

South Side FACTS

The incline is one of the most recognizable images of Pittsburgh. Most likely, you have seen an incline, and maybe you've taken a ride on one.

Did you know there were once nineteen inclines in Pittsburgh? This newsletter is filled with facts about inclines from long ago and about the two surviving inclines.

How Inclines Work

The idea of the incline was based on the counter-balance principle used by the ancient Egyptians and Greeks in construction projects. This idea would be put to use carrying people and freight up and down the steep hills in the city of Pittsburgh.

Two cars of equal weight are used, one at each end of a cable that runs through a winding gear at the upper station of the incline. Originally, the gears were powered by steam engines, but now electric motors are used.

Inclines in Pittsburgh

One of the first known inclines in the city was the **Kirk Lewis Incline**. In operation by 1851, it hauled coal from a mine near the top of Mt. Washington, then called "Coal Hill," down to the South Side Flats.

By 1900, there were 19 inclines in Pittsburgh providing access to the hills surrounding the city. Fifteen of those inclines carried only passengers. The other four carried coal and cargo as well.

Only two inclines survive today and both are on the South Side: they are the **Monongahela Incline** and the **Duquesne Incline**. (You'll find information on these inclines on the reverse side of this sheet.)

South Side Inclines

There were at least five inclined planes on the South Side besides the Monongahela and Duquesne Inclines. They are listed here, in the order they opened.

1. The **Mt. Oliver Incline** opened in 1871, rising from 12th and Bradford Streets to Warrington Avenue on Mt. Oliver. It closed in 1951, after 80 years of use!

2. The **Monongahela Freight Incline** carried freight — horses, wagons, and cargo — on a track parallel to the current Monongahela Incline. It was in operation from 1883 to 1935.

3. The **St. Clair Incline** had its lower terminal at 22nd and Josephine Streets. It carried both passengers and freight to and from Salisbury Street on the South Side Slopes, two blocks from Arlington Avenue. It operated from 1886 to 1935.

4. **Castle Shannon #1** opened in 1890, carrying passengers and vehicles. It ran from Carson Street (near the present-day trolley tunnel) to Bailey Avenue on Mt. Washington.

Castle Shannon #2 opened in 1892. It was really more of a cable railroad, with tracks laid on the ground, rather than an inclined plane. It brought people and freight up the back side of Mt. Washington to Bailey Avenue. Passengers would then get off and take the Castle Shannon #1 incline down to the South Side. It closed in 1914.

5. The **Knoxville Incline** opened in 1890. It was the longest incline in Pittsburgh, with 2,644 feet of track — that's almost one-half mile of track. Imagine: the track was a bit longer than the combined height of three US Steel buildings!

The Knoxville Incline had another unusual feature: it was one of only two inclines in Pittsburgh to have a curve in its track. (The Nunnery Hill Incline on the North Side up to Fineview also had a curve.)

Each incline car could carry up to 50 tons of people, horses, wagons, and goods. Eventually, the incline cars even carried automobiles! You could drive into the incline car in your car, and then drive off the incline onto the road! The Knoxville Incline closed in 1960, after 70 years of use.

OVER →

Knoxville Incline, c. 1940



The Two Survivors

Monongahela Incline

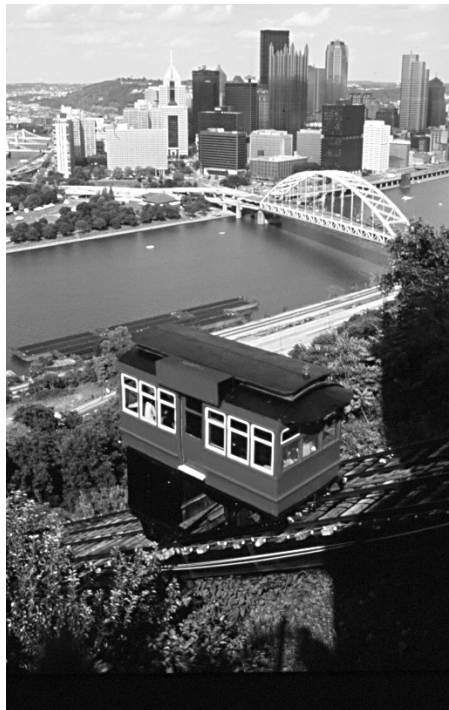
Opened: 1870
Track Height: 367 feet
Track Length: 625 feet
Occupancy of one car: 25 passengers
Operated by: PAT Transit
Call: 412-442-2000 for current fares.

Duquesne Incline

Opened: 1877
Track Height: 400 feet
Track Length: 794 feet
Occupancy of one car: 25 passengers
Operated by: The Society for the Preservation of The Duquesne Heights Incline.
This non-profit group leases the incline from the Port Authority Transit.
Call: 412-381-1665 for current fares.



The Monongahela Incline is the oldest and steepest operating in the country.



The Duquesne Incline cars date back to 1889. They are over 115 years old!

Questions

1. Have you ever been on an incline?

Yes No

If so, which one(s)?

2. How many inclines were there in Pittsburgh in the early 1900s?

3. How old is the Monongahela Incline?

4. How many years separate the opening of the Monongahela and Duquesne Inclines?

5. Which incline went from Josephine Street to Salisbury Street?

6. Besides people, name at least three things that were transported on inclines.

For more incline information, visit:

<http://www.pghbridges.com/inclinelist.htm>

http://www.pghbridges.com/articles/inc_duq_sciam1880.htm



Megan Heilmann, an intern with the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, wrote this fact sheet for students participating in educational programs offered through the Neighborhood Assistance Program/Comprehensive Service Program. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development sponsors the Neighborhood Assistance Program in partnership with the South Side Local Development Company and PNC Bank. For details call the SSLDC at 412-481-0651.



Help us protect the places that make Pittsburgh home.

For more information about our education programs and membership opportunities call 412-471-5808 www.phlf.org