

## A THREE-BLOCK WALKING TOUR OF VIENNA'S HISTORIC CHURCH STREET

**Welcome.** Your walking tour starts here, at the **Freeman Store and Museum**, 131 Church St, NE. Please pick up a brochure at the counter to learn the history of the building built by Abram Lydecker in 1859. Take the time to visit our exhibits, and, of course, do some shopping.

Most people assume Maple Avenue has always been Vienna's **Main Street**, but in fact that honor belongs to Church Street, so named because there were at least four churches along its full length. The street was originally lined with a variety of stores and businesses, much as it is today.

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1. Step out our front door and walk to the sidewalk. You are now at Church Street. Immediately across the street at the entrance to the parking lot was originally a feed store, which sold grain, farm machinery and lumber. It was later the **Piggly Wiggly** grocery store and a drug store, and still later a feed and grain dealer. To the right was a business that sold plows, tractors and other farm equipment and is now a modern dental office.

2. Turn right and proceed to the corner of Church and Mill Streets. Three historic buildings are in view. One-half block to your right is the **Little Library**, Vienna's original library, built in 1897 on Library Lane and moved to this location in 1970. Today it contains all its original books, card files, and historic records. There's a **Little Free Library** book exchange in front of the building. Across Maple where Mill

intersects was once the **Freeman Grist Mill**, which was powered by a stationery steam engine.

3. Immediately in front of you at the corner is the **Vienna Presbyterian Church**, the oldest portion, now called the Chapel, was erected in 1874.

4. Across the street to the left is **Bouton's Hall**, built around 1894. Once **Bouton's Grocery** store and post office; the building has been owned by Concord Masonic Lodge #307 since 1920. The Lodge Hall is on the second floor. The first floor is **Pennywise Thrift Store**, operated by the Holy Comforter Church of Vienna since 1961.

5. During the Civil War the entire hillside across and down Mill street and off to your left was the encampment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Massachusetts Cavalry and other units. Their mission was to guard the Western approach to Washington, D.C. from attack by Confederate forces.

6. Turn around and proceed back on Church to the **Northern Virginia Regional Trail**, operated by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. From 1855 to 1968 this was an active railroad line running from Alexandria to Bluemont, Virginia. Damaged by Confederate forces in 1861, the railroad resumed full service after the war. Originally carrying both passengers and freight, after 1951 it was freight only. All material used to build Dulles Airport was taken to the site on this railroad line.

7. Stop and look to your right. There is Vienna's famous **Red Caboose** commemorating the railroad that ran here for 113 years. The caboose was installed as a Centennial project in 1990.

8. Again to your right and about a block away (231 Dominion), is the **Vienna Railway Station**. Walk down to it if you wish. It dates to the Civil War (1861), and is now home to the **Northern Virginia Model Railroaders** club; they operate a large HO-scale model railroad

that represents an actual North Carolina railroad set in the 1950s. The first building in Vienna to serve exclusively as a Post Office was opened immediately across the street from the station in 1910. To the left of that building once stood **Ballard's Dry Goods** store.

9. Back at the corner of Church and Dominion and across the street (200 Dominion) is a brick building built in 1923; it was Vienna's first bank, the **Vienna Trust Company**. Note the two huge "double eagles" (\$20 gold pieces) high on the front wall. To the immediate right (208 Dominion) is **Vienna Floors**. It was originally the **Sanitary Grocery** which occupied the first floor. That later became **Safeway** which eventually relocated to Maple Avenue at two different locations. There was a dance hall on the second floor that was also the original meeting place for **American Legion Post 180**, now located a few blocks away at 130 North Center Street.

10. The building on "stilts" across Church from the bank (125 Church) is home of **The Dress Code**. Immediately next door is **Fairfax Auto Parts**. This was the site of the **Electric Railway Station**. Trolley cars on the Washington-Virginia Railway ran from Washington, D.C. to Fairfax via Oakton. The tracks to Oakton were just on the far side of Maple Avenue. In 1929, the company was losing money and passenger traffic declined. Trolley operations ended in 1939.

11. Behind that building and a few steps away on Maple Avenue, is the world famous **Vienna Inn**, serving adult beverages and their famous childdogs since 1960. Nice place for lunch.

12. Proceeding down Church, the brown structure with a porch on your right (120 Church) is **Cocoa Vienna**, a chocolatier. The building has had several occupants including the **Craig & Wright Grocery and General Store**, and later **Vienna Glass**, then, for about 30 years, it was **Once upon a time**, the very popular toy and dollhouse store. Local builder Tommy Staats began a complete restoration of

the building in 2012. It now houses his offices on the second floor.

13. The next building, **Diamond Spa** (108 Church), was originally **Sam Savia's Barber Shop**, which he later moved across the street.

14. At the corner of Church and Center Streets (100 Church), in what is now the parking lot for a dentist's office, was once **Koehnlein Bakery**, a large popular business that occupied the entire corner and extended up the hill on Center Street.

