

C.E. Urban Telephone Building: 123 North Market Street; Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania



Abstract:

The C.E. Urban Telephone Building, designed by the famous Cassius Emlen Urban and built in 1934, encompasses beautiful elements of Colonial-Revival architecture. Among the most intriguing aspects of the building are the concrete filled arches, Palladian window, and red brick. C.E. Urban was one of the most famous architects of his time. Throughout his career, Urban designed over 100 buildings, nine of which were listed on the National Historic Register. After the building's construction in 1934, Kathryn S. Demy became first owner of the property. In 1966, the Columbia Telephone Company purchased the property. The Columbia Telephone Company was granted authorization to place a tax on telephones back in 1898. Ever since the company took ownership of the building in 1966, the property has been used for the telephone business.

Property Details:

The C.E. Urban Telephone Building is located at 123 North Market Street Elizabethtown, PA 17022. According to the Lancaster Property Tax Inquiry, the building measures 5,614 square feet, and the lot contains 17,860 square feet.¹ The property was built in 1934 by the architect Cassius Emlen Urban after the Columbia Telephone company introduced a new battery telephone system.²

Deed Search:

The current community of Elizabethtown is situated between the Conoy Creek and the Conwego Creek along the Susquehanna River. In 1534 French King Francis, I (1494-1547) colonized North America establishing New France with Jacques Cartier (1491-1557) as Viceroy in Quebec. As early as 1615 Étienne Brûlé (1592-1633) explored the Susquehanna River and its tributaries in Lancaster County. Pennsylvania was claimed by Sweden in 1638 and then by the Dutch in 1655. The British claimed the former Dutch holdings in 1674. British King Charles, II (1630-1685) granted William Penn (1644-1718) the Province of Pennsylvania in 1681. The French and British disputed control of Pennsylvania between 1688-1763. During this time in 1707 French fur trader Peter Bezaillion (1662-1742) established a settlement between the Conoy and Conwego Creeks along the Susquehanna River. In 1719 Peter Bezaillion invited the Piscataway Indians to move from

¹ "Lancaster Property Tax Inquiry," DEVNET Inc., February 3 2017, accessed February 5, 2017.

² MacMaster, Richard K., Elizabethtown, the First Three Centuries. (Elizabethtown, PA: Elizabethtown Historical Society, 2000), 224.

Maryland and settle with him along the Cony Creek and Susquehanna River. Captain Thomas Harris (1695-1801) settled in Pennsylvania in 1726. In 1730, Harris built a log cabin along the Conoy Creek. Harris legally acquired the land in 1741 and built the stone house in 1745. The chain of command is as follows: Lazarus Lowry (15 July 1751 – 13 June 1753),³ Barnabus Hughes (13 June 1753 – 10 June 1786),⁴ Samuel Hughes (10 June 1786 – 28 October 1790),⁵ Alexander Boggs (28 October 1790 – 21 February 1809),⁶ George Wealand (21 February 1809 – 10 April 1809),⁷ John George (10 April 1809 – 31 March 1830),⁸ John Bender (31 March 1830 – 19 March 1834),⁹ Thomas Winnemore (19 March 1834 – 1 April 1844),¹⁰ Henry W. Gingrich (1 April 1844 – 11 April 1855),¹¹ Andrew Wade (11 April 1855 – 14 November 1857),¹² Henry A. Wade (14 November 1857 – 2 April 1854),¹³ Martin G. Keller (2 April 1884 – 4 August 1902).¹⁴ These were all the original owners of the lot of Elizabethtown. After the building was constructed in 1934, the first owner was Kathryn S. Demy. On 12 February 1935, she sold the property to Albert S. Ebersole.¹⁵ Albert would own the property until selling to Esther S. Brinser on 2 October 1937.¹⁶ Esther was the executrix of Kathryn S. Demy. Brinser eventually sold to Allen K. Demmy on 29 August 1962.¹⁷ Four years later on 24 May 1966, Allen K. Demmy's heir, Clinton K. Dehme, sold the property to the Columbia United Telephone Company who still owns the property today.¹⁸

Architectural Style:

The building was built during the Colonial Revival Era (1880-1955). It has Federal Style, an American neoclassical architecture. The neoclassical style was prominent during the enlightenment period of the mid 18th century. Greek Revival neoclassical architecture was popular in the United States and France at the time. The simplicity of the architecture was called Federal Style in the U.S because it was “seen as a suitably republican antidote to the decadence and overelaboration of imperial Roman architecture and its derivatives.”¹⁹ The keystones above the arches are an attribute to Pennsylvanian history as the Keystone state. The concrete arches at one time were windows and the reason for the filling is unknown. The property was designed by Cassius Emlen Urban, an architect who designed many building in the Lancaster area. Urban was the President of the Southern Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. He designed over 100 buildings, 2/3 of which were public buildings. Nine were listed on the National Historic Register. Some of Urban's most famous works were the Fulton School and the Hotel Brunswick.

Historical Context and Purpose:

In 1897, the Pennsylvania Telephone Company was authorized to build poles and wires around the borough.²⁰ The Pennsylvania Telephone Company was often referred to as the Bell Telephone Company.²¹ On the same day the company was given this authorization, they adopted an ordinance which placed a tax on telegraph, telephone, electric, railroad, and pipeline poles.²² This same opportunity was granted to the

³ MacMaster, 224.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Book: 1, Page Number: 120.

⁸ Book: Q, Volume 5, Page Number: 53.

⁹ Book: Q, Volume 5, Page Number: 55.

¹⁰ Book: D, Volume 6, Page Number: 45.

¹¹ Book: Y, Volume 6, Page Number: 386.

¹² Book: I, Volume 8, Page Number: 262.

¹³ Book: A, Volume 9, Page Number: 34.

¹⁴ Book: D, Volume 12, Page Number: 108.

¹⁵ Lancaster County Recorder of Deeds, Search Public Records, Document, Book: C32, Page Number: 88.

¹⁶ Book: H, Volume 33, Page Number: 85.

¹⁷ Book: Z, Volume 51, Page Number: 585.

¹⁸ Book: R, Volume 55, Page Number: 01051.

¹⁹ Carol Davidson Cragoe, How to Read Buildings, (New York, NY: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 2008), 40.

²⁰ MacMaster, 151.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

Columbia Telephone Company a year later. In 1898, the Pennsylvania Telephone Company had only fifteen subscribers, but the number increased to 222 subscribers by 1914.²³

The original building for this property was constructed in 1934. The telephone company originally owned a building on South Market Street. There was no previous building on the lot. At the newly built building, three telephone operators received and relayed calls at the switch board.²⁴ A detached building was added to the property in 1980. Since the Columbia Telephone Company purchased the property in 1966, the building has been used for the telephone business ever since.

²³ MacMaster, 152.

²⁴ Ibid., 224.

Appendix Historical Photo:



Appendix Current Photos:

