

C. Emlen Urban Collection, 1889-1939

Object ID: MG0100

1 box 4 folders .25 cubic ft.

Repository: LancasterHistory (Organization); PV7

Shelving Location: Archives South, Side 3

Scope and Content Note: Collection consists of some of the records of Cassius Emlen Urban, a Lancaster architect. He supervised the construction of the Lancaster Post Office at 120 N. Duke St., Lancaster. Many letters from James H. Windrim, supervising architect of the Treasury Department, Washington, D. C. Book of correspondence contains details of the construction. Also includes letters he wrote to his son, Rathfon, dated February 14-29, 1939, while on the Italian liner, Roma.

Creator: Urban, C. Emlen, 1863-1939.

Conditions for Access: No restrictions.

Conditions Governing Reproductions: Collection may not be photocopied. Please direct questions to Research Center Staff at research@lancasterhistory.org. Permission for reproduction and/or publication must be obtained in writing from LancasterHistory.

Language: English

Source of Acquisition: Gift of Mrs. Marie Urban, wife of Rathfon Urban.

Administrative/Biographical History: **C. Emlen Urban**

Throughout Downtown Lancaster numerous iconic buildings make up the city's landscape giving it its unique and ornate character. Landmark buildings such as the Greist Building, the Watt and Shand Department Store, Hager Building, Southern Market, along with many more churches, residential units including the facade of the Fulton Opera House were the design of Cassius Emlen Urban. Urban was Lancaster's first architect and one of the most significant influences on the city.¹ Urban modernized the city's landscape as he designed buildings in a new era where technologies never before available to architects made it possible for himself to leave such a grand impression.

Urban was born on February 20, 1863 in Conestoga Township to a Civil War veteran Amos Urban, a distinguished citizen known for his modesty and community service. Urban finished high school in 1880 and would get his architectural training through an apprenticeship with Scanton, PA architect E.L. Walter. Later in 1884 Urban would move to Philadelphia where he served as a draftsman to Willis G. Hale. Upon returning to Lancaster roughly a year later Urban would open his own practice in Lancaster.²

Only a few years after Urban opened his practice through a family connection he would receive a commission to design Lancaster's Southern Market. Urban's career would take off leading him to design many more iconic buildings in Lancaster and Hershey as well. Urban, through his membership at the Hamilton Club made acquaintance with Milton Hershey who hired him to design such buildings as Hershey Chocolates original company offices and even his own mansion.³

Urban spent the majority of his life in Lancaster with the exception of his time studying as a young man. Urban is remembered for his buildings designed in Queen Anne and Beaux style architecture.⁴ Shenk in his *A History of Lancaster County* wrote of Urban, "Few men of Lancaster county can point to a finer array of useful and beautiful work than can Cassius Emlen Urban."

¹ Nicole O. Sturla, "Cassius Emlen Urban: Lancaster's First Native Architect," *Susquehanna Monthly Magazine*, September 1980.

² *History of Lancaster County*, ed. E.M.J. Klein (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company Inc., 1924), 443.

³ "Urban, C. Emlen; 1863-1939," *Hershey Community Archives*, accessed September 30, 2014. <http://www.hersheyarchives.org/essay/details.aspx?EssayId=34&Rurl=%2Fresources%2Fsearch-results.aspx%3FType%3DBrowseEssay>.

⁴ "Introduction," *To Build Strong and Substantial: The Career of Architect C. Emlen Urban*, (2009): 2-3.

Accruals: No further accruals are expected.

Preferred Citation: C. Emlen Urban Collection (MG-100), Folder #, LancasterHistory, Lancaster, Pa.

Subject Headings:

Windrim, James H. (James Hamilton) (LHo-LOC nr 91029620)
Post Office (Postal service) (LHo-LOC sh 85105472)
Architects. (LHo-LOC sh 85006565)
Historic buildings. (LHo-LOC sh 85061097)
Letters. (LHo-LOC sh 85076240)
Business records. (LHo-LOC sh 85018316)
Buildings – Specifications. (LHo-LOC sh 85017696)

Search Terms:

Architects
Buildings -- Specifications
Business records
Correspondence
Finding aids
Historic buildings
Lancaster (Pa.)
Letters
Manuscript groups
Post Office

Processing History: Processed and finding aid prepared prior to 1997; updated by HST, March 2010. This collection has been documented, preserved and managed according to professional museum and archives standards. The finding aid was updated using DACS conventions. Biographical information compiled by DJ, Fall 2014.

Folder 1 Book of business letters, accounts, and receipts between Mr. Urban and U.S. Treasury Department officials.

Folder 2 Letters from C. Emlen Urban to his son, Rathfon.
Contract with Lancaster County Commissioners to provide drawings for a barn.
Agreement with firm to provide engineering services.

Folder 3

Insert 1 List of buildings designed by Urban, 1899-1933. Many of the buildings are not dated. List shows buildings that had been destroyed at the time the list was compiled. No date.

Insert 2 Sketch of the house built for Andrew B. Rote at 936 Buchanan Ave, Lancaster. No date.

Insert 3 Letter to his son, Rathfon, regarding the architecture of a dormitory at the University of Pennsylvania and his upcoming surgery. He reminds Rathfon to run water in the furnace to humidify the house. Letterhead of the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia. [November 1936].

Folder 4 Specifications of the residence for Mr. C. Emlen Urban, Buchanan and Race Avenues, Lancaster. Attached are specifications for millwork and electrical wiring. 11 January 1926. (paper is fragile, first page is loose)