

Louisville Déjà View: Where Have I Seen This Design Before?

Museum Plaza is a bold, striking building proposal. And, it is unique. There is nothing quite like it anywhere in the world. Not Chicago, where the high-rise was born and is still king. Not New York City, where skyscrapers proliferate. Not Dubai, Singapore, or Shanghai where towering structures have created instant skylines. Museum Plaza is a true 'signature' project that will only be identified in connection to Louisville. There will be no other design like it.



This isn't quite the case with other Louisville projects. As you drive about the city, you might do a double take and question if what you see is the real thing. Is that the original Rodin statue at U of L? Didn't I see a building like National City in New York? Doesn't that church resemble a famous one in Omaha? And, that domed structure in the background of the movie "Marie Antoinette" sure looked like one in a local cemetery.

Well, your eyes aren't deceiving you. It's not a bad case of déjà vu. Louisville does have numerous buildings and other designs that are based on other projects elsewhere. It seems our city is made up of duplicate construction from other cities.



The 800 Building, most would agree, has a different appearance. Its exterior has turquoise skin, balconies, and an angular projecting facade. For 1963, the bowed shape was distinctive – or was it? According to the developer Fritz Drybough, he wanted the 800 to look like a residential high-rise he had seen in Chicago. If you are in the Lincoln Park area, north of Chicago, and pass by a vaguely familiar structure at 2930 North Sheridan Road, then that is the genesis of our own 800. While the Chicago firm of Lowenberg & Lowenberg was the primary inspiration of this shape, Louisville architect William Arrasmith gave it the distinctive blue color by using porcelain panels. Arrasmith used similar panels in



his designs for Greyhound terminals throughout the county.



Heading east on Interstate 16, outside Macon, Georgia, as you cross the Ocmulgee River, you catch a brief glimpse of a prominent statue on the south side riverbank. Huh? Didn't that look like a monument in Cave Hill Cemetery? In fact, that is a duplicate design. The original is in Cave Hill. It was intended, though, for this site along the Ocmulgee River.



In 1859, Joseph Bond was Georgia's largest plantation owner when he was killed by a

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*Above:
New York City
twin to the
Louisville's
National City
tower, below*

disgruntled overseer. A memorial was ordered to reflect Bond's economic status. Louisville's Michael Muldoon crafted a massive sculpture that contained four perimeter symbolic figurines, with a fifth figurine representing the Archangel Gabriel sitting on top pointing skyward. There was just one major problem. A Civil War was going on by the time it was ready to be shipped south. So, it was placed in storage. In 1864, Muldoon's brother-in-law, James Lithgow, Jr., died. (Lithgow, Sr., was a successful business leader and a former mayor.) To honor his wife's brother, Muldoon placed the Bond monument on Lithgow's gravesite. Once the Civil War ended, Muldoon built a duplicate and sent it to Bond's gravesite in Macon's Rose Hill Cemetery.

Millions have ventured to the site of the former World Trade Center Towers. These visitors have also viewed a nearby tall, sleek black high-rise that was designed by the architectural firm of Harrison and Abramovitz. This architectural firm also was responsible for our National City Tower. Same architects, very similar building design.



And, if you are driving through Dayton Ohio on I-71, you might notice another National City look-alike in the Kettering Tower (*right*).

It was designed by a Cincinnati firm, but one can't help but think that Harrison and Abramovitz was the consulting architect.



Lockwood-Greene was an engineering firm that was associated with architects Mathers & Halenby in designing the Toronto Globe and Mail newspaper building (*right*) in 1938. In 1944, a new building was announced for the Courier-Journal and Louisville Times newspapers. And, the consulting engineer was Lockwood-Greene. The resulting project at Sixth and Broadway bears a strong similarity to Toronto's Globe and Mail. The Sixth Street façade contains the same window fenestration and rounded corner. While the Broadway façade is more streamlined and contemporary, the two story entryway mirrors the Globe's entrance.



In the book "Barry Bingham: A Man of His Word", Mr. Bingham wrote: "And we looked around quite a bit at that time and looked at some other newspaper buildings. There was one, the Toronto Globe and Mail, that I thought had a very handsome appearance, and I went up to have a look at it. So, we finally got the firm that was working on this, Lockwood-Greene, to give us an exterior appearance (*left*) that was fairly similar to the Toronto Globe and Mail."

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Throughout Louisville, there are many beautiful sculptures. Our own Enid Yandell (*left*) was an acclaimed artist not only locally, but also nationally for works such as Hogan's Fountain and the Carrie Brown sculpture in Providence, R. I. But, her winning entry in the Confederate Memorial competition was never built. There are various reasons given for not constructing it, ranging from structural instability to alleged jury bias. However, some theorize that the confederate men for whom the monument was to recognize did not want it

designed by a woman. Regardless, the statue that was ultimately erected at the convergence of Second and Third Streets, near U of L, is based on another confederate memorial in Raleigh, N. C. (*right*) Both were created by the Muldoon Monument Company headquartered here in Louisville.