15. The small strip of stores on the opposite side of Church includes **Church Street Pizza**, **Caffé Amouri** and **Vienna Dance Academy**. A block behind them on Maple Avenue once stood the **John R. Portmess Feed Store** and, from 1925, the **Feeser** home, which included an **Ice Cream Parlor**. The Fessers sold Ice cream from the front room of their house.

16. The blue building at the corner just past these stores (103 Church) was once a private home and later Vienna's first **Telephone Exchange**. Today it is **John Edwards Hair Design**.

17. Back across Center Street and proceeding down Church on the right are three modern buildings. The one at the corner was originally a home owned by the Gorham family and later Vienna's second **Telephone Exchange** which operated from 1916-1935. Today it houses **Sushi Yoshi**, **Pet Spaw** and **Leggett Wealth Management**. The second building is the **Vienna Clock Shop**. The third was the site of Vienna's original **Fire House**, and later, in the same building, two shops, **Worthington's**, a gift shop, and **Full Cry**, a ladies clothing store; today that building houses the restaurant **Bazin's on Church**, the **Anytime Fitness Club**, and **Blend**, a food and wine bar.

18. Across the street to the right of the apartment building is Vienna's newest building with four businesses on the first floor, the bookstore **Bards Alley**, the learning center

**Generation Code**, the **Wine Outlet**, selling wine, beer, cheeses and other gourmet foods, and **Rita's**, an Italian ice and frozen custard shop, and apartments on the second. Behind that building and set back from Maple Avenue is a low building that began as a livery stable and, over time, has been a camera store, furniture store, a spa, and more. In Ayr Hill alley immediately next door to the new building you will find **Bikes@Vienna**, **Pure Pasty** (they offer authentic Cornish pasties and other British goodies – if you have never had a pasty try one), and **Mo:Mo House**, an authentic Nepali restaurant. At the Church Street end of the alley is **Terra Christa**, a store offering religious goods.

19. The next one-story building was the **Vienna Post Office** from 1954 to 1977. Today it houses **The Sandwich Shop** restaurant, the **Wardrobe Rescue**, **Great Harvest Bakery**, **Kiln & Co.**, and **Achikian Goldsmiths**.

20. Crossing Church again is a set back building with several businesses including a **Yoga,-Tai Chi Healing** shop, **Young's** tailor, the **Allure** nail spa, and **Somerville Homes** real estate, and apartments above.

21. The yellow building next door (131 Church), was built in 1897-8, and was the home of the **Money** family. Mr. Money operated the **Howard Money Funeral Home** originally located in the parking area next door. Its successor, **Money & King Funeral Home**, is now located at the corner of Maple Avenue and Lawyer's Road. The building now houses **Guarantee Shoe Repair**, the **Vienna Music Exchange**, **Fisher Custom Homes**, and a spa and an attorney's office.

22. An historic location near Church you cannot see today was on Wilmar Place, one block behind these stores. In early 1942, after the start of World War II, the local Optimist's Club erected a two-story enemy aircraft **Spotting Tower** at the highest spot on Wilmar. The tower was manned continuously by teenagers and adults as long as the threat of enemy air attack

continued. A 1:12 scale model of the tower is in the lobby of the Vienna Town Hall.

23. The small grey building next door (137 Church), now **Yas Bakery**, was originally the **Vienna Methodist Episcopal Church** (now **Wesley United Methodist Church**, located on Spring Street in Vienna). This original building was erected in 1890 and served as the Church until 1956. It was later **Curly's Men's and Boy's Clothing Store**, where everyone went to purchase jeans, boots, shoes, socks and other clothing for the family.

24. Just past that building and across the street is a two-story brick structure that houses the **Red Galanga Asian Kitchen** restaurant, **Oriental Rug Weavers**, and other businesses.

25. Back across the street, there are two brick buildings; the first includes the **Consignment Boutique**, **Salon Etoile**, **Star's Beads**, **House of Vape** and more. The building at the corner of Church and Lawyer's Road, houses the consignment shop **Just Like New**, church offices, and **Glasshouse Real Estate**.

26. In front of you and immediately across Lawyer's Road is the modern **Vienna Post Office** (200 Lawyers). This was the site of the home of Vienna's first Mayor. That house was torn down in the 1970s to make way for the Post Office. A few steps up Lawyer's Road to the right of the Post Office is the **Knight's of Columbus** hall (214 Lawyers). Erected in 1867, it was originally the **First Baptist Church**.

27. The strip of stores to the left of the Post Office includes **Papa John's Pizza**, the **Plaka Grill** (a Greek restaurant), **Vienna Nails & Spas**, and the **Vienna Paint & Decorating Center**. This was the original site of Vienna's famous **Cummins Plow Factory** established in the 1840s, which manufactured the first iron-beam plows made in the U.S. Later the **Seventh Day Adventist Church and School** was located here.

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Congratulations, you completed your three-block walking tour of Church Street and environs. Please visit us again at the Freeman Store and Museum, and please patronize the many Church Street restaurants and stores you passed during your walk as well as the many other nearby Vienna businesses.

Additional information

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Church Street



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October 2019