

Municipal Complex, Edison C#1

Edison town hall provides plenty of elbow room

By DAVID FINNIGAN
News Tribune staff writer

EDISON — The spacious township municipal complex, built here between 1978 and 1981 at a cost of \$8.2 million, has become the envy of some municipal business administrators who find themselves working in overcrowded buildings.

And the complex was a welcome change for township officials and employees, who spent years in an overcrowded Township Hall at Woodbridge and Plainfield avenues.

Situated on a low, rolling hill off of Route 27, the 115,000-square-foot building is an imposing figure upon the wooded landscape. It looks more like a research laboratory than a township hall, as it is similar to nearby buildings such as the Revlon headquarters.

"We have enough space here; you should have been in the other town hall here," said John H. Fox Jr., director of finance.

In the finance department's area,

people work in gold-colored cubicles and walk on dark orange carpet. Like many other departments, the finance section contains a series of modular walls.

A modular wall separates the office of Business Administrator John Delesandro. His office is spacious, with one end dominated by a cluttered desk and shelves overflowing with notebooks. The other side holds couches and a chair.

A large expanse of carpeted open space divides the two areas. Windows take up the length of one long wall and offer views of commuter trains whizzing by.

Delesandro said the old Township Hall provided only "substandard offices." His was the same size as his new one, he explained, but he had to share it with a clerk.

"But mine was one of the better ones," said Delesandro. The construction that began in 1978 took three years to complete, and Delesandro said the 1981 move into the sprawling, multi-story complex "lifted everybody's spirits."

The complex was built to expand as this township of 80,000 residents grows through the year 2000. The

facility now houses 343 municipal employees, including some 200 police personnel.

Delesandro said the old municipal building, constructed between 1935 and 1936, encompassed 14,500 square feet and contained about 200 employees. Additions were made in 1939 and 1952.

The Township Hall was so small that the police detective's bureau was housed in a trailer, he said. "It was really ridiculous."

The building is now the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School, an Orthodox Jewish seminary for about 100 high school, college and postgraduate students.

The additional space offered by the new facility allowed the township's Department of Health and Board of Education to be housed there, Delesandro said.

"They (the Township Council) never balked at the cost or never even commented on the cost," Delesandro said.

Part of the \$8.2 million came from \$2.3 million federal grant the township received in 1982, he said.

Peter G. Russo, the North Brunswick architect whose firm of Mor-

ton, Russo and Maggio designed the complex, said the removable partitions on the first and second floors allow the floor plan to be rearranged with minimal effort.

In the first two to three years after the complex was opened, city officials found numerous problems in complex's the air conditioning, heating, ventilation and water systems.

In January 1983, Mayor Anthony M. Yelencsics estimated that the building has sustained \$150,000 to \$200,000 in damage since administrative offices had located there in 1981.

Although township officials did consider a lawsuit against the builders of the complex, Delesandro said the building's mechanical problems

and structural defects were resolved. He said the firms involved in complex's construction voluntarily worked to clear up the defects.

"When the township grows, you increase the need for separate facilities for all the services that the township provides," Russo said.

"There's always a controversy as to whether the municipal complex should house all the facilities," he said. "It's not a problem. It's how the township wants to have its services (positioned)."

Said Yelencsics: "We've really upgraded from a real small one (municipal building) when the town had a couple of thousand people to a larger complex where there is now around 80,000 people."



