



H O U R G L A S S

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C. Emlen Urban

19th and 20th Century Architect Re-defined the Architecture of Lancaster City

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- Cassius Emlen Urban was born February 20, 1863 in Conestoga Township, just prior to the start of the Civil War.
- Siblings - 3 sisters and 1 brother. The brother also worked in architecture.
- He graduated at 17 years old from Lancaster's Boys High School in 1880. He had no further formal education beyond high school.
- He apprenticed as a draftsman at the E. L. Walter architectural firm in Scranton, PA. His apprenticeship was followed by working in the office of Willis G. Hale in Philadelphia, a renowned architect. Hale's flamboyant, highly-ornate style was popular in the 1880s and 1890s. It fell out of fashion in the 20th century.
- As a 23-year old, in 1886, Urban returned to Lancaster from Philadelphia and opened a private practice. He designed many of Lancaster's notable buildings. He understood the connection between civic involvement and relationship building. He quickly became involved with many civic and social clubs.
- Today, there are 30 buildings within 1200 feet of Lancaster's Soldier's Monument that were designed by Urban. 20 architectural styles were utilized of which he was proficient in each. He practiced in 16 communities within 3 states.
- In 1888, at the age of 27 years old, his first commission was the design of the Southern Market. The building is of the Queen Anne style.
- In 1890 he was commissioned to design a mansion at 222 South Queen St. for Mary Bowers in the Shingle style. The house was subsequently purchased by Milton Hershey. One year later Hershey commissioned Urban to renovate the house. (Save-A-Lot is located on this site today.)
- Menno Fry, a prominent tobacco merchant commissioned Urban to build a mansion for him on West Chestnut Street in the Chateausque style. This commission was followed by a commission from Peter T. Watt to design a home located at the corner of Marietta Avenue and North President Avenue. Both of these prestigious homes remain today.

- At 30 years old, in 1897, Urban was commissioned to build the Stelhi Silk Mill. The Mill was the largest and longest in the United States.
- In 1896, Urban was again commissioned by Peter T. Watt to design the Watt & Shand Department Store. The store was designed in the Beaux Arts style.
- In 1903, Urban designed St. James Parish in the Georgian revival style.
- In 1904, Urban designed the Stevens School in the French Renaissance style. His designed was criticized as being too extravagant for a school.
- In 1904, Urban was commissioned to renovate the interior of the Fulton Opera House. The interior is designed in an Italianate style.
- In 1907, Urban was commissioned to design a planned community on the other side of town. The Fulton Hotel designed in Georgian Revival style was the center piece of the planned community.
- In 1900, Milton Hershey had a falling out with Lancaster City officials. He was asked to provide funding to the Republican Party, which he refused to do. Overnight his significant real estate holdings experienced a doubling of the tax assessment on the properties. This was in retaliation to his refusal. Hershey sold his properties and decided to start his own town - Hershey, Pennsylvania.
- Urban was then commissioned by Hershey to lay out the town of Hershey. He was commissioned to design the homes for Milton Hershey and Hershey executives. The houses remain today. Hershey's home, High Point Mansion was completed in 1908 in the Neo-classical style.
- The ornate Hershey Theatre was completed in 1916 as a community center in the Italian Renaissance style.
- Simultaneously Urban continued his work in Lancaster with the design of: the Unitarian Church, the Hagar building; the Kirk Johnson building; Keppel Factory; his own home on Race Avenue; Fulton Boys School; the Demuth Store; the Greist building; the interior of City Hall; and the home of the current Franklin and Marshall President located on Marietta Avenue.
- Urban never traveled to Europe until he retired in his 70s.
- Urban died at the age of 76 on May 21, 1939.