

The Corner Crawl—

Whether you are a newcomer to Charlottesville or a returning alumnus unfamiliar with changes around town, the following represents an overview, of sorts, of "The Corner" and beyond. The Rotunda is an obvious tourist attraction, and it's within easy walking distance of our facility. Mitchie Tavern, Monticello, etc. are a bit of a drive. When you get into town, I suggest that you pick up a copy of "The Charlottesville Weekly" and/or "The Hook". Both of them are free weekly periodicals. The Weekly comes out on Tuesday, and the Hook comes out on Thursday. You will see them at various newsstands around The Corner and the city. Both will feature articles on local events, entertainment for the week, guides for local restaurants, etc.

Charlottesville is a college town, and virtually every college town has its own version of The Corner. Basically, this just refers to an area where most of the college students tend to go to socialize during lunch or dinner or to explore night life. In the case of Charlottesville, this particular area is so close to the U.VA Medical Center that it gets a fair amount of participation from U.VA housestaff, as well as other post-graduates. The Corner has a rather extensive history. Frankly, it is too extensive for me to go into in depth, but a book called "The Corner", sold locally at bookstores, goes into this in great depth, if you are interested.

The Corner amounts to a 3 block stretch from the Rotunda (intersection of University Ave. and Rugby Rd.) to the intersection of University Ave., W. Main Street, and Jefferson Park Ave. All the restaurants, etc. in question are on one side of University Ave. or its side streets, like Elliewood Ave. and 14th street. Starting from the Rotunda and working towards the aforementioned intersection: The first place you will encounter is Bodo's Bagel Bakery. There are several Bodo's in Charlottesville, all owned by the same guy, and the bagels and associated sandwiches are really good. This particular Bodo's took about 4 years to open, and the rumor was that the owner was deliberately dragging butt on newest Bodo's until his divorce was finally in place. The delay was annoying to the locals, and there was even talk of some sort of advance boycott in response to the endless "tease" he had on the door ("Bodo's Bagel Bakery, coming soon"). It finally opened in 2005, and it's pretty good. Obviously, it has bagels and bagel sandwiches, and it's open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Next in line, at the intersection of University Ave. and Elliewood Ave., is Starbucks. This is a coffeehouse that is part of the chain of coffeehouses by the same name. As coffee goes, it's pretty good. Part of its ambiance is the fact that it has a few tables towards the front that allow people to drink coffee, read books or newspapers, and sort of scope out people as they walk past the big glass windows. In addition, they can sit there and try to look like aloof, coffee drinking intelligentsia to anyone walking by who want to stare back at them.



Elliewood Ave. is considered part of The Corner, so if you turn down this street you will encounter the Biltmore Grill and Buddhist Biker Bar and Grill on the side of the street that has the largest available pay parking. The Biltmore Grill is a big U.VA undergrad hangout, and during the school year it usually gets pretty packed, especially on weekends. The food there is pretty good, but it is along the lines of sandwich and burger platter stuff. The draft beer selection is pretty much the standard stuff. I tend to look at this place as more of a luncheon restaurant when the weather is good, because most people like to sit outside under an overhead trellis into which plant life is embedded. It can be quite scenic, and the birds and squirrels occasionally rattle debris onto your food from above to give you extra garnishment.

The Buddhist Biker Bar and Grill has a misleading name. It is not a "biker bar" by any means. The food there is more upscale than the Biltmore. They have burger platters, but they also have shrimp, steak, lamb, tenderloin. I do not think it falls into any particular category, and it runs more of a spectrum from bar food to upscale entrees than anything else. My personal evaluation bias, as you will find reading a lot of this, boils down to the beer selection though, and the draft selection is typical-no microbrews or fancy stuff, though they do have some lagers. This place is probably a bigger nightlife place for the under grads during the school year than the Biltmore.

Across the street is the Buffalo Wing factory and Coupe DeVille's Restaurant. The Buffalo Wing Factory is relatively new. It occupies a location that use to be the University Bike Shop, which was a long standing bicycle sales and repair place for years. I have been told that the Buffalo Wing Factory is pretty good in terms of chicken wings, but I do not know much about it otherwise.

Coupe DeVille's is just called "Coupe's" by the locals. It has an open patio out front where a lot of the lunch crowd hangs out. It has a fenced in open air section out back, and on some weeknights they have live bands in this area. Since the back area isn't fully enclosed, it is likely that any band you hear in the distance at night on The Corner is at Coupe's. The food is described as "all American"-centers around rotisserie chicken, but they have steaks, burger, salads, etc. The draft beer is standard stuff-Bud and Bud light, with a few upper tier beers available in bottles.

The only other places worthy of mention on that side of the street is the Ragged Mountain Running Shop and Mincer's (Mincer's is at the corner of Elliewood Ave. and University Ave.) Neither is a restaurant, but they are part of The Corner culture. The space occupied by RMRS was, until 3 years ago, occupied by Eljo's, an upscale clothing store that sold clothes that sometimes screamed "I am a UVA Student". Blue blazers, khaki pants, orange and blue ties, etc. After decades of being a Corner store, Eljo's moved over to the Barracks Rd. Shopping Center. RMRS then expanded from its second floor space into the Eljo's location. This is considered to be one of the 2 best places to buy running shoes and clothing in Charlottesville (The other is the Charlottesville Running Company on the Downtown Mall). Mark Lorenzoni, a former track coach, and his wife Cynthia, 2 time winner of the Marine Corps Marathon and Olympic trials qualifier, run the store. Whether you are a novice runner just starting out or a serious runner with experience, throw away all those shoe review magazines and just go talk to these guys. They will look at the wear pattern on your existing shoes, watch you run on a treadmill, and select the best pair of shoes for you based on what they see. The store also has some athletic clothes and announcements about training programs and local road races.

Mincer's was actually called Mincer's Pipe and Tobacco Shop at one time long ago. It has evolved into a U.VA sportswear store. The owner, "Mincer", probably holds the leases on several establishments in that area. Anybody looking for UVA imprinted sportswear usually gravitates towards Mincer's. The only other good places for UVA sportswear are the University of Virginia Bookstore (400 Emmett St., basically above and behind Memorial Gymnasium and the Central Ground Parking Garage on Emmett St.), and Student Bookstore Inc. and High Peak Sportswear on University Ave.

Okay, turning back onto University Ave. from Elliewood, you pass the front of Mincer's and next encounter The Virginian Restaurant. This establishment is probably the oldest restaurant on The Corner. It is very popular, probably owing to its heritage. Frankly, it is not a good place to take parties larger than 4 people to, because its space is restricted to booths and bar stools. It's pretty dark, which sort of adds (or detracts, depending on your point of view) to the atmosphere. The menu is described as American, but it's sort of shotgun: burger and chicken sandwich platters, bourbon chicken, catfish, pastas, etc. The draft beer is a little more diverse than the aforementioned places-Starr Hill (a local brewery, and the Starr Hill Amber, Pale Ale, and Jomo Lager are good; the Northern Lights is a good IPA), Bass, Guinness, Bud Light, and some lagers. They used to have "Cigar Night" here on certain weeknights, where they would sell really cool smelly cigars for people to smoke and sit at the bar, but I think that is now defunct. Some of the waitresses have been known to be a bit lax about checking IDs here in the past, or perhaps

it's so dark that it's easier to pass a fake ID than other places...anyway, the underage drinkers might like this place because of that.



Next in line on University Ave. is Three, a relatively new restaurant that took over space formerly occupied by a restaurant called Jaberwocke (pictured; and before that, The Greenskeeper, and before that, University Cafeteria). As of the writing, the local phone directory assistance still has it listed under the Jaberwocke phone no., which can be annoying to somebody trying to find the place. This restaurant tries to be a bit more upscale, with a dress code that discourages T shirts, gym pants, etc. They have flat screen TV's over the bar for

watching sports, but it is intended to be more of a lunch and dinner venue. The menu is described an American bistro with a southwestern slant and the entrees run \$15-\$20. There are some 12 drafts on tap, and they are described as "upscale" beers. Happy Hour runs 5-9 PM and the drafts are discounted from \$5 to \$3 during that time.

Still walking away from the Rotunda, next in line in terms of restaurants is the College Inn. As the advertisement in the telephone book says, they serve gyros, sovlaki, salads, subs, sandwiches and pizza. A lot of people really love their pizza. I have no idea what sort of drinks they have, as nobody generally views this as a "bar" per se. It is probably a more popular lunch than dinner place. There are several old Ralph Sampson era Virginia basketball photos on the walls at this restaurant. The pizza here is very good.

Next up is Trinity, an Irish Pub, which replaces O'Neils, another Irish Pub that closed about 2 years ago. The location remained vacant for a long time, because the required leasehold improvements were reported to be significant, and this scared away potential businesses for awhile. The landlord finally got a buyer, and that buyer has spent almost a year renovating the property. I got a nickel tour from one of the bartender/waitresses there, and they have done a nice job. They even added a small balcony. I cannot comment on the menu as of this writing, because I have not seen it. But they have plasma TVs for watching sports, and I was guaranteed that they would have at least one decent IPA on draft, in addition to Guinness and the usual domestic beers. They have also apparently managed to steal Rachel, Sara, and Mckenzie (my tour guide) from Boylan Hts. (see below). This is likely going to be the site of our luncheon associated with resident interviews. -way back in the stone ages, this was the location of Macado's, a very popular sandwich platter place, and before that, Poe's, a really grimy bar that had great local bands.



The next establishment in line is Little John's Deli and, overhead, Michael's Bistro and Taphouse. Little John's is a pretty old establishment and a very popular sandwich place, particularly for Medical Center housestaff and other health care providers. It has really cool names for its various submarine sandwich combos, and they are pretty good. This place is particularly attractive to the UVA fraternity/sorority crowd after 2:00 AM, as it is the only place on The Corner open for food past this time. Hospital employees on night shift might go over there on break in the early AM to observe half-trashed UVA students trying to satisfy an attack of the munchies. Little John's is also open for breakfast-omelets, pancakes, French toast, and breakfast sandwiches.



Michael's Bistro and Taphouse ("Mike's" or "the Bistro") overhead used to be my favorite place on The Corner. The majority owner, Michael, was the son of the guy who owns the lease on this place and that of Little John's. Over a year ago, Mike cut loose his minority co-owner, manager, cooks, bartenders and waiters/waitresses that made up his staff. The problem is, most of his staff were cool people that contributed a lot to the restaurant and were the very people a customer would like to associate with. With their departure, a lot of the more interesting "regulars" that made up the

patrons left. I no longer have anything to do with the place, because Mike subsequently tragically lost his life, and the establishment has a bad vibe with me as a result. A longtime friend of his took over the business, with the intention of continuing it in the same spirit as the original Bistro plan. The kept many of the menu items developed by the previous cooks, etc. Small bands play there after 10:00 PM on certain weeknights. The food is diverse—they have about 10-12 items on a menu that changes about 10% each month, with something from the categories of pasta, Asian food, Mexican food, American food, etc. The draft and bottled beer selection was diverse (some great microbrews), and I heard they had some decent wines. There is a small balcony overlooking the sidewalk that has some 3 small tables. When the weather was good, was a great place to be in the sense that the lighting from the street, setting sun, etc. is really cool. This is one of the most handicapped inaccessible places in the world--the access stairwell is about a 45 degree climb.

There is an alleyway between Trinity and Littlejohn's/Mike's going from University Ave. to a rear parking lot. In that alleyway used to be an entrance to the "Satellite Ballroom". This space was leased in 2005 and converted it into about a 600 person capacity multipurpose space—bands, private parties, etc. However, the person who owned this space and the space occupied by Plan 9 Music (see below) decided not to renew the lease and, instead, turned it all over to CVS. In my way of thinking, the Corner needs a CVS like a fish needs a bicycle, but what do I know? CVS continues to do okay there.

Right across the street from Little John's and Mike's is the entrance to Hospital Dr. and the Old Medical School. Hospital Dr. curves around the back of Hospital West (also called the "Multistory") which has a lot of outpatient medical clinics. Originally, this WAS the UVA Hospital, and the columned entrance that still stands is the original entrance to the first UVA Hospital.



Still traveling away from the Rotunda on University Ave., you would have encountered Plan 9 Music up until a few months ago, but, as I said, CVS took over that space. Plan 9 was a pretty large and extensive place to purchase new and used CDs. Higher Grounds (coffee) had a little cubicle towards the front of Plan 9, but it bit the dust along with Plan 9. There remains a Higher Grounds in the Hospital Cafeteria though, and it is just as good. Plan 9 still has a store north of town, and it has several stores in Richmond. It is named after the old cult film, "Plan 9 from Outer Space"; one of the worst science fiction movies ever made—it is one of those movies that is so

incredibly bad that it is hilarious to watch. The history of the movie and its director resulted in the flick "Ed Wood", starring Johnny Depp.



Going down a few stair steps, to a drop in the sidewalk level, you come across Qdoba, a Mexican restaurant. It specializes in burritos, quesadillas, and taco salads. It attracts more of a lunch and light dinner crowd. When the weather is good, they have tables outside on the covered front area. The food is pretty good. The Corner Market is next in line, and it's THE place to go on The Corner for those picky about cigarettes. It is not much of a market otherwise. High Peak Sportswear is next door, a previously mentioned UVA sports clothing store. Next to this is The

White Spot, nicknamed "the Spot". This serves breakfast, lunch and dinner, with subs, gyros, BBQ, chicken platters, and, of course the infamous "Gus burger". It has a greasy diner type atmosphere, and the "Gus burger" single handedly provides most of the cardiology patients for UVA Hospital. The only way to order this burger is "all the way", which means a greasy fried hamburger with a fried egg on top. It is positively delicious at 2:00 AM after partying all night on The Corner, but the next morning you want to have your stomach pumped and have your arteries cleaned of all cholesterol. There used to be a really odd little shop called Coyote's next door, but the Spot just bought out the lease for to create a small ice cream parlor. Across the street is the UVA Women's Center and the Teen Health Center.

At the traffic light at the end of this block and the intersection with 14th St., you will notice a railroad overpass. The trains that travel this track supply coal to the energy plant for the Medical Center, and you can see the 3 Mile Island-like cylinders in the distance on the other side of the street. What is interesting about this overpass is that it is a low bridge, and in spite of a no. of signs that state the maximum height for trucks, somebody always manages to get stuck under this bridge or take off the top of his truck every now and then. They even have sonar like device that senses the height of oncoming vehicles and sounds an annoyingly loud alarm bell if the oncoming vehicle is too high for the overpass. Unfortunately, the train vibrations tend to knock it out of kilter, so it goes off even in response to transit buses that easily clear the overpass.



If you take a left onto 14th street, you will pass a few other places of minor interest. There is a UVA clothing store, specifically for the fraternity/sorority set, called Hoos Greek, on the left side of the road. Right above that is Sakura Sushi, which has the type of food the name would imply. I have never eaten there, but I have been told that the food is good. Beyond that is Frank's Pizza, one of several specialty pizza shops (as opposed to chains, like Domino's, Papa Johns, etc) on the Corner. The last little merchant's stop on the left is St. Maarten's, a bar/restaurant that used to be called TJ's (as in Thomas Jefferson) many years ago. St. Maarten's used to be a rather frequent hangout for our residents on Thursday night, in particular, because that is "cheeseburger in paradise" night--\$2.00 burger platter, served to the background music of Jimmy Buffet. Their burger platters, in general, are pretty good (Texas Fireburger is great...) and they also serve a pretty good nacho platter and hot wings. The "regulars" there often purchase personalized pewter mugs with special identifying numbers and nicknames. The mugs are frosted so that any drinks you order are kept really cold. The draft beer selection is a bit limited. Mug holders also get a free fudge brownie sundae on their birthday. They have one big TV for watching sports, but the TV is positioned such that it is difficult or impossible to watch anything, whether you are sitting in a booth or at the bar. Ted Galbraith, one of our faculty, was probably the most frequent visitor of St. Maarten's among our staff.



On the opposite side of the road is Buck's Pizza, another specialty pizza place. Traveling back towards University Ave. is First Wok, an Asian restaurant. There is a recessed area that leads to the patio portion of another restaurant on University Ave. (Baja Bean) that has a few small establishments: Subway, The Pita Pit, and Arch's Frozen Yogurt, coffee shop and T shirt shop. Arch's is a very popular frozen yogurt place, and it can be really packed with UVA students at night. At the corner of 14th and University Ave. is Christian's Pizza and then Boylan Hts. These



2 places occupy a space that used to be The Mousetrap back in the 70s. The Mousetrap was a really popular hangout, though nobody seems to know why. They had this annoying policy in which you were handed a blank receipt on entry, and you had to have it filled out to turn in before leaving. If you didn't, you faced a flat rate of \$25, even if you ordered nothing. That was fine if you remembered to keep it, but some people would just forget and then get into tremendous arguments with the check out personnel over the flat rate. One such argument led to a rather celebrated

lawsuit between The Mousetrap and a UVA graduate that went on for years. The grad actually left the country for awhile then was arrested when he returned to the United States. The case dragged on forever. I seem to remember that the suit was eventually settled between both parties, but you could tell from the newspaper reports that public sympathy was with the grad. The Mousetrap finally called it a career, and I'm sure that decision had something to do with the patience of the Corner participants wearing thin over the stupid receipt policy.

Christian's Pizza is relatively new to the Corner area, having been a popular specialty pizza restaurant on the Downtown Mall for years. The pizza choices are prepared and displayed for customers to select from by the slice, after which it is heated up to be served. This particular location housed a Mexican restaurant until recently named Amigo's (pictured above before the location change). Amigo's was a rather popular University student hangout, because it had good

Mexican food at a cheap price. Amigo's is reportedly moving into a location on the Corner formerly occupied by Tropical Smoothie, which is near the College Inn.

Boylan Heights is a new bar/restaurant that occupies the location that used to be Orbit's beforehand and The Mousetrap before that. It is billed as an upscale burger place. The name is taken from the title of an old vinyl album of the same name by The Connells. The burgers are good, and they have sweet potato fries as an alternative to classic French fries. The BBQ nachos are excellent. The place is loaded with plasma televisions, and the downstairs bar has become my favorite place to watch multiple NCAA football games or NFL games on Saturday. The upstairs has a bar and televisions too, but it also has a band stage and some games, like shuffleboard. Our current residents claim to "own" the shuffleboard scene at Boylston Heights, to the point where they even have their own groupies. The staff there are all great guys and gals, but, like I said, Trinity is taking at least 3 of our favorites. The ownership is the partly the same as that of the Mellow Mushroom (see below). Boylan Heights and the Mellow Mushroom tend to be my 2 favorite places to drink draft beer, watch sports, and eat bar food on The Corner. ...but I may wind up adding Trinity to the list.

Making a left turn back onto University Ave., the next place in line is Café Europa, a Mediterranean cuisine place. The food is really good, and the owner, Gus, is a character. They serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Next in line is Baja Bean, a Mexican restaurant. I'm hardly an expert on Mexican food, but I think this is pretty good. Surprisingly enough, for all the Mexican food on the menu, they also make a great burger platter. They have an upstairs portion for when



the place gets crowded, and the patio out back is available for service when the weather is appropriate. The draft beer selection is good enough, and they have several Mexican beers in bottles. I've heard that their margaritas and other mixed drinks are pretty decent. This place is absolutely packed with students when they have the annual Cinco de Mayo celebration. It's also a popular place during Open Mic Night, when semi-amateur singers play to the crowd.

Next in line on University Ave. is a suntan shop, which somehow stays open in spite of the fact that it seems doomed to failure. This is actually an even older (than the CVS site) location of Plan 9 Music. Knowing the rent on the Corner, I cannot understand how this place stays busy enough to survive. Directly above it are some small apartments which some of the students rent. The next to last establishment to be considered part of the Corner is The Mellow Mushroom (aka The Shroom). As pizza goes, this place has some great pizza. Our department frequent orders pizza from this place when a dental supply vendor comes calling with the guarantee of buying us lunch. The White Pizza, named after the Beatles's White Album, is excellent. So is the Jerk Chicken Pizza, though they have a special variation of this, not on the menu, called the Funky Jerk Chicken Pizza, that is even better? The House Special is another great pizza. They also have great calzones and hoagies (jerk chicken, again, is the best). They have multiple TVs on satellite, so you can pick up just about any sporting event of interest. The bar has something like 35 different draft beers on tap, which is rather incredible selection. I think they have Happy Hour with \$2 draft beer prices until 7:00. As dentists, you should really appreciate their draft beer arrangement from a biofilm standpoint: the kegs are all in a room directly behind the taps, so you are only talking about 4-5 feet of tubing that can accumulate biofilm. These guys actually clean their tubing periodically, which means you don't have extra crud added to your beers (which should explain why the same brand of beer tastes different at different bars). And, as far as the drafts go, "when it rains, it pours"-inclement weather means that beers are half priced. This place

is packed with students for bands. It's also packed on Wednesday nights, which is trivia night—people enter as teams to guess answers to trivia questions mc'ed by the host. The prize is some sort of gift certificate. They also have drink specials during Monday night football, contingent on particular plays during a game (Ex: Punt return for a touchdown in a particular quarter means such-and-such shots are a dollar, etc.). The bartenders are characters.

The informal boundary of the Corner is the Red Roof Inn, which used to be Howard Johnson's in the 70s. The bottom level has a small sandwich place called Jimmy Johns. It's pretty good. Though not part of the Corner per se, I think it's fair to mention the 12th Street Taphouse in the context of this discussion. It's across the street from the Marriott Courtyard hotel, just past the intersection of University Ave., Jefferson Park Ave., and W. Main St.,



barely a stone's throw from our clinic. In the 70s, UVA GPR alums would remember this particular restaurant spot as Expresso's, a place with great pizza but the most unsanitary conditions imaginable. It became Zipper's after that, then became Northern Exposure after that, and was Spry's BBQ about a year ago. The minority owner, manager and other staff who everyone seemed to like at Mike's and were subsequently "let go" decided to renovate this place to open up the 12 St. Taphouse. It worked out well, as it kept the essential menu items that the owner (also head chef) designed before he left Mike's. They have a nice draft beer and wine selection, and they just started a Happy Hour that runs to 6:00. Best of all, it is only a couple of hundred yards from our place of work, 1222 Jefferson Park Ave. When the day is done, we can just walk out our building across the parking lot and into the Taphouse to have "rounds".

As for beyond the Corner Crawl.... In sequence, on W. Main St., are Continental Divide, Maya, Blue Bird Café, and West Main of Virginia on the "Corner" side of the street. On the other side, about the only place of significance is Wild Wings, which shares the parking area with the train station. For some odd reason, Continental Divide is a very popular student hangout. It serves good Mexican food in a smaller, intimate setting. It can get really packed with UVA students, though I can't figure out what sort of pattern that follows. Starr Hill Brewery and Restaurant used to be located next in line, but the restaurant closed down about 6 months ago. The brewery remains in action out of town, and Starr Hill beers are quite well known in this region—the Starr Hill Amber and Jomo Lager are particularly good (Jomo used to be called Mojo, but the name was a copyright infringement, so they changed it just by spelling it backwards....). Maya is billed as southern cuisine, but that's about all I know about the place. Blue Bird Café serves lunch and dinner, but it's probably the most popular brunch restaurant of all that I have mentioned so far. West Main of Virginia used to be Awful Arthur's until a few years ago. I do not know much about this place at all, and somebody told me that it recently closed.

Next stop, the downtown mall, which sort of starts at the Omni Hotel. For a tour of the downtown mall, refer to The Mall Crawl.

TRAVEL |

36 Hours in Charlottesville, Va.

By JOSHUA KURLANTZICK

Though it's known for its neo-Classical architecture, this southern town's innovative culinary and music scene would make Thomas Jefferson proud.