street from The Plunge is the **Trainmaster's Building**. This is the oldest surviving building of the original Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad established in Point Richmond in 1902. Built about 1903 and situated in the train yards along Garrard Blvd., it was originally the Employees Reading Room housing "... 500 books, all current magazines, pool and billiard tables and bath rooms..." for use by railroad employees. It eventually became the Richmond Trainmaster's Office. It had been abandoned for several decades and was scheduled for demolition when the City of Richmond acquired it. It was moved to this site in 2005. The Point Richmond Gateway Foundation, the Mechanics Bank and many local citizens were instrumental in its restoration. (Go to pointrichmond.com/gateway for the full story.)

8 Before heading west on West Richmond notice the black and white **wigwags**. 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 are used on special occasions. This is where the railroad crossed the first street and thus may be the historical center of Point Richmond. †

Historic Downtown Point Richmond



18



9 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 that housed, among others, the coroner, Dr. C.L. Abbott. In 1914 Dr. Abbott operated his Emergency Hospital here. Since the 1920s the building has had many occupants, including Sherry and Bob's, an apparel store located here for 30 years. The exterior was extensively restored in 2003. †

10 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 flagpole, 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. The building also housed the Masonic Lodge for several years. In preparation for restoration, new owners removed the stucco facade revealing what is left of the brick underneath. †

11 Up the hill a few steps at 214/218 Washington is the original **home of Dr. William S. Lucas**, one of Pt. Richmond's most distinguished physicians. He was a graduate of the Stanford University Medical School and came to Pt. Richmond to practice medicine in 1903. According to his fellow physician, Dr. William Thompson, Dr. Lucas probably treated more Point Richmond residents than any other doctor in the Point. †

12 On the next block up Washington at 304 is the **former First Baptist Church of Richmond** built in 1903. In 1910 the church sold the lot next door to the city for \$1 and it became the Janice Play Lot named for the daughter of the original owners of the church property, Sam and Rose Curry. In 1912 the First Baptist Church moved to Richmond and this church became the Point Richmond Baptist Church. During WWII it

was a popular USO center for military personnel. The last services were held here in 1989. The building is now privately owned. †

Return to the corner of Washington and West Richmond. Walk west (uphill) on West Richmond.

13 On the left in the next block you will come first to 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 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. †

14 At the corner of West Richmond and Martina is the **First United Methodist Church**. The original building was a wood-frame structure built in 1900 that also housed Richmond's first schoolhouse in the basement. Victims of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake were sheltered here. Within a few years, the congregation outgrew the church and constructed this one, dedicated in 1909. 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. †

15 Across the street at the corner of West Richmond and Santa Fe Ave. is the original **Abbot Hospital** building. Initially 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.

16 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 where the Board of Trustees met for the first time in 1905.[†]

17 Continue the tour by walking north (downhill) 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 “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 delightful guest rooms are available for overnight guests.

18 The **Frosini house** is located on the bay side of Point Richmond at 411 Contra Costa Street in an area once known as Goat

Hollow. It was built by Rose and Quintillio Frosini in 1903. Originally it was one story but was raised to a 3-story structure in 1913 to create space for boarders and a basement for winemaking. The excess wine was bootlegged. In 1974 the building was purchased from the Frosini family by Patricia Bill Davis and family, longtime Point Richmond residents.[†]

** 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. Check the sign in the window for our open hours.*

Also visit the Point Richmond History Assoc. website at www.PointRichmondHistory.org.

Below: 1900 The Critchett hotel (second building from left) on Washington Street in Point Richmond was Richmond's first hotel. (Photo—Richmond Museum of History)

[†] Building site with historic plaque.





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 510-237-1403 or 866-977.RCVB (toll free). We are located at 201 W. Richmond Avenue, Suite B.

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.nps.gov/rori 510-232-5050

S.S. Red Oak Victory

1337 Canal Blvd, Berth 6A

www.ssredoakvictory.com 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

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