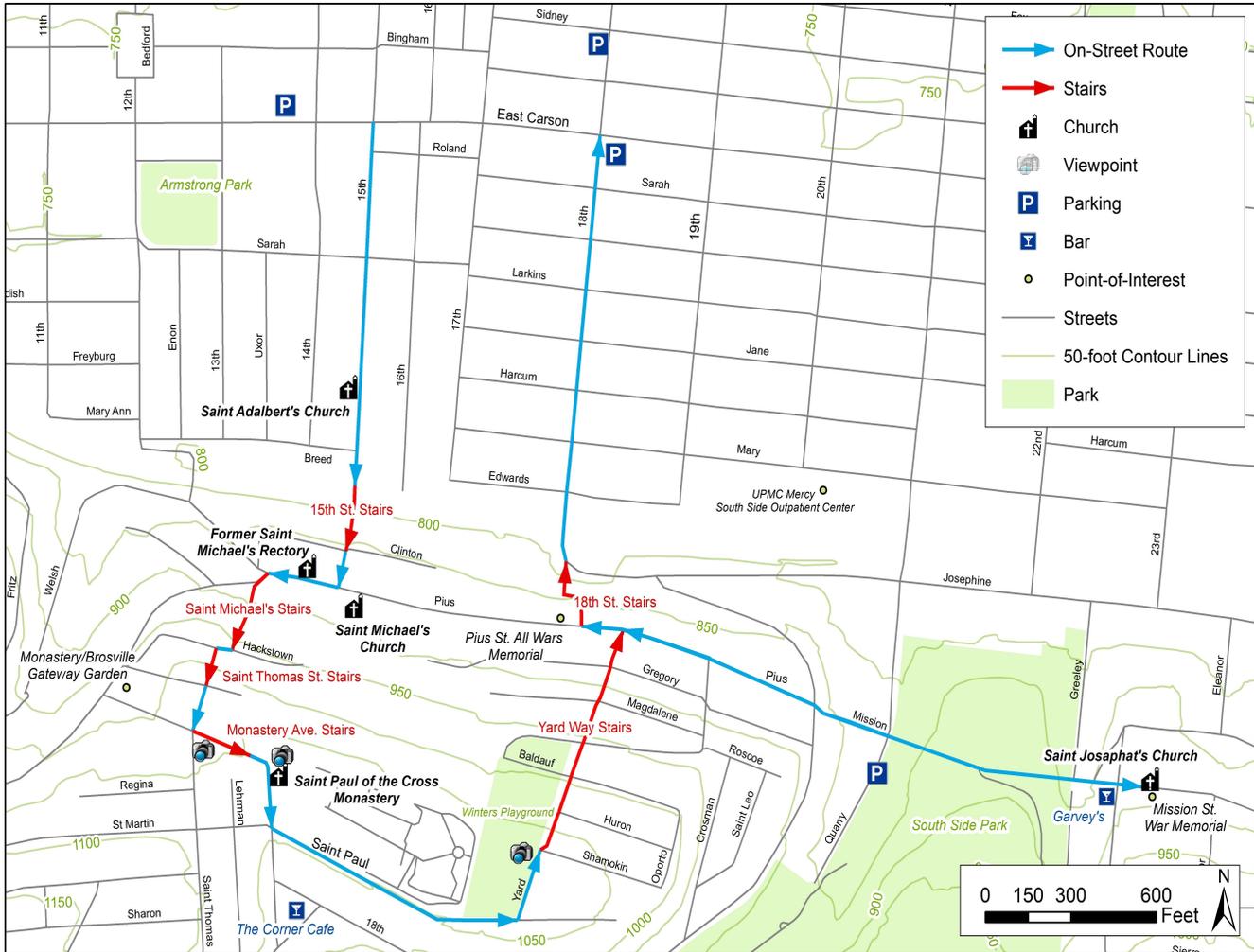


Church Route – Flats to Slopes

SSSNA's StepTrek Church Route



Tim Dolan, May 2012

1. Starting at S.15th and E. Carson streets, walk up S. 15th Street toward the Slopes.

2. S. 15th St. – Continue on S. 15th past St. Adalbert's church (1889) which is part of Prince of Peace Parish of the South Side. This parish is a consolidation of St. Adalbert, St. Casimir, St John The Evangelist, St. Josaphat, St. Matthew, St. Michael and St. Peter churches. Only St. Adalbert and St. Peter remain active. The parish house is at 162 S. 15th and the former convent at 155 S. 15th.

3. S. 15th St. Footbridge – Continue up S. 15th St. to the former Polska Szkola, which sits on the left at the base of the COR-TEN steel footbridge. The school for Polish immigrants was built in 1898. Ascend 59 steps to the footbridge. At the request of the South Side Slopes Neighborhood Association (SSSNA) & Slopes residents, the City and Norfolk Southern railroad completed this footbridge, and the one at 10th St., in summer of 2002 to reinstate pedestrian access between the Slopes and Flats. Ascend 59 steps to Clinton St. Continue straight for 26 more steps and then take a right at St. Michael's on Pius Street.

* St. Michael Church and the Cholera Plague of 1849 – The influence of the church is strong in the Slopes. St. Michael Church was started in a house in 1848 where the church front now stands. The main church was designed by Charles Bartberger and built between 1855 and 1860 on land donated by German immigrants. The surrounding land reminded them of the Rhine River valley. The building's style is Rhineland Romanesque Rival similar to rural Bavarian churches. It has a gothic spire. In 1849, a deadly cholera plague hit Pittsburgh. The parish could not find enough burial places for deceased members. Parishioners prayed to St. Roch and vowed to keep a day holy if the plague would cease. It did. Another plague hit the South Side in 1853 but no members of St. Michael died. Cholera Day is still observed each August in Prince of Peace Parish on the South Side. The church was closed through a consolidation within the parish, and St. Michael is being redeveloped as the Angels' Arms condominiums.

