For thousands of years, Indigenous people lived in and migrated throughout the area that we now call the New River Valley. This region has long been stewarded by Eastern Siouan people, who called themselves, “Yesa” and identified with the Monacan Alliance.

Solitude, 1801, as a one-room log structure, later became the center of the Preston property and was expanded to its current configuration. This included dwellings for enslaved people, such as the surviving example - the Fraction Family House, named to honor all who had been enslaved. In 1872, the new Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Virginia Tech) purchased Solitude plantation. The house served many purposes over the next several years before efforts began the 1980s to revitalize the entire site.

Virginia Tech is situated on land that was long the domain of the Monacan-Tutelo peoples. As European settlements expanded onto Indigenous lands, it forced out the Native peoples. In 1798, William Black carved 38 acres from his property to form the village of Blacksburg, and the original 16 blocks. Area leaders supported the establishment of the Olin and Preston Institute in the 1850s which would later transition to Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College as part of the Morrill Land-Grant College Act.
The complete loop of the tour is approximately 2-2.25 miles, beginning on West Campus Drive and following the tour in numerical order.

For many years, Virginia Tech students were all white, all male, and all cadets, and they were mostly Virginia residents and Protestant Christians. By the 1920s, students had come from many states and nations, white women were enrolling, and men could attend as civilians in their third and fourth years. Some students came from Asia, but Black and Native people were barred until decades later.

From the beginning, Black workers contributed to the well-being of Virginia Tech students and faculty, supporting a college that they and their children were barred from attending before the 1950s. In 1953, Irving Peddrew enrolled at Virginia Tech. The eight Black students of the 1950s all lived at the Clay Street home of an elderly Black couple, Janie and William Hoge, who helped introduce them to the wider Black community.