JOHN DELESANDRO
business administrator

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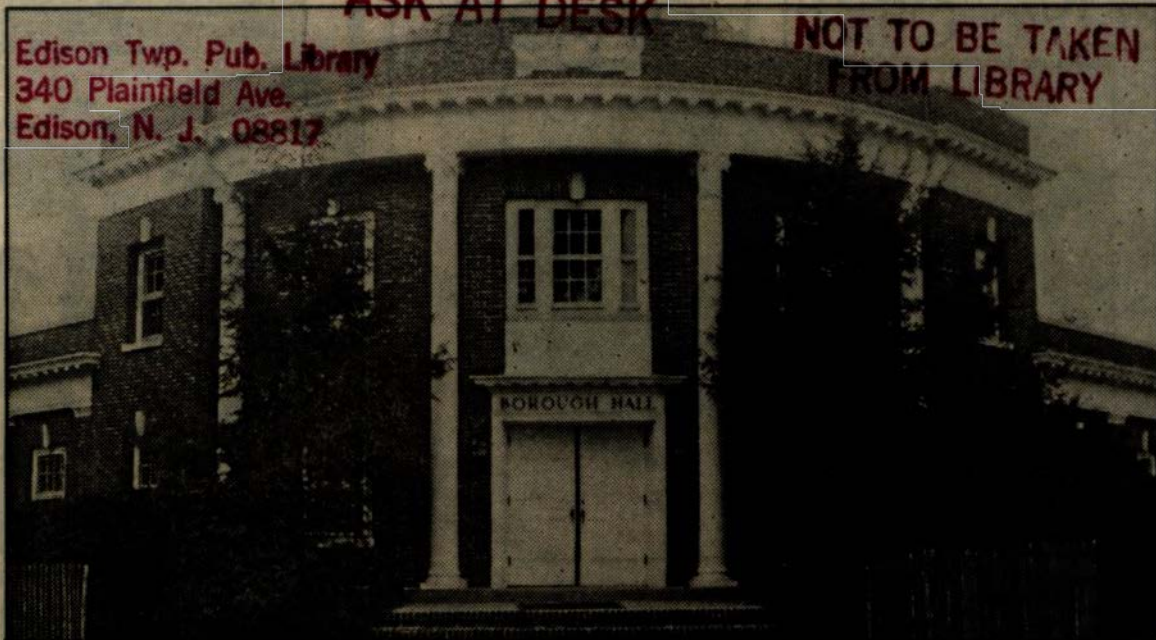


Edison Municipal Complex

TNT photo by James Shive

Town halls: Catalysts for government

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Focal point

Borough Hall in Metuchen, like other municipal halls throughout Central Jersey, serves as a catalyst for local government. Municipal

officials say these buildings also are the first lasting impression a community will make on a visitor.

TNT photo by Frank Wojciechowski

The impressions a municipal building leaves on a visitor are as diverse as the facilities themselves.

The Edison Municipal Complex, situated on a low, rolling hill, is sprawling and has wide, carpeted hallways.

The more quaint and folksy Perth Amboy City Hall has kept so much of its historical heritage and architecture intact that a visitor there is reminded of an era long past.

Perth Amboy Mayor George

Otłowski said his city hall remains "the central force of local government," a description also fitting to municipal buildings in Woodbridge, Carteret, Rahway, Metuchen, Edison, Old Bridge, Sayreville, South Amboy, Matawan, Aberdeen and Hazlet.

The town hall may be the central force of local government, but a mixed review comes from talking to local officials about the municipal buildings where they work every day.

Some administrators said they

have little or no problems with their present accommodations. Other discussed their space problems in small, overcrowded offices.

Key issues for area municipal buildings are maintaining an uncrowded work space and having proper records management in an age where local government must keep more documents on file.

"We don't have enough space here," said Hazlet Business

See TOWN HALLS, Page A-6.

(This is the first in a six-part series on county and municipal facilities in the Central Jersey area.)

NT 3/2/87

DAVID FINNIGAN

News Tribune staff writer

In Sayreville, Borough Hall looks like the dormitory of a boarding school.

Residents in Aberdeen called their new township complex the Taj Mahal when it was completed, while in neighboring Matawan, the borough government works out of a renovated bank building.

SUNDAY SPECIAL

Rahway City Hall soars into the future as it is powered by solar energy.

The ancient Perth Amboy City Hall remains the oldest active municipal building in the United States, which were just 13 colonies when that building was erected.

They are the town, city, and borough halls that serve as catalysts for a dozen municipal governments in Central Jersey. More than just the roof and walls that house government, town halls often are the first lasting impression a municipality will make on visitors.

"They (town halls) tell a story to outsiders about what you think about yourself," said Rahway Business Administrator Joseph M. Hartnett. "It's a question of what impression you're making on the outside world."

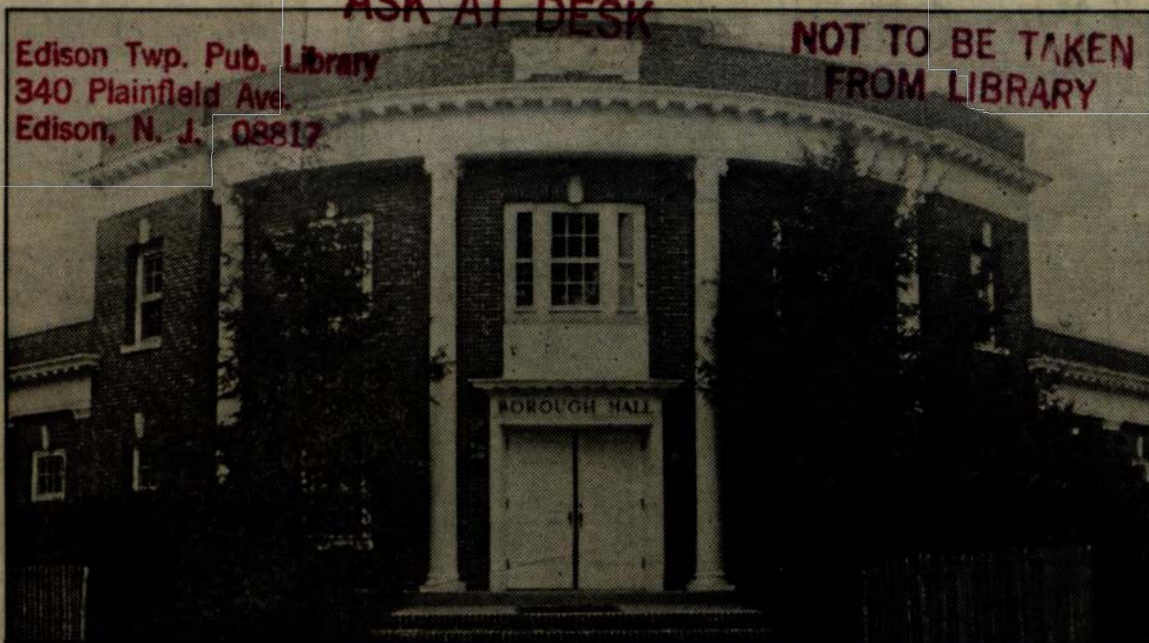
Edison: Municipal Complex

Town halls: Catalysts for government

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TOWN HALLS: Focal points for municipal governments

NT 3/2/81
(Continued from Page A-1)

Administrator Robert G. Weigand.

Weigand's cramped office, similar to those throughout the township hall, tell the story of building where rooms and hallways are crowded with file boxes overflowing with tax records and documents of all types.

Metuchen Borough Administrator David R. Kochel said his community is "primarily a developed community without vacant areas.

"Given those parameters, what we can do in terms of our physical facility, that does put some constraints on us," he said, describing his 62-year-old borough hall that also houses the local Police Department.

"We do use every inch of space, (and) we would certainly like the luxury of more space," said Kochel, who nonetheless added the borough hall is "presently adequate for personnel."

Kochel said that since the borough will not experience "any major fluctuation in population in the short term future," the number of personnel will not grow.

Saying the borough has had to be "more creative," in its staffing, he said Metuchen jointly employs its recreation director, a tax assessor, and a construction code official with Highland Park. Each municipality has a population of about 13,000.

Kochel, as well as administrators

in Aberdeen, Matawan, Sayreville, South Amboy, Perth Amboy, Edison, Rahway said their present facilities provide adequate space for personnel and record-keeping.

Problems with their buildings, these officials said, are minimal.

Weigand, as well as administrators in Woodbridge, Carteret and Old Bridge, said their buildings are not adequate to meet local government needs.

Administrators said an increase in the number of laws that either impact or must be carried out by municipalities has meant additional personnel, and more desks in town halls.

Sayreville Borough Treasurer Wayne A. Kronowski, for example, said the implementation of the Uniform Fire Safety Code "practically created another unit all by itself."

While Kronowski said there is enough room for personnel at Borough Hall, maintaining permanent records the borough is required by law to keep is "becoming a problem, finding a safe storage for them."

But even when a municipality needs building growth to alleviate overcrowding, local government may not have the ratables and tax base for such projects.

A bedroom community such as Hazlet, for example, may not have the same ratable base Edison, rich

with tax-paying corporations, has.

It was from such a tax-base that Edison began construction for a 115,000 square-foot municipal complex that was completed in 1981.

Edison spent \$8.2 million on a building which other government officials envy.

"What you'd like to do and what you can subject the taxpayers to are two different things," Weigand said.

Access for handicapped citizens is available at barrier-free municipal buildings in Old Bridge, Edison, Rahway, Aberdeen, Metuchen and Perth Amboy.

In Woodbridge, Carteret, South Amboy, Sayreville, Matawan and Hazlet, disabled people find municipal buildings where either steps or other entrance barriers can block their way.

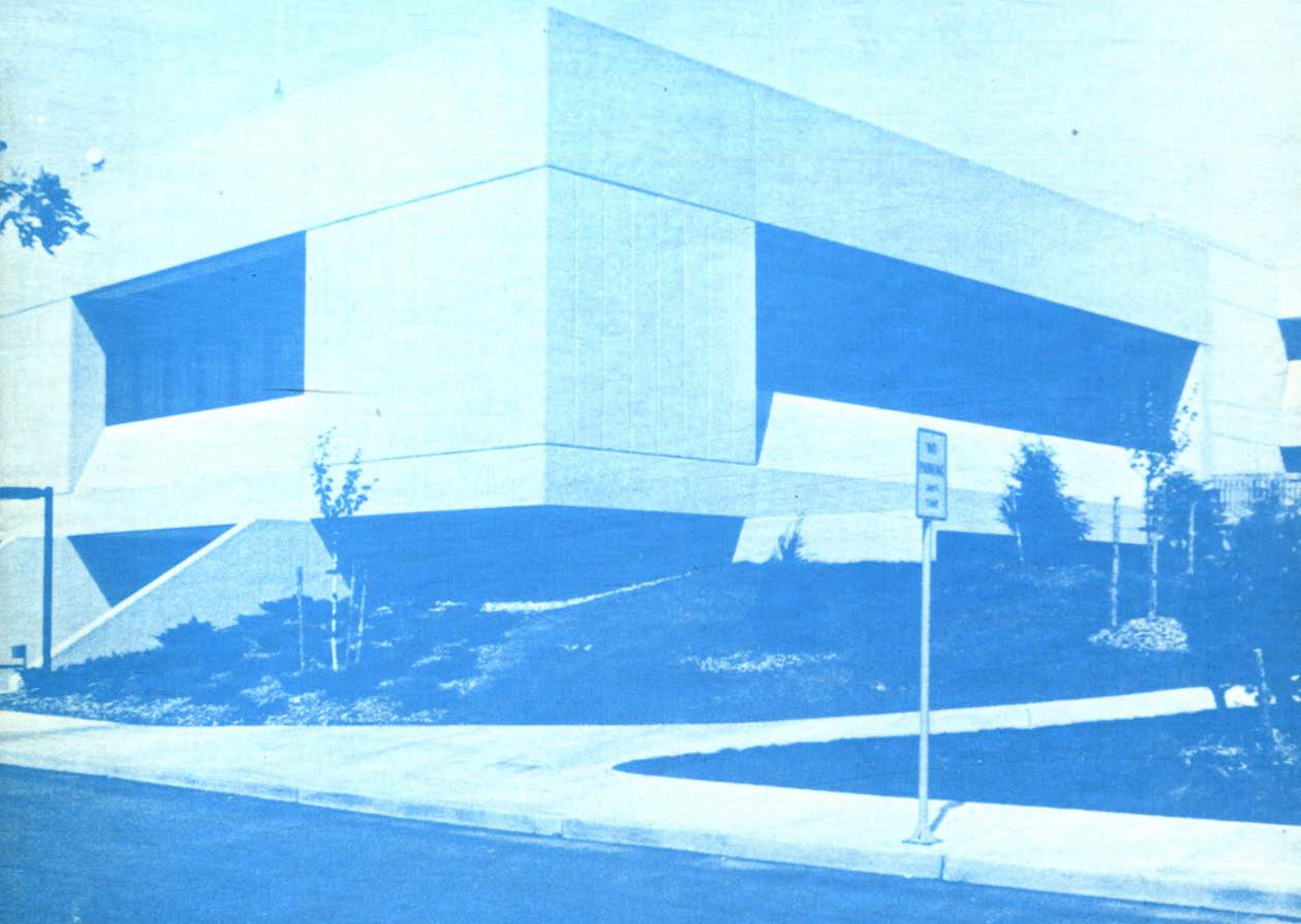
Hartnett said that when older town halls were built, there was neither the awareness nor laws or building code requirements for handicapped access.

He said renovations for such access are a factor in decisions about town halls.

"(Access for the handicapped) does become a critical factor in your costs analysis as to whether you decide to renovate or build new," he said.

(TOMORROW: Restoration in Perth Amboy.)

DEDICATION of MUNICIPAL COMPLEX



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Angelo A. Orlando Jr.

HISTORY OF EDISON

The early history of the local area is directly related to the histories of Woodbridge and Piscataway Townships from which Raritan Township was formed in 1870. Early settlers who replaced the original inhabitants—Lenni-Lenape Indians—came from New England and several European countries. Included among these were the Stelle and Bonham families after whom sections of the Township are named. Despite difficulties inherent in founding early settlements, these pioneers cleared land for farming, built St. James and Stelton Baptist Churches, established local government, constructed a meeting house in Piscatawaytown and founded a local school there and one in Oak Tree.

During the Revolutionary War local residents remained loyal to the Patriots' Cause, engaging in numerous skirmishes, especially in the Piscatawaytown-Bonhamtown area where several British regiments were stationed. Among the many who served with the American militia were Major Reuben Potter and Captain Abraham Tappan. Following the end of hostilities, residents turned their attention to improving and extending facilities and services started before the War. Funding through subscriptions and special taxes was initiated.

Of major importance during the 19th Century was the movement to form a new township from portions of Woodbridge and Piscataway Townships. Led by a group of Metuchenites, local leaders were successful when Raritan Township was incorporated, with the first election held at the Academy on April 16, 1870. Family names of the earliest settlers filled many of the civil servant lists—Tappan, Martin, Stelle, Campbell.

Internal political differences concerning representation, improvements and taxation continued after the formation of Raritan Township. Leaders in Metuchen opted successfully for the creation of a separate borough in 1900, followed by Highland Park in 1905.

During the following years, residents again renewed their efforts towards extending and refining facilities and services. A major change was made in the form of local government from Township Committee to Commission which lasted until 1958. However, throughout much of the eighty-four year period of Raritan Township, there existed a need to identify with the township and not with sections of the township—a situation which was common to other townships made up of villages in a rural setting.

The post-World War II period brought with it a rapid and massive increase in population with its corresponding demands for expansion and reorganization of all the resources of the community. The change from Raritan to Edison in 1954 honored Thomas A. Edison, who spent perhaps the most fruitful period of his life in the Menlo Park section during the latter part of the 19th Century. Numerous individuals and civic groups made concerted efforts to remove the last of the sectionalist feelings and build an identification with Edison. The result of their efforts is apparent.

Today, Edison is one of the major communities in the state of New Jersey with a comprehensive master plan to insure a well balanced municipality.

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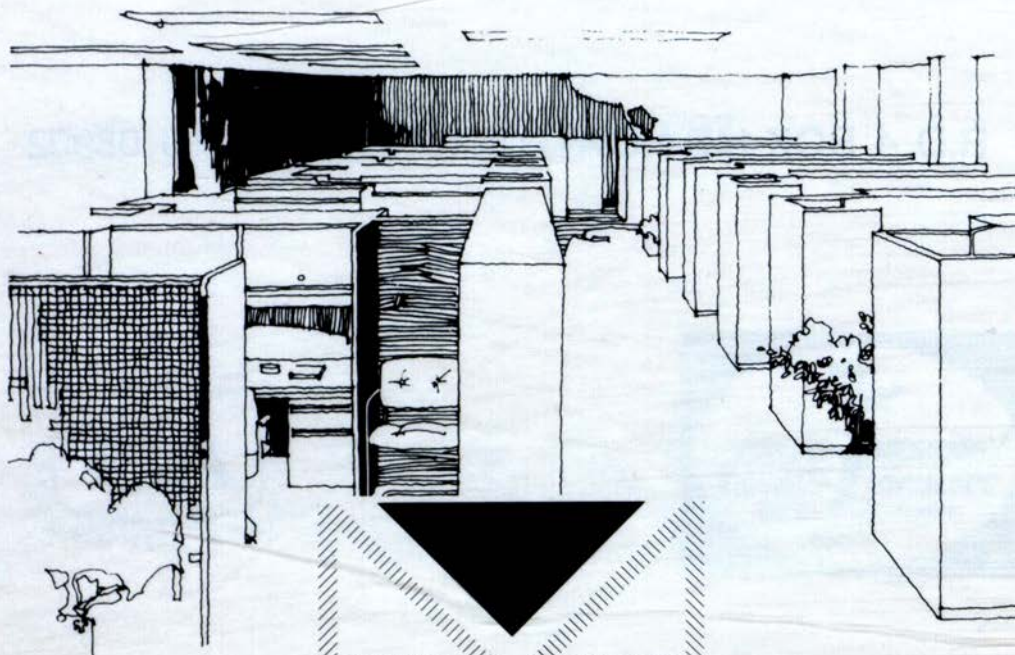
"The only sure bulwark of continuing liberty is a government strong enough to protect the interests of the people, and a people strong enough and well enough informed to maintain its sovereign control over its government."

—Franklin D. Roosevelt

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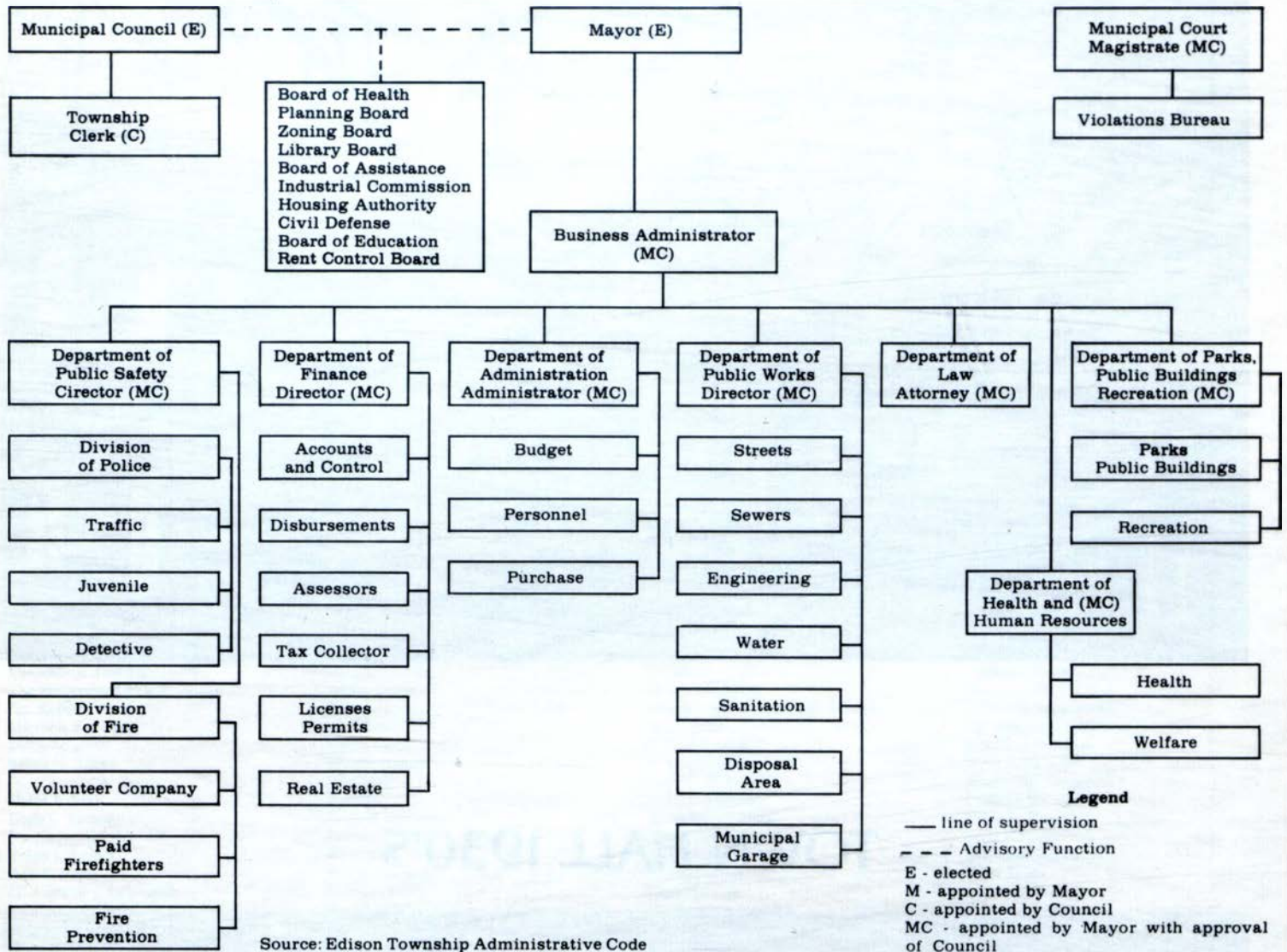
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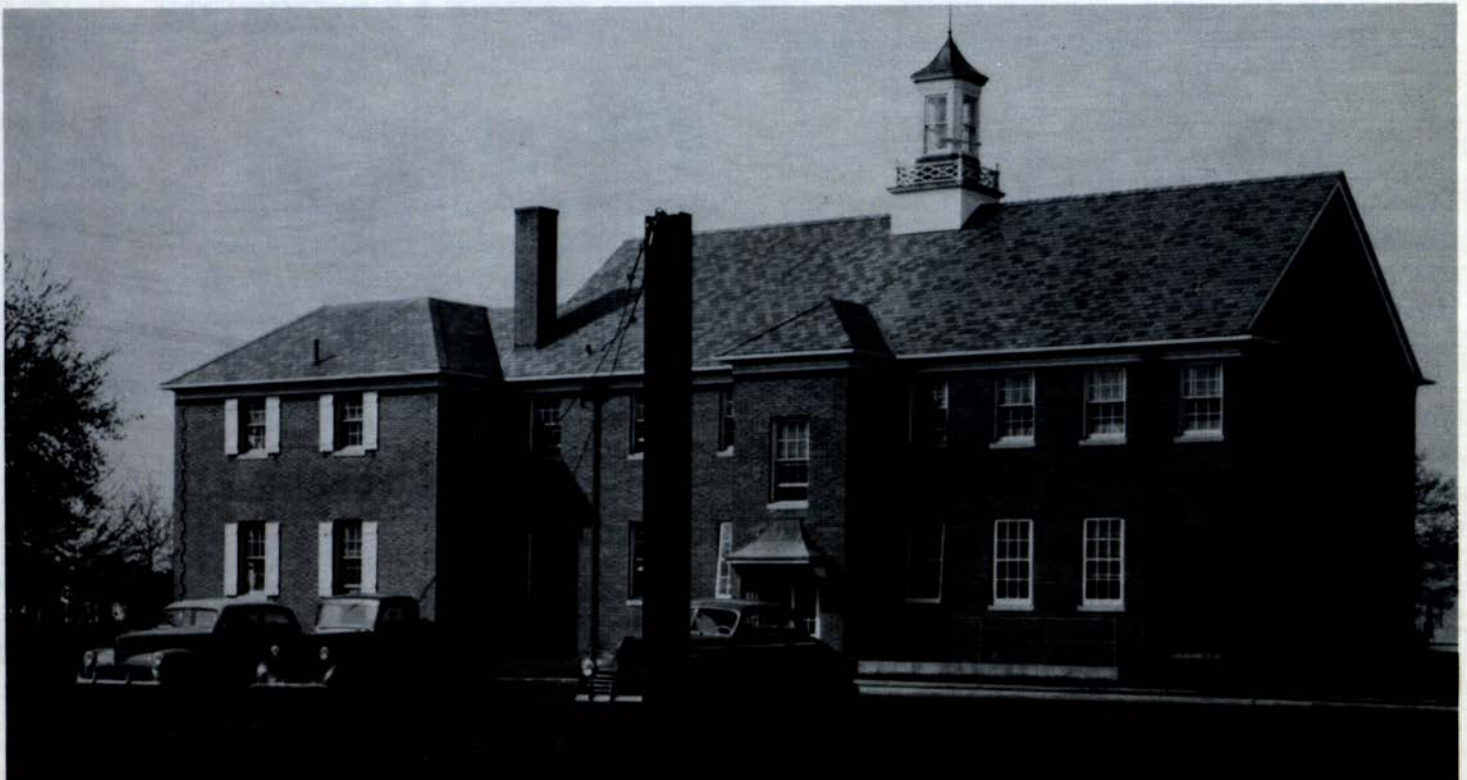
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TOWNHALL VACATED IN 1980



