



GREGORY J. SCOTT PHOTOS

Clockwise from above, the roof monitor and bow barrel trusses in Southern Market; a terra cotta ram's head is set in brick roundel beneath decorative terra cotta brick molding; the wrought iron "torch" finial on Southern Market.

A view of Southern Market from Queen Street highlighting its brick pediment, terra cotta datestone, brick corbeling and decorative terra cotta knees.

How to appreciate the architectural history of Southern Market

Before 1930, Lancastrians did their grocery shopping at the farmers market in their respective neighborhoods, and in many cases, they did this several times a week. Similar to the points on a compass, Lancaster city had five farmers markets: North, South, East, West and one dead center.

Although Central Market holds the distinction of being the oldest continuously operating market in the country, the building that contains it is more recent than the Southern Market by 14 months.

Southern Market, which celebrates its grand reopening later this week, has a rich architectural history.

Designed by Lancaster's then-24-year-old architect C. Emlen Urban, the Southern Market was an engineering and construction feat that defied all logic and common sense — even today. Newspaper accounts from Aug. 22, 1888, stated that the market house had reached substantial completion within three months and three weeks of commencing construction, including the demolition and removal of a hotel and funeral home that had occupied the site.

Urban secured the commission to design Lancaster's fourth market house on his merits and his family connections. Although he had never designed a market house before, a news account from Oct. 10, 1885, credited him with designing well over 150 buildings in the city by the time he was 22 years old.

His father, Amos S. Urban, was a highly respected and influential member of the Southern Market House Board of Directors. C. Emlen was awarded the project, winning out over two other design submissions, under the condition that he and members of the Board of Directors would visit the



GREGORY J. SCOTT
ARCHITECTURE WRITER

recently completed market house in York for inspiration and assurances that young Urban's design would be of equal quality.

Urban chose the popular Queen Anne style for the building that would end up launching his "public career," and he eventually produced a portfolio of work that exceeded 450 buildings in 21 architectural styles.

The 92-foot-wide by 238-foot-deep red brick Southern Market House consisted of two parts; the three-story head house fronting on Queen Street and the single-story farmers market stretching along West Vine Street.

The head house, similar to York's Central Market House, has strong symmetry featuring two towers with pyramidal roofs flanking the gabled main entrance.

The market was open Wednesdays and Saturdays and remained in operation until it was closed as a market in April 1986. The market enjoyed a second chance at life through an adaptive reuse initiative that included the introduction of City Council Chambers and general-use offices from 1987 to 2019.

The 134-year-old building is returning to its original use — providing food for the residents of Lancaster, but in 21st-century style.

The success of the Southern Market commission placed a spotlight on the immeasurable talent of young Urban and a career that spanned 55 years.



MATTHEW TENNISON

A close-up of iron turnbuckles and tie rods inside Southern Market.



GREGORY J. SCOTT

A roundel window with four concentric brick rowlocks on Southern Market. In the glass is the reflection of St. Mary's Church.

If you decide to visit Southern Market, here are a few architectural details of note to help deepen your appreciation of this building's history.

How to enjoy the architecture

The head house

The three-story, red brick, Queen Anne-style head house grabs the attention of the passerby. At the market's inception, this space housed the offices and rental space needed to maintain a vital market.

Urban created the illusion of twin towers by placing tall pyramidal decorative slate roofs on the corners of the Queen Street facade. The pyramids are skillfully proportioned and cleverly detailed to accommodate the ventilation



GREGORY J. SCOTT

A massive brick corbel inside Southern Market, with a semicircular window in the background.

louvers with a graceful flare of the roof. Each tower is capped with an open-basket metal finial reminiscent of a lit torch.

Between the towers is a highly detailed and ornate brick pediment that accommodates the terra cotta datestone of the building in a stylized serif font depicting "1888." Few people remember the golden eagle that sat upon a ball attached to the peak above the datestone. A winter storm removed the eagle from its perch in 1957 after a 70-year reign. The eagle now resides at Landis Valley Village and Farm Museum. In 1958, the museum's then-curator said the eagle would not withstand the elements if it was placed on the exterior of a building again.

The facade is laden with beautiful examples of brick corbeling

in the pediment and around the cornice, casting amazing shadows on a clear day.

The iconic terra cotta ram and bull heads flanking the triple window sash speak to the building's purpose. Even the earliest photographs of the market depict the rather austere and curious white lettering applied to the brickwork.

The small multi-panes of glass over a large single pane of glass is indicative of Queen Anne styling.

Last, take note of the unusual "relief arches" with brick nogging that Urban worked into the Vine Street facade.

The farmers market

While the head house exterior grabs the attention of the passerby, it is the market house interior that creates the most striking and memorable experience.

Urban created a 90-foot-wide column-free arena using an innovative "bow barrel truss" design. The graceful curve of the open web truss repeated 20 times with equal spacing creates an inspired interior. Each truss maintains its "bowed" profile by thick iron tie rods and turnbuckles. Each truss rests on a massive, corbeled brick support, securely anchored to the thick masonry walls.

Daylight enters the great hall through two generously sized roof monitors and tall, semicircular windows around the perimeter. The west elevation offers controlled light through three perfectly round fixed sash windows. Four concentric brick rowlocks accentuate their apparent diameter.

● This column is contributed by Gregory J. Scott, FAIA, a local architect with more than four decades of national experience in innovation and design. He is a member of the American Institute of Architects' College of Fellows. Email GScott@rtps.com.