* St. Michael's Parish – To view the complex of former parish buildings, turn left on Pius St. The buildings on the right include the Burning Bush, which offers a retreat center for quiet meditation in overnight rooms. At 44 Pius is the former St. Michael's Madchen Schule, which is now home to the Veronica's Veil playhouse. The theatre hosts a series of plays throughout the year but is most famous for the Passion play, Veronica's Veil. Performed each spring during Lent, it is said to be the longest running play in American community theatre. The former convent at 66 Pius Street is now a condominium complex. Turn around and retrace your steps to St. Michael Church.

4. Pius St. – Continue west so you face toward downtown Pittsburgh. Walk to the stop sign and cross the street at the corner of Pius & Brosville St. to the St. Michael St. Steps.

5. St. Michael St. Steps – These steps climb 150 steps to Hackstown St.

6. Hackstown St. – Make a right on Hackstown. Across the street and down 15 yards are the St. Thomas St. steps. Another 50 yards down Hackstown is the Kanyuscak-Zofcin

House at 112 Hackstown. Built and inhabited circa 1890 – 1920, it was the residence of a steelworker from the Jones & Laughlin works along the Monongahela River. When finished, turn around and backtrack to the steps that ascend the hill.

7. St. Thomas St. Steps – These next 78 steps continue up to St. Joseph’s Way. Turn around and you are on level with the top of St. Michael’s Church steeple. Also visible is the Mon River and Pitt’s upper campus. Walk one-half block up to Monastery St.

8. Monastery St. – Cross Monastery St. and make a left. Ascend the 32 steps on the right side, which were built in 1950. Ahead is St. Paul of the Cross Monastery.

* St. Paul of the Cross Monastery – Paul Francis Daneo (1694 – 1776) founded the Passionists order in Italy. Known as the barefoot missionaries, the Passionists vowed to live a life of prayer, poverty, penance and solitude. Bishop Michael O’Connor, the first bishop of Pittsburgh, invited the order over in 1852. The first retreat in the New World was held here in 1855. Designed by Charles Bartberger, the architect who also designed St. Michael Church, it was built in 1859 in the midst of an 11 acre compound chosen for the serenity of its natural beauty and solitude. The architectural style is Romanesque. The interior rose window is a copy of one in Reims, Germany. The church may be open for quiet visitation. On the riverside of the building are views of the Mon and Ohio Rivers and Station Square.

9. Monastery Ave. – From the steps of the church, turn left and walk one block and turn left onto St. Paul St.

10. St. Paul St. – The course winds around the orange brick building housing the Retreat House, which is available for individual retreats by arrangement. SSSNA holds its monthly meetings here. The monastery was founded in 1853. Shielding the monastery from the outside world, a tall, brick wall surrounds the Monastery gardens and Stations of the Cross. Walk the sidewalk along the right of St. Paul to Yard Way.

11. Yard Way – Welcome to Billy Buck Hill! Make a left on Yard Way and walk to Shamokin St. View uptown, Oakland and Greenfield across the river. The South Side Works, under development on the former LTV site, sits to the bottom right. The Yard Way steps, built in 1944, contain a total of 301 steps, and extend down to Pius St. Cross Shamokin and descend 63 steps to Winter’s Playground at Huron St. and another 52 steps to Baldauf St. From Baldauf descend 186 steps past Roscoe St. and Magdalene St. to Gregory St. Cross Gregory. The last 13 steps of Yard Way were rebuilt in preparation for the first StepTrek in 2000.

12. Pius Street. – Make a left and continue along Pius St. to the top of the 18th street stairs, they will be on the right side of the street.

* Detour to Saint Josephat Church – It’s about a 15 minute diversion to visit this Byzantium-influenced church. To skip this detour, jump to #13 in this narrative. Otherwise, turn right on Pius and walk to the stop light at Pius & S. 18th streets. Cross S. 18th and continue east on Mission St. across the two bridges to Sterling St.

* St. Josaphat Church – Dedicated in 1916, the church was built to serve a Polish parish that was established in 1901. The building is Romanesque with a Byzantium influence evident in the arches, pillars and bell tower. The consolidation of Catholic churches a few years ago had limited its usage to weddings and funerals. The church closed permanently after a section of ceiling collapsed about the casket of the last caretaker during his funeral mass. The main altar held relics of St. Josaphat. In the rear, beneath the choir balcony, hung a picture of the Black Madonna. The church is slated to be converted into multiple living units by a Slopes resident. Many Polish descendents continue to inhabit this section of the Slopes. The names of relations and former residents who served in World Wars I & II are seen on the memorial tucked into the hillside across Mission St. from the church. When finished, retrace your steps to S. 18th St. and cross to Pius St. Continue west just before 107 Pius St. are the S. 18th St. steps.

13. S. 18th Street Steps – These steps are being upgraded through a combination of the state’s Elm Street funding and a grant from Duquesne Light’s “Power of Light” program to repair, pressure wash and stain the concrete steps and install LED light fixtures below each stair tread. The fixtures will not only serve the practical need of increasing lighting levels at the footfall areas of the steps, but they will also serve as beacons to passersby, highlighting and celebrating this neighborhood icon. Climb down the 140 steps to 18th St. below.

14. S. 18th St. – Keep to the left and continue down S. 18th under the railroad bridge. The underpass is one of seven that cuts beneath the railroad along the base of the Slopes. In a joint project between the South Side Local Development Co., SSSNA and the city, all of the underpasses were fitted with lights in 2004 and several of the sidewalks were replaced. Continue along S. 28th St. to E. Carson St.

15. E. Carson St. - Take a left & walk three blocks back to the starting point at S. 15th street.

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