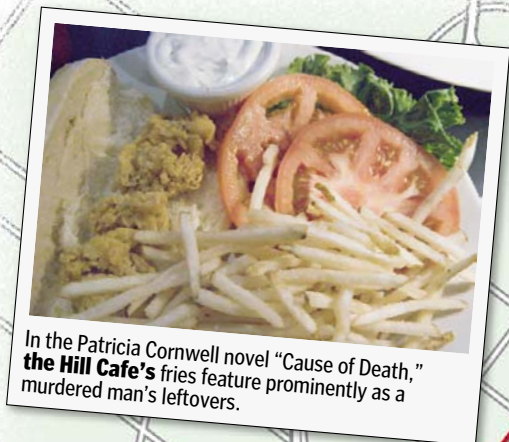


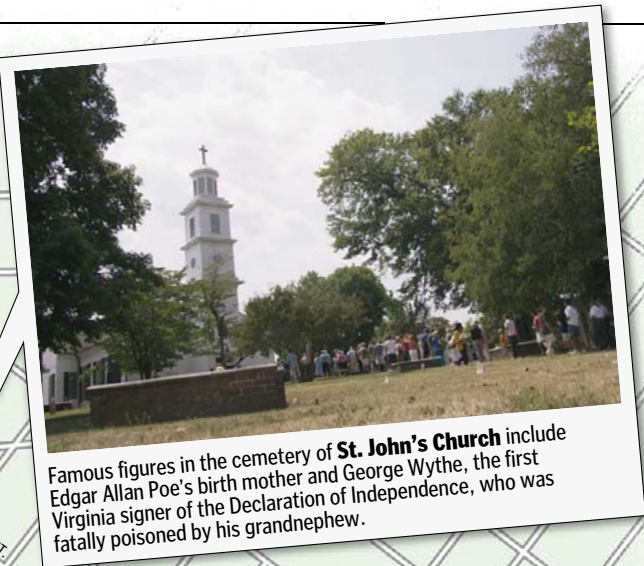
# RoadTrip

## History and Mystery in Richmond's Church Hill



In the Patricia Cornwell novel "Cause of Death," **the Hill Cafe's** fries feature prominently as a murdered man's leftovers.

Look for the spooky entrance of the now-closed **Church Hill Tunnel**, which allowed trains to pass through before its deadly collapse in the 1920s.



Famous figures in the cemetery of **St. John's Church** include Edgar Allan Poe's birth mother and George Wythe, the first Virginia signer of the Declaration of Independence, who was fatally poisoned by his grandnephew.

Outside the borders of Church Hill, the **Poe Museum** offers a seriously deep look into the life of the dark writer.

Edgar Allan Poe's childhood sweetheart lived at the **Elmira Shelton House**, now a private residence. No, the new owners have not found any telltale hearts under the floorboards.

Shake off any heebie-jeebies at **Captain Buzzy's Beanery**, a local spot with a broad drink menu and loaner board games.

There's often a line at **Millie's Diner**, which makes a potent extra-spicy bloody mary.

Stop in at **Church Hill Herbs** for gifts or flowers. Presumably, no hemlock is sold.



**Chimborazo Park**, site of Chimborazo Hospital during the Civil War, is home to a medical museum with instruments and artifacts from 150 years ago.

0 1/4 MILE

James River

Driver's route

Start here

**WHERE:** Richmond.

**WHY:** Patrick Henry's cry, here lies . . . , and macabre french fries.

**HOW FAR:** About three miles from start to finish, and about 108 miles from Washington.

**C**hurch Hill is changing. The historical Richmond neighborhood — site of old mansions, cast-iron work on porches, cobble streets and the church where Patrick Henry made his impassioned cry for liberty or death — deteriorated rapidly in the mid-20th century. "Church Hill was the drug-infested shooting gallery" of Richmond, says John Johnson, president of the Church Hill Association. But in the past few decades, an aggressive historic preservation effort (and tempting tax breaks) have spurred revitalization and development.

A mile east of downtown, the mostly residential neighborhood now has a few cafes and coffee shops sprinkled among its brick Greek Revival, Federal and

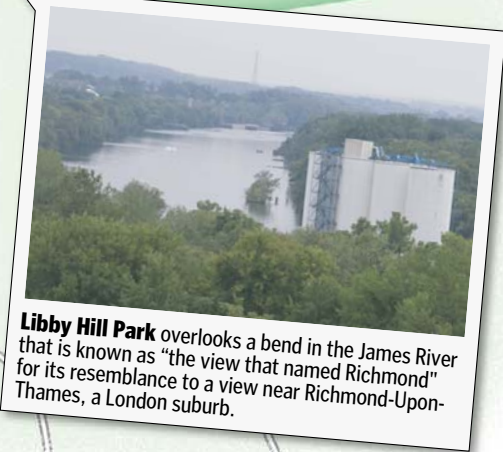
Italianate homes.

Much of the area's history involves gruesome topics, such as Civil War medicine (never a pleasant subject) and a murderous grandnephew who offed Virginia's first signer of the Declaration of Independence. Add to this Edgar Allan Poe's association with the neighborhood (the writer spent much of his youth in Richmond and entertained a forbidden courtship with a Church Hill girl), and you have the makings of a creepily entertaining stroll.

Those with tamer tastes can distract themselves with a reenactment of Henry's speech at St. John's Church while their dauntless friends wander the cemetery, which contains 400 visible headstones for the approximately 1,600 people interned.

— Rachel Kaufman

**Road Trip maps** and details about each stop are available at [www.washingtonpost.com/roadtrip](http://www.washingtonpost.com/roadtrip). Have an idea for a trip? E-mail [roadtrip@washpost.com](mailto:roadtrip@washpost.com).



**Libby Hill Park** overlooks a bend in the James River that is known as "the view that named Richmond" for its resemblance to a view near Richmond-Upon-Thames, a London suburb.