

Summertime can be hot in 19th Century market houses!

Whether it's Lancaster's very popular Central Market or Columbia's Historic Market House, it can get hot during summer months. Lancaster Sunday News writer, Chip Smedley investigated the concept of air conditioning at the Central Market and found:

"... there were a whole bunch of opinions in Central Market.

All can be bunched into the following general areas:

- Why wasn't air conditioning included in the recent renovation project?
- Shoppers don't browse around stands in hot weather but simply get in and out as quickly as possible.
- Fresh produce doesn't last in the heat.
- It's a big, old building with high ceilings. Would it even be possible to air-condition a structure of this size and shape?
- If market is air conditioned, it will completely change its 19th-century ambiance.

"First comes the obligatory history lesson based on newspaper articles chronicling the machinations related to the renovation project and on conversations with city Public Works Director Charlotte Katzenmoyer and a few standholders.

"When the city initially applied for grants and the Central Market Trust began fundraising campaigns, the renovation budget included an air-conditioning system.

"But the caveat was that the standholders' rates would be raised to cover the increased energy costs,' Katzenmoyer said.

"At the time (2009), those costs were estimated at \$30,000 to \$35,000 a year. The standholders' association overwhelmingly rejected the air-conditioning plan. (Only two standholders voted in favor of it.)

"Cost was the main reason cited for opposing it. Some also believed the installation of ductwork would mar the beauty of the building's wood ceiling.

"After the vote, the estimated \$385,000 it would cost to purchase air-chilling units was reallocated to pay for exterior sidewalk and streetscape improvements, Katzenmoyer said.

"The design and construction of the market building itself are another factor.

"Built in 1889 (in under six months, surprisingly) the market building was designed by architect James Warner. Its high-peaked roof and two towers are part of a natural, chimney-like ventilation system. When doors and windows are open, cross breezes course through the building. And since hot air rises, it is drawn out of the building through the towers and windows.

"Modern developments rendered that setup ineffective.

"The construction of the much-taller Hager and Greist buildings in the early 20th century boxed in the market, severely diminishing the cross-breeze effect.

"In the days before electricity, stand holders used ice to chill their wares. That ice, in turn, chilled the indoor air. But as stand holders started to install coolers to chill their goods, the air compressors in the coolers had quite the opposite effect, churning out even more hot air.

"The state health department recently added fuel to the fire by mandating that all cut lettuce and greens must be kept in coolers, forcing more standholders to purchase and install them.

"We tried to get the market exempt, but the health department said no,' Katzenmoyer said.

"The market renovation program did attempt to deal with the ventilation problem by making it possible to open the windows in the ceiling and installing ventilation fans in the towers to create air movement in the building.

"But even that is problematic, Katzenmoyer said, because, 'if it's 95 degrees outside, the fans are bringing 95-degree air into the building.'

"Electrical service to support air conditioning was installed in the building, but the city would have to apply for a grant to purchase the chilling unit if it is ever decided that one is necessary, she said.

"In the meantime, purists will be happy to know that walking into the market will still be something of a step back to a simpler -- albeit hotter -- time." - *This is extracted from Chip Smedley's "Lancaster Watchdog" column which appeared in the Lancaster Sunday News on August 26, 2012.*