Sculptor George Grey Bernard made several similar Lincoln statues, one of which stands outside the Main Public Library at Fourth and York. Another is nearby in Cincinnati. The Martin Luther statue next to First Lutheran Church on Broadway is a replica of one at Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Massachusetts. And, the distinguished cararra marble statue of Henry Clay inside the old Courthouse atrium is a copy of the original which stands in Virginia's statehouse in Richmond. While there are no known statistics of such, perhaps the most copied statue in the world is Auguste Rodin's "The Thinker" sculpture. A quick Google search reveals dozens of locations worldwide of this iconic image. U of L's "Thinker", though, is the only known cast made from the 'lost wax' method.

Being within Jefferson County, Louisville has numerous references to our namesake Thomas Jefferson. There's the U of L Administrative Building, right, (based on Jefferson's library design for the University of Virginia) and the Monticello replica bank at Preston and Eastern Parkway. The Liberty Bell with Jefferson standing on top though, by Sir Moses Jacob Ezekiel in front of the old Courthouse, is an original. However, the University of Virginia liked this piece so much that they ordered a copy and placed it in front of their library building by Jefferson.



Within the city itself, we have our own twins. Waterfront Plaza on West Main between Third and Fourth, has identical towers with lighthouses on top. Twin high-rises were proposed, but never implemented, for the Aegon Building and the LGE Tower. And, of course, the all-glass Meidinger Tower and Brown & Williamson Tower mirror one another.

The old Belknap School, near Douglas Loop, had its composition cloned as part of a new residential development adjacent to it. Just north on Bardstown Road, St. Francis of Assisi owes its classic style to that of the Boy's Town Chapel in Omaha, Nebraska. And, the cast iron façade of 643 West Main Street was replicated across Seventh Street in Ft. Nelson Park.

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One of the more fascinating duplicates is Actor's Theater (*left*) on Main Street. When built in 1837, it was known as the Bank of Louisville. James Dakin, who had recently arrived from New York City, was the architect. Until recently it was always thought that this was an original design until Louisville historian Sam Thomas came across a reference that noted it was based on another bank design in New York City. The Bank of America (*right*) was completed in 1835. There is no reference of James Dakin as its designer, but obviously he knew enough about this building to base his Louisville bank upon it.



To further complicate matters, in 2009, the Actor's Theater façade was caricatured in a Disney-esque manner as part of the Chamberlain Pointe retail development (*left*) on Highway 22, south of the Snyder Freeway.

Petit Trianon, a pavilion in Versailles, France, was Marie Antoinette's favorite place to get away and relax. 168 years later, Preston Pope Satterwhite commissioned Philadelphia architect Horace Trumbauer to create a similar 'Temple of Love' (*right*) for his wife Florence's gravesite. This eloquent marble structure is Cave Hill Cemetery's most picturesque memorial.



Like Museum Plaza today, 25 years ago the Humana Tower (*left*) was all the buzz and a dynamic original design. The Humana competition produced 5 designs from which Michael Graves' submission was chosen. Two of the non-winning designs have since been built elsewhere. Helmut Jahn's spiraling tower concept was built in a reduced scale in Minneapolis, and Cesar Pelli's pointed cap model was given life in New York City.

There will be no duplicates of the Humana Tower. And, there will certainly be no twins to Museum Plaza. Both of these projects 'broke the mold' and are strictly Louisville originals.

Yet, as you drive about the city, you may wonder what was the inspiration for certain buildings and structures. Or, perhaps when you are on traveling, such as enjoying the Circle Line Boat Tour around New York City, you may ask: 'Gee, that large clock on the New Jersey shoreline sure does resemble Clarksville's Palmolive Colgate Clock.' (*right*)



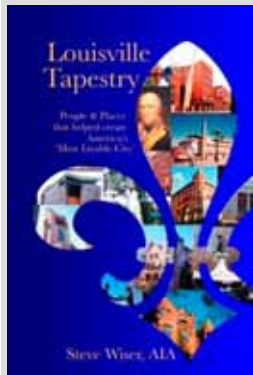
You're not delusional. It's just a case of Louisville déjà view!

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Interested in learning more about Louisville architecture and history?
Then purchase one or all 3 of the following items prepared by Steve Wiser:



“Louisville Tapestry: People & Places who helped create America's Most Livable City”, 144 pages, over 100 b & w images, 2009.

Cost: \$15 (*includes shipping and handling*)

From the Olmsted Parks and landmark architecture, to fascinating tales on notable businesses and personalities, this book explains how the city evolved to its current state. Great for both native Louisvillians as well as new residents!



“Louisville Landmarks & Legends”, 25 minute DVD video, over 200 color images, 2008

Cost \$10 (includes shipping and handling)

This DVD features Louisville's legendary business leaders and landmark businesses such as Col. Sanders, John Schnatter, J. Graham Brown, Al Schneider, and Tom Simons, along with landmark businesses like Humana, UPS, Hillerich & Bradsby, and Churchill Downs, among many others. In 25 minutes you learn many important aspects of Louisville!



“Louisville 2035”, 144 pages, over 100 b & w images, 2008

Cost: \$8 (includes shipping and handling)

What will look like in 25 years? This is Steve Wiser's conjecture of how the city will evolve. It also contains many historical backgrounds on the city's past developments and civic leaders. Several of these proposals have already started to happen! Find out more in this intriguing futuristic vision.

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