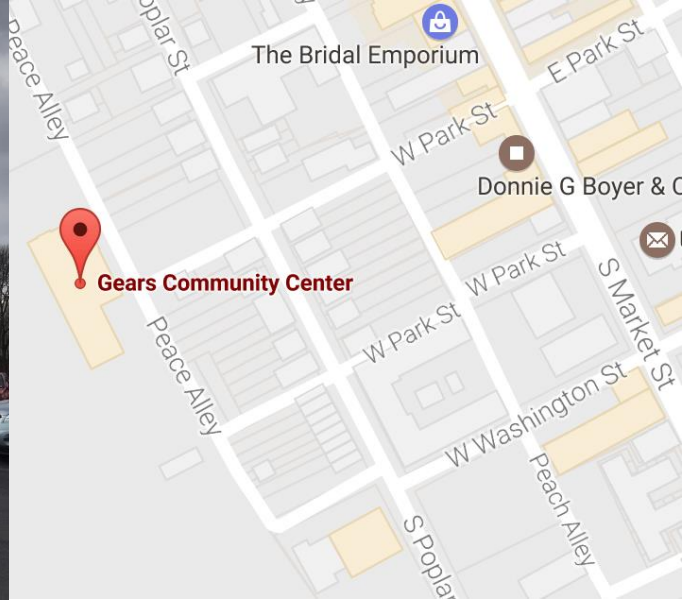


## C. E. Urban Elizabethtown Public High School: 70 South Poplar Street Elizabethtown, PA



### Abstract:

The Elizabethtown Public High School, designed by Cassius Emlen Urban and was built in 1928. It contains beautiful Colonial Revival style architecture which was the signature style of Cassius Emlen Urban. The Colonial Revival style is very distinct and is demonstrated by the design filled stones cross the top of the building. Additionally, the Palladian arches above the windows and the robust arches that announce the main entrances of the building are strong indicators of the Colonial Revival Style. The building was built in response to the original school burning down in 1911. From the time it opened until 1958 this building was filled with students on a daily basis. In 1985, the building was renovated and repurposed to be used for the new owners, the Greater Area Elizabethtown Recreation Services (GEARS) Center and continues to expand its services to the community.

### Property Details:

The Elizabethtown Public High School, a community enrichment building designed by architect Cassius Emlen Urban and built in 1928, located at 70 South Poplar Street in Elizabethtown. Lancaster County Recorder of Deeds cites the perimeter of building to measure 214 feet x 94 feet. Thus, the building contains 20,116 square feet.<sup>1</sup>

### 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.<sup>2</sup> As early as 1615 Étienne Brûlé (1592-1633) explored the Susquehanna River and its tributaries in Lancaster County.<sup>3</sup> Pennsylvania was claimed by Sweden in 1638 and then by the Dutch in 1655. The British claimed the former Dutch holdings in 1674.<sup>4</sup> British

<sup>1</sup> Lancaster Property Tax Inquiry, Parcel: 2507636300000, <http://lancasterpa.devnetwedge.com/parcel/view/2507636300000/2017>.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Jean Knecht, *Francis I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 333-343.

<sup>3</sup> Consul Willshire Butterfield, *History of Brulé's Discoveries and Explorations, 1610-1626 Being a Narrative of the Discovery by Stephen Brulé of Lakes Huron, Ontario and Superior, and of his Explorations of Pennsylvania and western New York: Also of the Province of Ontario* (Cleveland, OH: Herman-Taylor, 1898), 49-51.

<sup>4</sup> Randall M. Miller, ed., *Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2002), 50-60.

King Charles, II (1630-1685) granted William Penn (1644-1718) the Province of Pennsylvania in 1681.<sup>5</sup> The French and British disputed control of Pennsylvania between 1688-1763.<sup>6</sup> During this time in 1707 French fur trader Peter Bezaillon (1662-1742) established a settlement between the Conoy and Conwego Creeks along the Susquehanna River.<sup>7</sup> In 1719 Peter Bezaillon invited the Piscataway Indians to move from Maryland and settle with him along the Cony Creek and Susquehanna River.<sup>8</sup> Captain Thomas Harris (1695-1801) settled in Pennsylvania in 1726. In 1730, he builds a log cabin along the Conoy Creek and in 1741 he legally receives the warrant to the land.<sup>9</sup> Then, in 1745 he builds the Sign of the Bear Tavern, which is the first permanent structure in Elizabethtown.<sup>10</sup>

There are only two deeds for this property. When the building was built in 1926 the lot was owned by the Elizabethtown Public School District. Then in 1975, The Elizabethtown Area Recreation Committee acquired this building from the school district as a community center.<sup>11</sup>

### **Architectural Style Report:**

The Elizabethtown Public High School is designed by Cassius Emlen Urban and is consistent with his usual Colonial Revival Style. The Colonial Revival style is evident in the designs in the block along the top of the building.<sup>12</sup> These designs often are designed after Greek or Roman governmental figures.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the large arches around the entrances to the building are very indicative of the Revival style, called triumphal arches.<sup>14</sup> The windows on the front of the building are large rectangular windows which are a part of the Colonial style.<sup>15</sup> The Palladian arches that are above each of the windows also exemplifies the Colonial Revival style.<sup>16</sup>

### **Historical Context and Purpose:**

The building that is standing on Poplar Street that is currently the Greater Elizabethtown Area Recreation Center and previously the Public High School was not the first High School of Elizabethtown. The first high school was located on the corner of Poplar and High Streets.<sup>17</sup> This property was destroyed in a fire on 11 December 1911.<sup>18</sup> The current building was built in 1928 and held classes until the 1958.<sup>19</sup> The Elizabethtown Area School District had moved to its current location further down East High Street after vacating the property on South Poplar Street.<sup>20</sup> In 1977, the Elizabethtown Area Recreation Commission was created and by 1985, the former high school was restored into the Elizabethtown Community Center.<sup>21</sup>

The most notable person who is associated with this property is Cassius Emlen Urban. Urban was the architect that designed the Elizabethtown Public High School that was built in 1928.<sup>22</sup> C.E. Urban was born on 20 February 1863.<sup>23</sup> He started out his career as a carpenter creating coffins.<sup>24</sup> He graduated from Lancaster's

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<sup>5</sup> Jean R. Soderlund, William Penn and the Founding of Pennsylvania, 1680-1684: A Documentary History (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1983), 39-50.

<sup>6</sup> Henry Meclchior Muhlenberg Richards, The Pennsylvania-Germans in the French and Indian War: A Historical Sketch Prepared at the Request of the Pennsylvania-German Society (Lancaster: The Pennsylvania German Society, 1905), 16-22.

<sup>7</sup> David L. Martin, A Clash of Cultures: Native Americans and Colonialism in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania (Morgantown, PA: Masthof Press, 2010), 21-23.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Richard K. MacMaster, Elizabethtown: The First Three Centuries (Elizabethtown, PA: Elizabethtown Historical Socoeity, 1999), 5.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Paul Benowitz, Elizabethtown: Images of America, (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2015), 868.

<sup>12</sup> Carol Davidson Cragoe, How To Read Buildings, (New York, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2008), 86.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Jean-Paul Benowitz, Elizabethtown: Images of America, (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2015), 865.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 868.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 864.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 871.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 868.

<sup>23</sup> Jean-Paul Benowitz. C.E. Urban Lecture. (2017).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Boys High School in 1880 and went straight into the architectural business as an apprentice draftsman in the office of E.L. Walter in Scranton.<sup>25</sup> After a one year apprenticeship he continued work as a designer for Willis G. Hale in Philadelphia.<sup>26</sup> After spending 3 years (1881-1884) with Hale, C.E. Urban moved back to Lancaster County and began his claim to fame.<sup>27</sup> His first project that he took control of was one of the early buildings in Lancaster County which became the home of the United States Post Office.<sup>28</sup> He became a member of the American Institute of Architects, president of the Southern Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and a member of the T-Square club in Philadelphia.<sup>29</sup> For years, he designed over 100 buildings around Lancaster County, clearly leaving his mark on the area.<sup>30</sup> He retired in 1937 at the age of 74 and passed away two years later on 21 May 1939 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.<sup>31</sup> He is survived by his work that is still very evident in the county today only about 25 of his buildings being torn down or altered and nine being listed on the National Historical Register.<sup>32</sup>

C.E. Urban's work is astounding and can be seen all over Lancaster County.<sup>33</sup> He is most well known for his work on what is now the Marriot Hotel and Convention Center in the square of Lancaster county.<sup>34</sup> This building was formerly known as the Watt & Shand Department Store.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, he designed Lancaster City Hall, Hershey Auditorium and Theater.<sup>36</sup> C.E Urban also designed the Krieder Shoe Factory, Elizabethtown Public High School, the Loyal Order of the Moose Building, and the Telephone Company.<sup>37</sup>

**Appendix Historical Photos:** *Photo Courtesy of the Elizabethtown Historical Society.*

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> H.M.J. Kline. *A History of Lancaster County.* (Lewis Historical Pub. Co., Inc. New York, New York, 1924).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Jean-Paul Benowitz. *C.E. Urban Lecture.* (2017).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

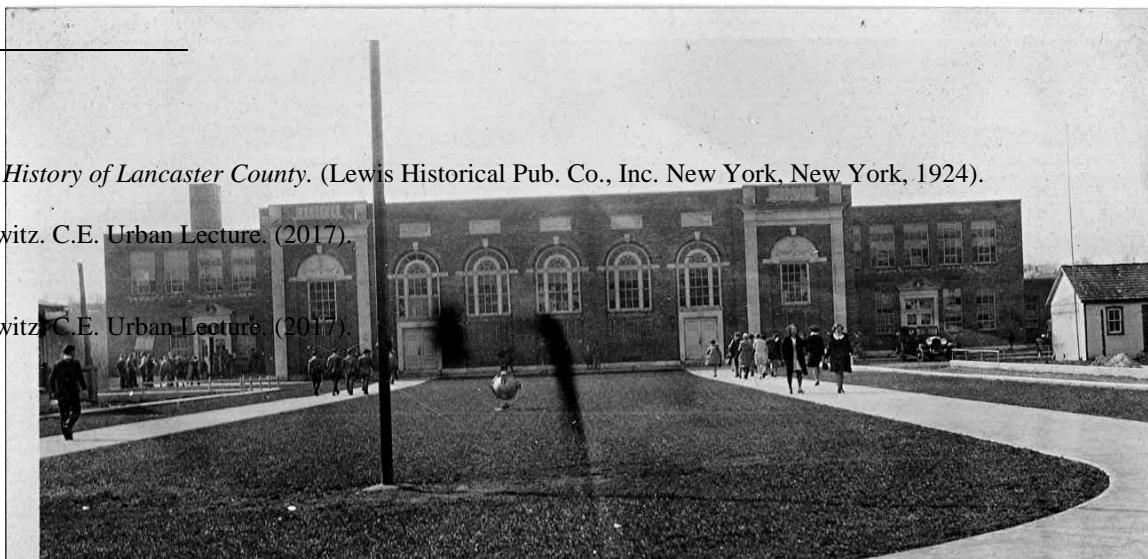
<sup>33</sup> Jean-Paul Benowitz. *C.E. Urban Lecture.* (2017).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.



**Appendix Current Photos:**



