

Lancaster's Changing Appearance

By John W. W. Loose

In this brief essay readers are reminded of changes occurring in the city of Lancaster. Often we wonder when certain buildings were built, altered or razed. Here is a description of changes taking place in 1986-1987:

The Farmers' Southern Market, southwest corner of Queen and Vine streets. This excellent example of Queen Anne architecture was designed by C. Emlen Urban in 1888. It was closed as a farmers' market in 1986, and presently is undergoing restoration and renovation to become offices for the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and Industry and chambers for the Lancaster City Council. The exterior will not be altered drastically.

The old Water Street Rescue Mission building at 214-216 West King Street, more recently occupied as a "buy-sell-swap" shop, is to be razed and replaced by the "Golden Arches" hamburger restaurant of the McDonald corporation. Preservationists and the city government are resisting the proposal to build a typical McDonald hamburger stand. They are urging the fast food outfit to construct something that will be more appropriate for a neighborhood that is ripe for upgrading. The doomed building was constructed in sections at various times throughout the nineteenth century and even as early as the late eighteenth century when the structure housed the King of Prussia tavern.

Several years ago Franklin and Marshall College acquired the former Posey (Lancaster) Iron Works property between the Harrisburg Pike and the railroad tracks north of the college athletic fields. The large foundry built by the iron works about 47 years ago has been demolished along with several other industrial structures in the iron works complex. Two large steel frame erecting shops have been retained, and the College may use eventually these buildings as part of a field house complex. Deteriorating structures along Harrisburg Avenue between Race Avenue and State Street

have been removed.

After serving as a school administration building, funeral home, fraternity house, and apartment house, West Lawn, the magnificent mansion built 1873-1874 by Barton B. Martin, prosperous lumber and coal merchant, at the northwest corner of West Chestnut and North Charlotte streets, has been restored to its original glory including the restoration of its Second Empire tower and Corinthian-columned porch. At the time of its restoration the plans were for it to become a private residence.

One after another of Lancaster's downtown buildings have been rehabilitated and turned to new uses that bring credit to the city and its political and commercial leaders. The old brick building at 212 North Queen Street has had a checkered career as a tobacco warehouse, illegal distillery, counterfeiter's shop, Sears Roebuck farm store, auto parts store, and now, after undergoing a thorough renovation, it is a handsome office building for a firm of attorneys. Formstone, paint, and other forms of "cosmetic" coatings applied indiscriminately over the years to the exteriors of Lancaster's sturdy old brick buildings are being removed, and the warm mellow red brick once more is appearing as restorers carefully remove the ugly coverings and coatings. Sandblasting is out, water under pressure is "in" for the task of removing accumulations of paint from the brickwork.

The former Domestic Tobacco Co. warehouse, built originally as the Rose Brothers & Co. umbrella factory at 221 East Chestnut Street, has been done over to become another handsome office building for the law firm of Hartman, Underhill, and Brubaker. This is an impressive adaptation of a simple albeit sturdy industrial structure; now it is an architectural gem! Frederick L. Teschner, D.D.S., has taken the old and dilapidated former Wickersham Printing Co. building at 111 East Chestnut Street, and has converted it into a truly magnificent building of uncommon charm for his dental offices.

Much of the real estate in the block bounded by West King, South Queen, West Vine, and South Prince streets is owned by the Steinman enterprises, publishers of the Lancaster newspapers. During the past four or five years the buildings in this block have been restored and readapted to new uses with loving care and excellent taste. Situated in the center of these rehabilitated structures is Steinman Park with its fountain, brick patio, facilities for relaxation, and the bronze gentleman perusing his bronze newspaper on a bronze park bench at the entrance to Steinman Park.

All along North Queen Street and adjacent streets may be seen dozens of tastefully restored or "recycled" buildings. How much better it is to restore the fine old structures with their character intact than to bulldoze everything and replace it with colorless, characterless, geometrical cubes that have all the warmth and charm of a maximum security prison! If you haven't walked leisurely around downtown Lancaster recently, you owe it to yourself to see the transformation! Lancaster never has looked more handsome than it does today! Thank you, Mayors Scott, Wohlsen, and Morris! Thank you, enlightened business persons that are willing to express their faith in Lancaster in material ways!