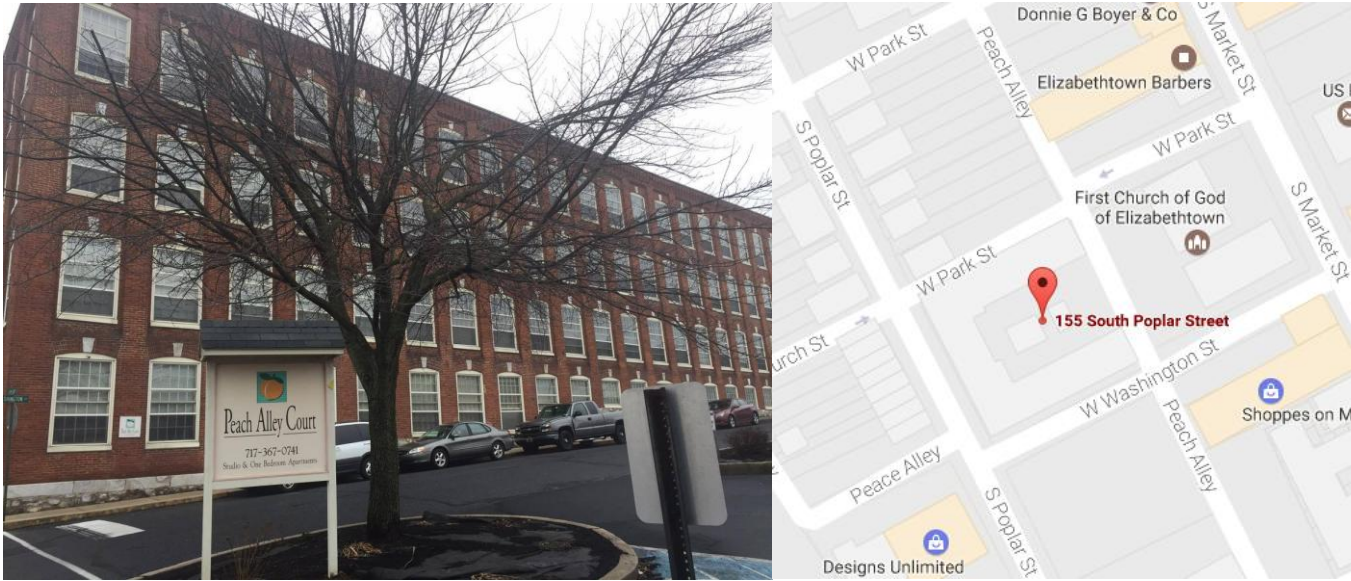


Kreider Shoe and Elizabethtown Garment Factory: 155 South Poplar Street; Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania



Abstract:

The Kreider Shoe and Elizabethtown Garment Factory, built in 1905, is a wonderful example of industrial architecture informed by Victorian sensibilities. One of the most well-preserved buildings in Elizabethtown from this era, it features repeating bays and an interesting building pattern. It is speculated that it was designed by C. Emlen Urban, due to similarities in style and historical continuity. The factory housed the Aaron Shenk Kreider Shoe company from 1905 to 1954. Kreider was a member of the Church of the Brethren, and attended Lebanon Valley College. By the 1930s, the company was dependent on contracts with the Pennsylvania State Police for existence. In 1954, the factory was sold to the Elizabethtown Garment Company, which operated for twenty years. Since then, it was sold and readied for admission to the National Register of Historic Places.

Property Details:

The former Kreider Shoe Factory was built in 1905. While the actual constructor was not recorded (or such a record has been lost), it is known that prior to the factory, the property was an undeveloped lot. The dimensions of the property are 115.8' x 198' x 118' x 70.5' x 197.7'.¹

Deed Search Report:

Deed research dates ownership from the "A. S. Kreider Company" (a name assumed in 1915) from 1905-1954,² followed by a sale to the Elizabethtown Garment Company in 1954.³ Names associated with the Garment Company include J. W. Atkins, Lee Keb, N. W. Eshelman, and Ben Beyer. In 1974, the property was sold to William Hess,⁴ who readied it for submission to the National Register of Historic places, and sold it to the "Elizabethtown Historic Associates" in 1980.⁵ It was then sold to the Peach Alley Court Historic Associates

¹ National Register of Historic Places, "Kreider Shoe Manufacturing Company, Elizabethtown, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania." NRHP Nomination Form, Ref. No. 80003515, 1980.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Lancaster County Recorder of Deeds, Search Public Records, Book: B65, Page: 626, accessed April 19, 2017, <https://searchdocs.lancasterdeeds.com/countyweb/disclaimer.do>

⁵ Book: H, Volume: 80, Page: 156.

in 1983,⁶ and finally to “Peach Alley, LP” in 1998 (which would later change its name to “Peach Alley Court, LP” in 2010).⁷

Architectural Style:

The building was constructed in an Industrial-Victorian style in a U-shape with repeating windows and a straight line built into an inclining landscape for climate control purposes. According to its National Register of Historic Places nomination form:

“This is an imposing and very substantially intact example of an industrial structure built in the first decade of the twentieth century. Varying from three to four full stories in height, the overall structure is U-shaped with a large courtyard... This factory building stands on a rough limestone foundation, which is partially exposed in some areas. All walls are built of brick laid in common bond with well-preserved joints... a bold and well executed corbelled brick cornice demarcates the roofline. This cornice actually is a parapet that screens the roof, which slopes gently toward the inner courtyard... the sheer mass of the building, and the repetition of the bays, give a great sense of solidity and monumentality.”⁸

Historical Context and Purpose:

The Kreider Shoe Manufacturing Company was an essential element of the economy of Elizabethtown in the 1900s. “The Kreider Shoe Manufacturing Company stands as a monument to an important industry that was of key importance to Elizabethtown’s economy for about half a century... No documents are known to survive that identify [either] the architect or the builder. However, it is interesting to note that somewhat similar industrial buildings in Lancaster County dating circa 1895-1910 were designed by C. Emlen Urban, Lancaster’s leading architect for nearly half a century... this was one of the two most important companies in the Elizabethtown area in the first half of this century.”⁹ There is also substantial historical precedent to suspect that Urban was the architect of this building, as he also designed similar factory-residence setups as near to Elizabethtown as Hershey.¹⁰

“This was one of the two most important companies in the Elizabethtown area... In the 1920s, the A. S. Kreider Company was one of the... leading shoe manufacturers in Lancaster County. Thus, for the socio-economic continuum of regional history, this structure holds great importance.”¹¹

The owner and namesake of the A. S. Kreider Company, Aaron Shenk Kreider, was originally an agriculturalist from South Annville Township, Pennsylvania. A member of the Church of the Brethren,¹² he attended Lebanon Valley College and Allentown Business College, graduating in 1880 and moving to Fulton, Missouri. Returning to Pennsylvania in 1884, he became a mercantilist in Campbelltown and operated occasionally in Roseland. He established the municipality of Lawn, Pennsylvania in 1886, and moved to Palmyra, Pennsylvania in 1893. Around this time, he became interested in shoe manufacturing and banking, founding the company during this period. In 1909 he was elected to the Board of Commissioners of Annville, and in 1910 went as a delegate to the Republican State Convention. He then served as president of the National Association of Shoe Manufacturers from 1913 to 1916, and was elected to Congress five times from 1913 to 1923, losing re-election in 1922. After losing re-election, he became president of the board of trustees of Lebanon Valley and Elizabethtown Colleges and continued his earlier manufacturing pursuits, before dying on May 19th of 1929.¹³

Kreider’s shoe manufacturing was of paramount importance to the Elizabethtown economy for the first half of the twentieth century. Employing 450 people by the 1920s, the factory was producing five thousand

⁶ Book: D, Volume: 88, Page: 24.

⁷ Book: 5617, Page: 21.

⁸ National Register of Historic Places, “Kreider Shoe Manufacturing Company, Elizabethtown, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.”

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ “Urban, C. Emlen; 1863-1939”, *Hershey Community Archives*, accessed April 30, 2017, <http://www.hersheyarchives.org/essay/details.aspx?EssayId=34&Rurl=%2Fresources%2Fsearch-results.aspx%3FType%3DBrowseEssay>.

¹¹ National Register of Historic Places, “Kreider Shoe Manufacturing Company, Elizabethtown, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.”

¹² Jean-Paul Benowitz, *Elizabethtown* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing), 2015.

¹³ “KREIDER, Aaron Shenk”, *Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress*, accessed May 3, 2017, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=K000327>

pairs of shoes daily in 1915. By the depression, business slowed down, but ultimately did not falter until the 1950s, when increases in foreign trade brought cheap imported shoes to American markets at a fraction of the cost of domestically-produced shoes.¹⁴ By the 1930s, the company was dependent on contracts with the Pennsylvania State Police.¹⁵ From the period of 1905 to 1954, however, the A. S. Kreider Shoe Company was one of the most important manufacturing forces in central Pennsylvania, striking various deals with municipal authorities such as police, and producing innovative products like the “Pollyanna Health Shoes,” which were purported to have “special orthopedic features not contained in any popular priced shoes” at the time.¹⁶

In 1954, the factory was sold to the Elizabethtown Garment Company, which produced clothing in the space at 155 South Poplar St. until its dissolution in 1975. The Elizabethtown Garment Company’s records have been apparently lost, but it is known that they purchased the building for \$125,000.¹⁷

The likely architect of the factory, C. Emlen Urban, was born in 1863. Graduating from Boys High School in Lancaster in 1880, he apprenticed as a draftsman at E. L. Walter’s architectural firm in Scranton before returning to Lancaster in 1886 to design several notable buildings, including the County Courthouse, the Watt and Shand Department Store, the Unitarian Church, and the Farmer’s Southern Market. Urban’s architecture was an eclectic mix of various styles such as that of the Colonial Revival, but generally, his work was an example of a modernized sort of Victorian style.¹⁸

The factory is surrounded by working-class housing and neighborhoods, a typical fixture of factory construction and influence in 19th/20th century America. The neighborhood and context of the factory is largely emblematic of the fall of the manufacturing and industrial economic sectors in the mid-to-late 20th century. The explosion of the service industry and rise of cheap foreign-made goods did irreparable damage to American manufacturing, and what was once a booming industrial town slowly became an effective bedroom community in no small part thanks to the changing nature of the national and regional economy.

¹⁴ Patsy and Lloyd Reed, “Savoy Shoe Company, Gone but Not Forgotten”, *Elizabethtown Advocate* (Elizabethtown, PA), June 1, 2006.

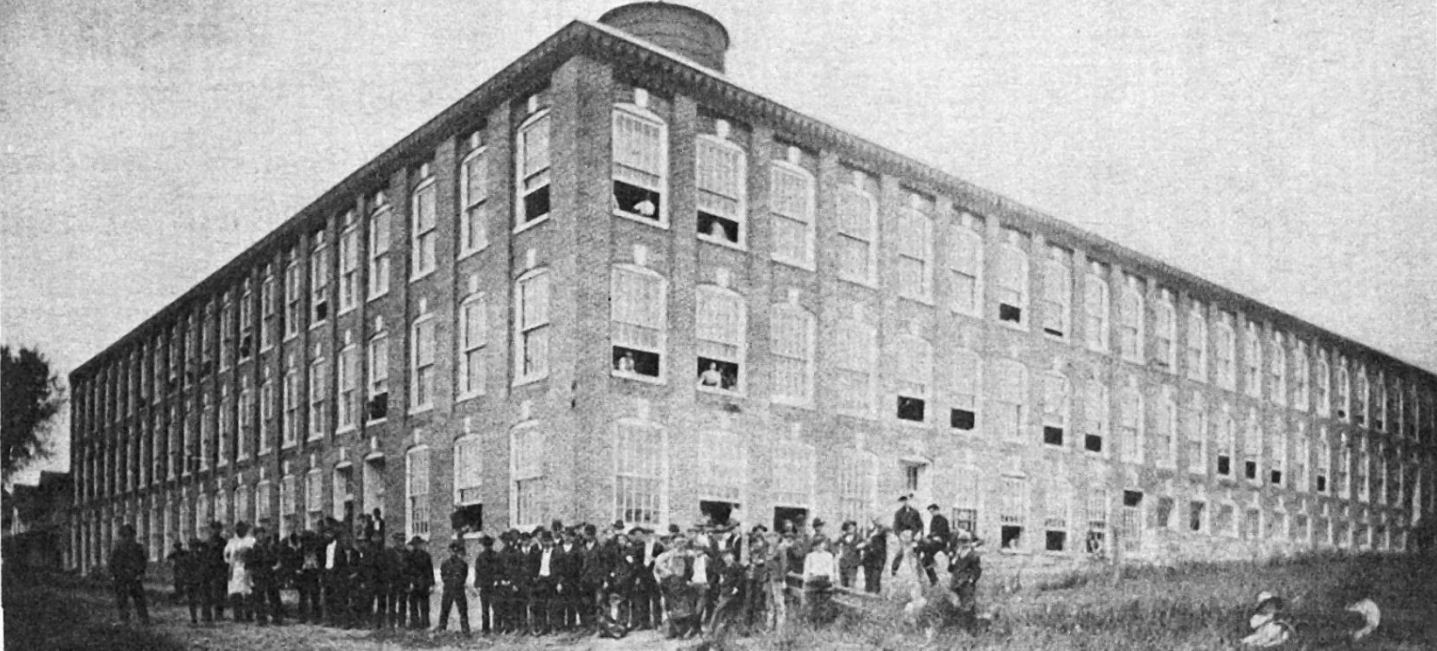
¹⁵ Jean-Paul Benowitz, [Elizabethtown](#).

¹⁶ “A. S. Kreider Shoes Gaining Big Reputation”, *Lebanon Daily News* (Lebanon, PA), August 27, 1931.

¹⁷ National Register of Historic Places, “Kreider Shoe Manufacturing Company, Elizabethtown, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.”

¹⁸ City of Lancaster, [To Build Strong and Substantial](#) (Lancaster, PA: City of Lancaster, 2009).

Appendix Historical Photos:



Appendix Current Photos:

