

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Stevens High School (also, Girls High School)

and/or common Stevens Elementary School

2. Location

street & number Northeast Corner of West Chestnut & Charlotte Streets NA not for publication

city, town Lancaster N/A vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Lancaster code 071

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name School District of Lancaster, Pennsylvania

street & number 225 West Orange Street

city, town Lancaster N/A vicinity of state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Lancaster County Courthouse

street & number 50 North Duke Street

city, town Lancaster state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Survey of Lancaster City has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1978-1980  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County / PA Historical & Museum Commission

city, town 123 North Prince Street, Lancaster/Harrisburg state Pennsylvania 17603

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>N/A</u>

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located on the northeast corner of Lancaster's West Chestnut and Charlotte Streets, the Stevens High School (now Stevens Elementary School) is a rectangular structure, three full stories in height. The exterior walls are built of brownstone, with striated joints, on the basement and first floor levels. The walls on the second and third floor levels are of golden-colored vitrified Roman bricks, with all ornamentation done in terra cotta of a similar color. The mansard roof is covered in dark gray slate, with enframements and anthemion pattern border in solid copper. The facade of the building fronts 176 feet on Charlotte Street, and the building is 74 feet deep on the east-west axis. Most interior walls are of weight-bearing masonry structure, with wood joists and rafters.

The facade of the school is thirteen bays wide; the central seven bays constitute the main block of the building. This main block has a slightly higher roofline than the symmetrical flanking sections; these flanking sections have a subtle setback from the plane of the more monumental central block. In the center of the facade is the main doorway to the school; it is surmounted by a projecting balcony in brownstone, with supporting console brackets. The chestnut woodwork of this doorway features engaged fluted columns, a broken domical pediment, and a central finial bust representing Minerva. The central five bays of this main section of the building are divided by monumental panelled pilasters of terra cotta which extend from the second through the third floors. These pilasters are ornamented with swags and pendant husks. The five third floor windows in this defined central section have segmental arched heads with central keystones. This central section of the building also features embellished panels of terra cotta on the second and third floor levels. At the roof, the corner junctures of this central section and the flanking side sections are marked by four tall brick chimneys, with triglyph ornaments in terra cotta. The front of each of the flanking sections is three bays wide. On the second and third floors of these flanking sections, the windows are surrounded by single faced architraves of terra cotta with central keystones. The terra cotta cornice which encircles the entire building, with allowance for change in roof levels, has a plain frieze and modillions, all done in terra cotta. The east or rear elevation of the school essentially matches the facade in all major facets of design, with the exception of the absence of the central doorway, and less rich ornamentation.

The south elevation of the school, facing West Chestnut Street, is seven bays wide. The central bay is twice the width of the other bays; on the first floor level, it features a doorway and balcony, similar to those on the facade facing Charlotte Street. Ornamentation of the second and third floors matches that seen on the facade. The north elevation of the building essentially matches the West Chestnut Street elevation, with the exception of the absence of a central doorway.

The outstanding feature of the interior is the third floor auditorium, which was designed to seat six hundred people. This rectangular room features elaborate plasterwork, of French Renaissance style inspiration, on the walls and ceiling. It also retains its original chandeliers, which originally had both gas and electric lights.

In all respects, ranging from interior and exterior ornament to the brown paint on exterior window frames, the Stevens High School is virtually 100% intact to its original design and construction. Many details, ranging from door hardware to the one-over-one window sash, survive in pristine condition. The high integrity of the building itself is complemented by the fact that the majority of the buildings in the neighborhood are those which existed when the school was completed in 1905.

# 8. Significant

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1904-1905 **Builder/Architect** George Gessell, builder; C. Emlen Urban, architect

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Lancaster's Stevens High School is significant on both the local and state levels for its architecture and its role in educational history. Built between the Spring of 1904 and December, 1905 from designs by the Lancaster architect C. Emlen Urban (1863-1939), this school cost a total of \$215,000. Contemporaries considered it to be the most elaborate school building in the Commonwealth between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh; it was certainly the most expensive public building erected in Lancaster at the opening of the twentieth century. In reference to architectural design, the Stevens High School is important as a distinguished period piece, and also as a key commission in the long career of C. Emlen Urban. The Stevens High School is the best example of the Second Renaissance Revival Style in Lancaster; sometimes this style is regarded as a facet of Beaux-Arts Classicism.<sup>1</sup> Further, this building was instrumental in opening a period of twenty-five years for C. Emlen Urban as a designer of schools, businesses and public buildings. It demonstrated Urban's thorough competence in designing a free-standing building, using the Classical Orders on a monumental scale.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the Stevens High School, when completed in 1905, represented the most advanced ideas in secondary education. It was the first high school in Lancaster built for girls which offered all the major educational facilities available to boys, plus special programs then considered necessary for future housewives. Among the facilities of the building which were considered as being innovative at the time may be listed the following: the basement gymnasium, the cooking room, the chemical laboratory, the physical laboratory, the botany room, the auditorium, the drawing room, and the commercial department. The stature of the school was summarized in the Pennsylvania School Journal for January, 1906, which stated the "...building marks an era in the history of schools...to a higher plane of dignity and usefulness..."<sup>3</sup>

1. There are surprisingly few buildings in Lancaster City or County which are totally and distinctly in this Second Renaissance Revival style. Another major example was the former YMCA Building, also by Urban; this was razed in the 1960's.

2. In a long career stretching over half a century, Urban had relatively few opportunities for designing free standing buildings, with the exception of schools and a few churches, plus the smaller-scale private houses. In particular, his design for the Stevens High School paved the way for later schools in Lancaster, such as the Fulton and Reynolds Schools. His skilled use of the Classical Orders on a large scale, as seen on the facade and east elevations of the Stevens High School, may have influenced some facets of his later buildings including the Hager Department Store, the Griest Building, and several buildings at Hershey, Pennsylvania.

3. It should be noted that the Stevens High School ceased its original specific function in 1938, when it became an elementary school. The present function as an elementary school will end in June, 1983.

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## Significance - Documentation

The Stevens High School (Stevens Elementary School) has a rich, multi-faceted history. It stands on the site of the c. 1855 Italianate style mansion built for the Lancaster merchant, Frederick John Kramph. After 1868, this mansion was the residence of two generations of Lancaster's noted Franklin family. At the turn of the century, some of the county's most prominent families - including Martin, Holahan, Baumgardner, Bausman, Franklin, Foltz, and Steinman lived within one block of this corner of West Chestnut and Charlotte Streets. As early as 1901, the School Board of Lancaster began considering possible sites for a high school for girls. On July 1, 1902, the Lancaster City School District purchased the corner lot, with the old Kramph Mansion, for \$23,000. This mansion was demolished between October, 1902 and January, 1903.

In the Spring of 1902, the School Board, by a vote of twenty to fifteen, selected the Lancaster architect C. Emlen Urban (1863-1939) to design this building. Urban's stature was already well established in the community. He had designed several elementary schools in Lancaster, plus such notable structures as the YMCA, Watt and Shand Department Store, and the Davidson Building. In designing the proposed Stevens High School, Urban is known to have visited then-new schools in York, Reading, Chester, and Atlantic City, New Jersey. It is possible that some aspects of the general design of the school's facade may have been inspired by the 1898 Boston Public Library by McKim, Mead, and White. It is equally likely that Urban may have been inspired by plates in Andrea Palladio's The Four Books of Architecture (1570; English translation by Isaac Ware, 1738) for both general forms and specific ornamental devices. Urban's plans were completed early in 1903, and they were accepted by the School Board in February, 1903.

Bids were opened for the actual construction on May 14, 1903. Nearly every builder and contractor in Lancaster City submitted bids; the successful competitor was George Gessell. Contracts for the school were signed on May 21, 1903. In its meeting on August 6, 1903, the School Board authorized the cornerstone-laying ceremony. This event was held on May 27, 1904, with the chief address being presented by Dr. Nathan C. Schaeffer, State Superintendent of Public Instruction. In this address, Dr. Schaeffer noted that "the high school is the most conspicuous edifice in the modern town."

The proposed time for the completion of this school, named in honor of the champion of public education, Thaddeus Stevens, was September, 1905. However, there were many delays in both construction and the arrival of interior furnishings. Dedication ceremonies were held on December 22, 1905, with addresses being presented by C. Emlen and Dr. Thomas M. Balliet of New York University. In January, 1906, the building commenced full-scale functions as the Girls High School. With the completion of McCaskey High School in 1938, the structure became an elementary school.

Even at the time the plans for this school were first published in February, 1905, it was considered to be a building of unusual elaboration and quality. The Lancaster New Era for May 18, 1903 termed it "...the finest High School building in the State." At the time of the dedication, the New Era of December 22, 1905 praised it as "...one of the city's chief ornaments, and a source of unbounded pride..." However, this expensive building, whose total cost reached \$215,000, also created considerable controversy. As early as 1903, the proposed building was criticized as an "aggregation of extravagance." Eighty years later, it is possible to see these criticisms of the building's expense as being an ironic statement of its quality.

# 9. Major Bit Geographical Referer es

Refer to attached list

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .94 acre

Quadrangle name Lancaster Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 18 387980 4143128770  
Zone Easting Northing

B           
Zone Easting Northing

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The Stevens High School property is bounded on the south for 160 feet by West Chestnut Street; on the west for 257 feet six inches by Charlotte Street; on the north for 160 feet by property of Mrs. R. W. Callender; and on the east for 257 feet six inches by property formerly owned by the Bausman estate.

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title John J. Snyder, Jr., Architectural Historian

organization Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County

date February, 1983

street & number 123 North Prince Street

telephone 717-291-5861

city or town Lancaster

state Pennsylvania 17603

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer

date 5/12/83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to attached list

## 10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property .94 acre

Quadrangle name Lancaster Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 18 38179180 4143128710  
Zone Easting Northing

B           
Zone Easting Northing

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

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date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Major Bibliographical References

Books:

William Riddle, One Hundred and Fifty Years of School History in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Lancaster, 1905. Particularly, pp. 412-419.

Periodicals and Newspapers:

Lancaster Intelligencer for the following dates: October 3, 1902; December 5, 1902; December 26, 1902; May 27, 1904; and December 22, 1905.

Lancaster New Era for the following dates: October 3, 1902; December 26, 1902; January 2, 1903; May 15, 1903; May 18, 1903; May 22, 1903; May 27, 1904; September 8, 1905; December 8, 1905; December 22, 1905; June 9, 1961; and October 15, 1961.

Pennsylvania School Journal, vol. 53, no. 1, July, 1904, pp. 38-40; and vol. 54, January 1906, pp. 315-319.

Unpublished Sources:

Deeds at the Archives of the Lancaster County Courthouse, Lancaster, Pennsylvania: W-16-547 (1902); N-16-523 (1901); G-12-562 (1885); and Q-9-556 (1868).

Information Files, Lancaster County Historical Society, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

"School" Files, Library of Lancaster Newspapers, Inc., 8 West King Street, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Minutes of the School Board of the School District of Lancaster, c. 1901-1907, School District of Lancaster, 225 West Orange Street, Lancaster.

Original drawings for the Stevens High School by C. Cmlen Urban, c. 1902-1903, owned by the School District of Lancaster. These are stored at the School District Warehouse.



GREENLAND 1.4 MI.  
PHILADELPHIA (CIVIC CENTER) 61 MI.

SMOKETOWN 2.5 MI.  
INTERCOURSE 7.6 MI.

LEWISBURG 5.2 MI.  
JATESVILLE 2.3 MI.