

St. Stephen's Slovak Catholic Church
Cambria City Neighborhood
414 Fourth Avenue
Johnstown
Cambria County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5744

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

St. Stephen's Slovak Catholic Church

HABS No. PA-5744

Location: 414 Fourth Avenue (corner of Chestnut Street), Cambria City, Johnstown, Cambria County, Pa.

Description: St. Stephen's faces southeast on a corner lot, with commercial buildings on one side. A four-story building housing the church school, rectory and convent is to the north. The church is 50' x 113', three-bays wide by five bays deep. The exterior walls are finished with an ashlar, smooth-faced stone. The front facade is heavily detailed, displaying a pedimented centerpiece incorporating a large round-headed arch. Two five-story bell towers flank the entrances. There is a front stoop with five concrete steps. Each side bay displays a large round-headed stained glass window. The front-gable roof is covered with tile. The foundation is constructed of rough-faced stone.

The nave is flanked by side aisles, each separated by an arcade of five round-headed arches. The apse is polygonal, with a vaulted ceiling. The main ceiling is barrel-arched and constructed of plaster, with ceiling beams supported by elaborate console brackets. A two-tier gallery, ornamented with plaster decorations of musical instruments and encrusted with gold leaf, is at the south end of the church. The vestibule has a coffered ceiling.

History: The Slovaks of Johnstown founded St. Stephen's Parish in 1891, with Father Francis Horvath celebrating the first mass on October 2nd. After meeting in an abandoned church and then at a frame church on the present site, the congregation laid the cornerstone for the present church in 1909. Construction was completed in September, 1911. The architect was Walter Myton of Johnstown. A four-story brick building housing the church school, rectory, and convent was also constructed in this period. Until the completion of other ethnic churches, St. Stephen's church for many years served a number of other ethnic groups, notably Croatians and Poles. The parish claimed the largest Slovakian Catholic congregation in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s, and the parochial school was the largest such school in Johnstown for many years.

Sources:

"Cambria County Historic Site Survey, Johnstown Inventory," Redevelopment Authority of Cambria County, 1981.

Deed and Tax Assessment Records, Cambria County Courthouse, Ebensburg, Pa.

"History of St. Stephen's Parish, Johnstown, PA." (St Stephen's Church, n.d.).

Kory, William, "The Churches of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Population Survey," (University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown, Summer, 1972).

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP). An overview of history of the city (HABS No. PA-5669) and an overview of the neighborhoods of Cambria City and Minersville (HABS No. PA-5672) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the downtown and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Jeffrey Hickey in August 1988 under the direction of Alison K.

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Hoagland, HABS historian, and Kim E. Wallace, the supervisory historian of the project. Hickey's and other project historians' work was published as The Character of a Steel Mill City: Four Historic Neighborhoods of Johnstown, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1989), edited by Kim E. Wallace. Illustrations in the publication include large format photographs taken by HAER photographer Jet Lowe and 35 mm photographs taken by the project historians.