



# THE POE MUSEUM

## VISITOR'S GUIDE

*Illuminating Poe for everyone, evermore.*

Our collection of diverse artifacts relating to the writings and legacy of Edgar Allan Poe is the most comprehensive in the world. Poe's legacy extends far beyond the horror genre, by creating the modern detective story, exploring science fiction, fantasy, poetry, and literary essays.

Poe lived in Richmond for 13 years, longer than anywhere else in his life, however, Poe did not live in any of the buildings that make up the museum. All of his childhood homes have been demolished, most were destroyed in the 1800's, before the museum was founded. Luckily, the museum salvaged many items from Poe's childhood in Richmond that you will discover in several of our exhibits.

### **The Enchanted Garden**

Completed in 1922 as a memorial to Poe, the Enchanted Garden was inspired by Poe's poem "To One in Paradise." As you wait for your tour entry time, read the first stanza of the poem and try to spot elements of the garden that were directly inspired by this piece.

*Thou wast all that to me, love,  
For which my soul did pine--  
A green isle in the sea, love,*

*A fountain and a shrine,  
All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,  
And all the flowers were mine*

### **Exhibit One: The Old Stone House**

During Poe's lifetime, this building was home to the Ege family. The Eges probably built the house in the 1730s and were living here during the American Revolution when Samuel Ege served as Commissary to the Marquis de Lafayette, the French general who helped George Washington defeat the British.

In 1824, Lafayette returned to America and visited the house to thank the Ege family for their support. At 15, Edgar Allan Poe was a member of the junior honor color guard that escorted the general to this house and waited outside while Lafayette visited the Eges. Poe's childhood homes were close to the Old Stone House, so he would have walked past this home many times.

The main exhibit in this house introduces you to the young orphan, Edgar Poe, who grew up in Richmond under the care of his foster parents John and Frances Allan. In this room are pieces from Moldavia, one of Poe's childhood homes. As you can see, the Allans were wealthy, and little Edgar enjoyed the privileges of the elite Virginian lifestyle.

### **Exhibit Two: The Memorial Building**

Named in honor of Poe's mother, the Elizabeth Arnold Poe Memorial Building was constructed in 1928. It was built around the staircase that was salvaged from one of Poe's childhood homes. Some of its bricks on the exterior walls were salvaged from the *Southern Literary Messenger* and the Ellis & Allan Firm, co-owned by Poe's foster father, John Allan.

The exhibit is dedicated to Poe's career which includes several first editions of his writing and personal letters. The Memorial Building also houses our museum library and reading room which are temporarily only available by appointment.

### **Exhibit Three: The North Building**

This building was constructed in the late 19th century and acquired by the Poe Museum in 1927. The museum originally used it as a tea room, but after a recent series of renovations, the building was utilized as exhibit space. This building is dedicated to investigating Poe's mysterious demise.

### **Exhibit Four: The Shrine**

Located at the back of the garden and dedicated to the memory of Poe's life and legacy, the Poe Museum's shrine is made up of bricks and granite salvaged from the demolished offices of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, the magazine at which Poe began his career in journalism formerly located at 15th and Main Street. The bust of Poe located in the shrine is a copy of one donated to the Poe Museum by the Bronx Historical Society. The original bust was stolen from the shrine and found several days later in a local bar.

The lock on the green gate that you walked through as you exited the North Building was taken from the infamous Civil War prison known as Libby Prison formerly located on 20th and Cary Street. Notice the broken glass atop the garden wall - a security device borrowed from Poe's tale "William Wilson."

### **We Need To Talk: Art Installation on the Old Stone House Windows and Fence**

As you leave the museum, notice the artwork covering our windows and across our fence. This artwork was created by local artists as a part of Mending Walls RVA as a way to continue the conversation about where we are now in society and how we can move forward through understanding and collaboration. They hope to bring about healing through public art while adding something meaningful to the conversation of Black Lives Matter.

