

# Self-Guided Walking Tour of St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery

Welcome to St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery, the oldest site of continuous worship in New York City and the second oldest church in Manhattan. Not only is the St. Mark's campus a beautiful collection of buildings and burial grounds, its unique and interesting history is quintessential New York. The site is officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was designated a New York City Landmark in 1966.

The St. Mark's Church and its yards are just a few reminders of the once vast "bouwerie," or Dutch plantation, which Peter Stuyvesant, governor of New Amsterdam purchased in 1651 from the Dutch West India Company. When Stuyvesant died in 1672, his body was interred in a vault under the family chapel he'd had built in 1660. In 1793, Stuyvesant's great-grandson, Petrus Stuyvesant, donated the chapel property to the Episcopal Church with the stipulation that a new chapel be erected and on April 25, 1795, the cornerstone of St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery was laid.

**1. Sanctuary:** The main portion of the church, designed in the late Georgian tradition, was completed and consecrated on May 9, 1799. The fieldstone church was built by the architect/mason John McComb, Jr.

**2. Steeple:** The Greek Revival steeple, attributed to Martin Euclid Thompson and Ithiel Towne, was erected in 1828. Thompson is also credited with an interior renovation to the Sanctuary, circa 1836. At that time, the original bulky square pillars that supported the balcony were replaced with the present slender Egyptian Revival columns, improving the view from the aisles.

**Clock:** The current clock replaced one installed by the E. Howard and Co. of Boston, which dated from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and was damaged in the 1978 fire. The original mechanism sits in the West Yard; the bell is in the East Yard. The weathervane dates from 1836.

**3. Fence:** The cast and wrought-iron fence, attributed to Martin Euclid Thompson, was erected in 1838.

**4. Portico:** Circa 1858, cast iron, attributed to James Bogardus, noted early proponent and innovator of cast iron construction. Bogardus' prominent use of cast iron exteriors led to the use of steel frames in the construction of whole buildings.

**5. Abe Lebewohl Park:** Created in 1938 by the Works Progress Administration, this small triangle is owned by NYC Parks Department and is named for Ukrainian immigrant, Abe Lebewohl, who owned the famous 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Deli and was instrumental in helping the neighborhood reclaim the park in the 1980s.

**6. "Aspiration" & 7. "Inspiration":** Sculptures of Native American men, carved by sculptor Solon Borglum, brother of the sculptor of Mt. Rushmore, were acquired by Rector Norman William Guthrie in the 1920s. Reverend Guthrie believed in artistic form as religious expression and was responsible for bringing artists in many disciplines to St. Mark's -- a tradition that remains today. Among those who have honed their talents at St. Mark's are Harry Houdini, Patti Smith, Allen Ginsberg, Martha Graham, Khalil Gibran, Ishmael Reed and Sam Shepherd. Two lion sculptures, acquired by Rev. Guthrie in the 1920s, stand guard outside the church doors. The lion is the symbol of St. Mark.

**8. East Yard & 9. West Yard:** Under both yards are stone vaults, in which were placed the coffins of wealthy New York families of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who attended St. Mark's church. The burial of full bodies is no longer permissible in Manhattan, but cremation burials are still done in the church vault in West Yard.

Notable vaults include Petrus Stuyvesant, A.T. Stewart, Nicholas Fish, Gideon Lee, Abraham Schermerhorn, Elizabeth Beekman, Daniel Tompkins, and Philip Hone.

In 1968, the Preservation Youth Project was organized and its workers undertook the restoration and landscaping of both the East and West yards.

**10. Bust of Petrus Stuyvesant:** Designed by Dutch sculptor Toon Dupuis, the bust was presented to St. Mark's by Queen Wilhelmina of Holland and the Dutch Government on December 5, 1915.

**11. Parish Hall:** The stone portion was added by John C. Tucker in 1835. In 1861 James Renwick, Jr. designed the brick addition.

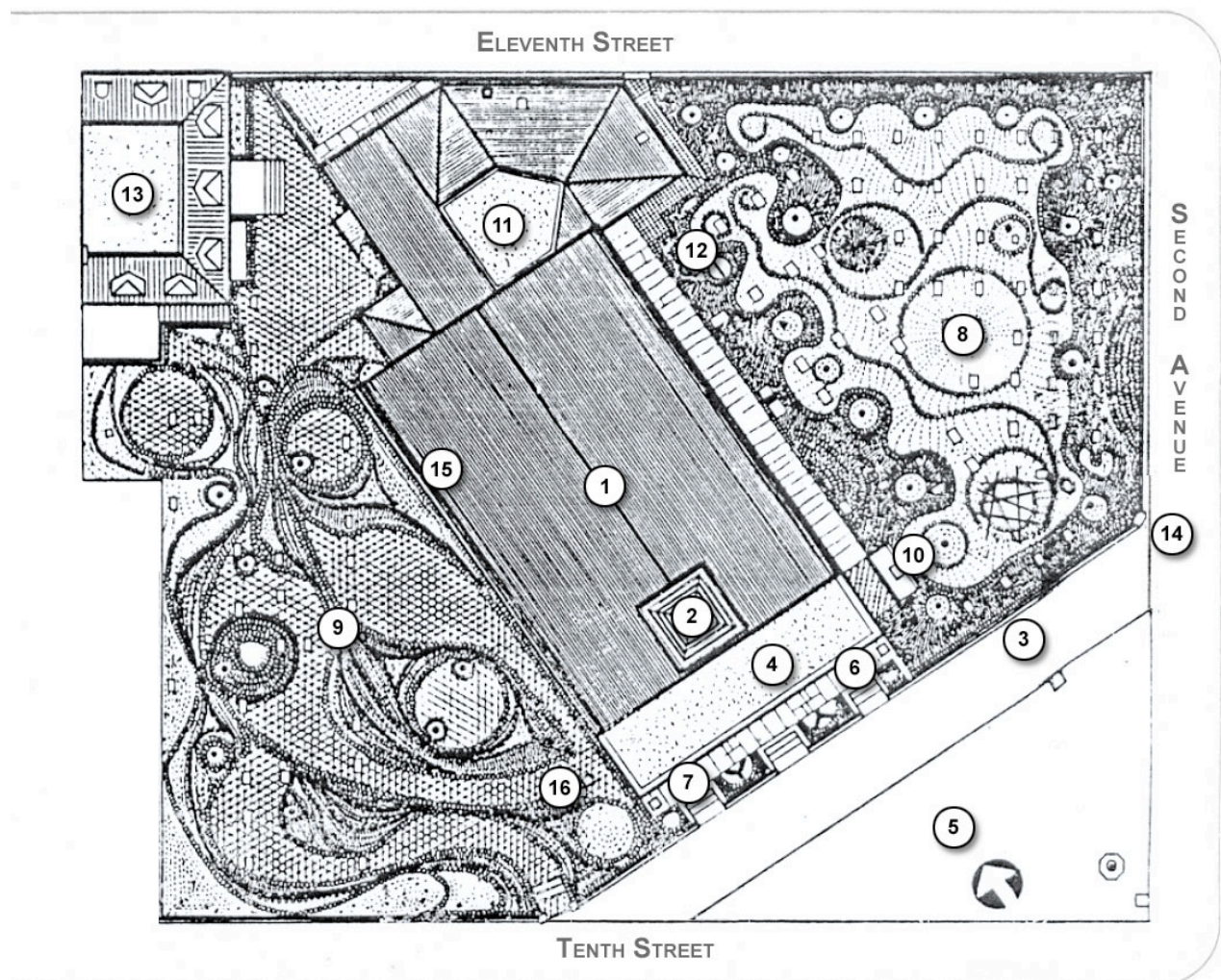
**12. Bell:** 1836; cracked in 1978 fire; rang for JFK and MLK, Jr.

**13. Rectory:** 1901; Ernest Flagg. An important American architect famous for his fluency in the Beaux-Arts style, Flagg designed the Rectory in 1900. After the rectory was badly damaged in a 1988 fire, and an adaptive reuse design was undertaken by the Edelman Partnership. The Rectory reopened as the Neighborhood Preservation Center in 1999 and is now home to the St. Mark's Historic Landmark Fund, the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, the Historic Districts Council, along with other groups working toward the preservation and improvement of the urban environment.

**14. Stone Fountain:** Dedicated to the memory of Elizabeth Spingler vanBeuren born March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1831, died July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1908. She lies in this churchyard to the west side of the church.

**15. Stained Glass Windows:** In 1885 patterned stained glass windows were installed on the main floor and the balcony of the church's sanctuary; a fire in 1978 destroyed the upper windows, they were replaced with modern windows designed by architect Harold Edelman.

**16. Bust of Daniel D. Tompkins:** Sculpted in bronze by Oliver Grymes; presented to St. Mark's on November 2, 1939 by the U.S. Daughters of 1812.



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*Courtesy of the St. Mark's Historic Landmark Fund. For more information about the Landmark Fund and its programs or about the cultural history of St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery, call 212-228-2781 or go to [www.smhlf.org](http://www.smhlf.org).*

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