

## Richmond's Raven: Why RVA is Edgar Allan Poe's Home

If you were to ask someone right now if they knew of Edgar Allan Poe, the chances are that they would say something along the lines of, "Well, of course I do. He's the one who wrote that poem about a raven, isn't he?" Poe is known worldwide for his incredible literary works; therefore, many places have tried to claim him as their own. Boston, Baltimore, and others have each rightfully paid homage to Mr. Poe. However, many are of the strong opinion that Richmond, Virginia should be referred to as Poe's true home. There are plenty of reasons that this opinion makes sense.

Though he may not have been born here, Edgar Allan Poe was raised in Richmond. In fact, Poe moved to Richmond at the age of two, long before he was even old enough to have remembered a life before it. This means that most of his core memories were formed here. One such memory occurred at the age of 15, when Poe swam 7 ½ miles against the James River's current without stopping. Even today, this incredible feat has yet to be repeated. Young Poe also found people with whom he could enjoy spending his time with despite his rocky relationship with his uncle, John Allan. Poe had many childhood friends and was a relatively content young boy in Richmond. Due to his many memories and experiences in his childhood city, Poe frequently returned to Richmond throughout the rest of his life.

A second reason that Richmond should be widely recognized as Poe's true home is that Poe himself felt a kinship to Richmond. In times of need, Poe returned to Richmond. When he lacked the money to pay for a college tuition, he returned to Richmond. When he needed a job doing what he loved, he came back to Richmond. When his wife, Virginia Clemm, passed away, Poe hurried home to the tragic comfort that Richmond offered him. Are you sensing a theme yet? If Edgar Allan Poe was going through something difficult, Richmond was there for him. Though

he most likely associated Richmond with tragedy, the morbid side of life was a familiar friend to Poe.

Poe wrote many of his most famous darker pieces whilst living in Baltimore, but where did the inspiration come from? Most likely his tragic childhood in—Where? Oh, that’s right, Richmond! These grim tales were the brainchild of Poe’s grim memories. For example, his poem entitled, “3 Sundays in a Week,” is most likely an homage to his tense relationship with his uncle. His short story, “The Masque of the Red Death,” was about tuberculosis, a disease that stole many of Poe’s loved ones.

Though he may be dear to Baltimore or Boston, those places were not very dear to him. Richmond was where Poe went for comfort and for inspiration. If Edgar Allan Poe were to be reminded of Richmond today, he might ponder it with a sad smile. As is the case with all homes, Richmond brought Poe both joy and sadness. To put it simply, Richmond should be known as Poe’s true home because *it was*.

Sources:

<https://www.eapoe.org/works/misc/swimnga.htm#:~:text=Poe%2C%20now%20of%20the%20Gentleman's,but%2015%20years%20of%20age.>

<https://poemuseum.org/poe-biography/>