TOWN HALL 1930'S



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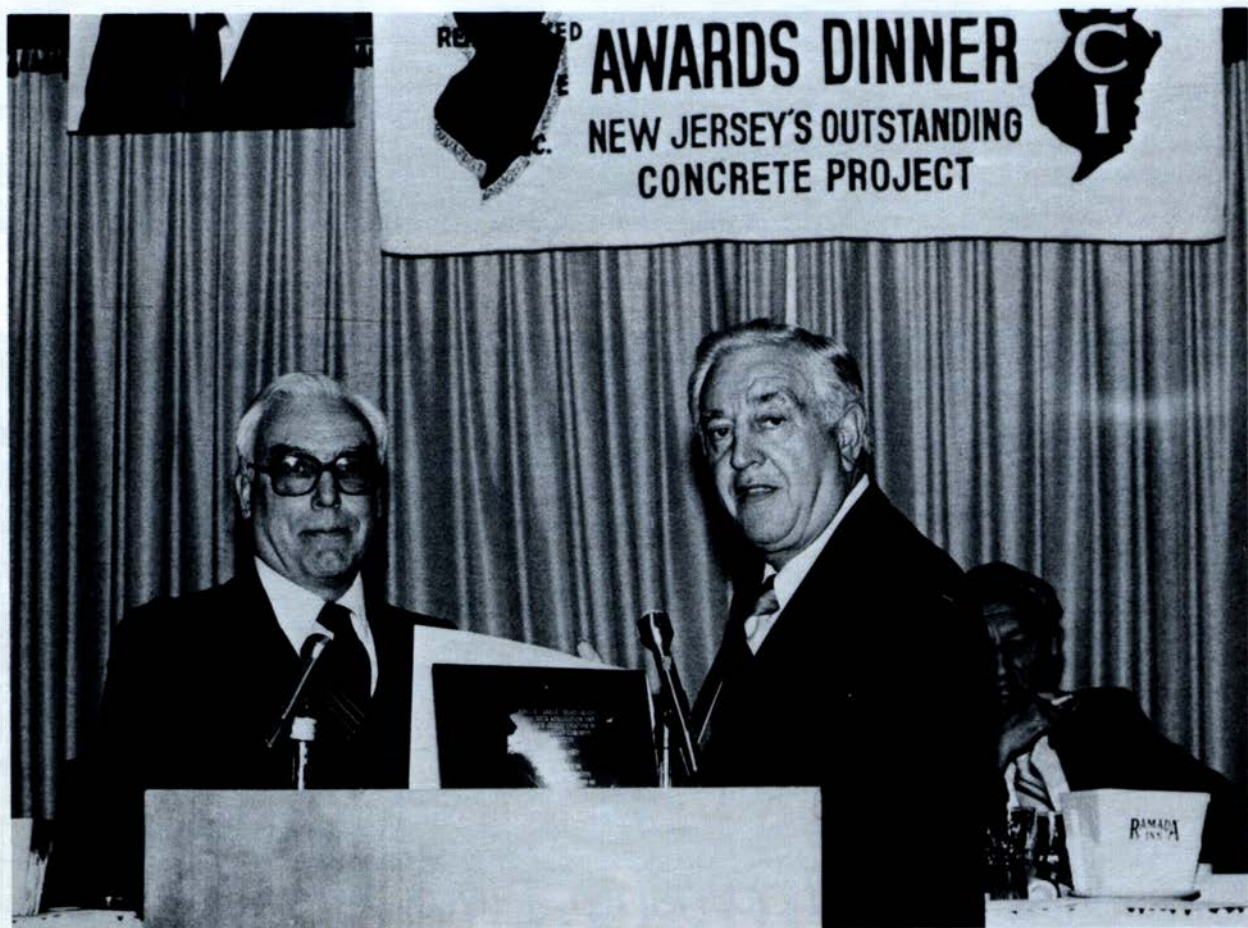
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PROGRAM

Master of Ceremonies	The Honorable Anthony M. Yelencsics <i>Mayor of Edison</i>
Pledge of Allegiance	The Honorable Angelo A. Orlando, Jr. <i>Edison Council President</i>
Star Spangled Banner Sung by:	The Honorable Dorothy K. Drwal <i>Edison Council Member</i>
Accompanied by:	Combined Edison and J. P. Stevens High School Bands Bernard Stark, <i>Director - Edison</i> Andrew DeNicola, <i>Director - JPS</i>
Invocation	Reverend Gerard Van Dyke <i>Pastor - Grace Reformed Church</i>
Introduction of Guests	The Honorable Anthony M. Yelencsics <i>Mayor of Edison</i>
Guest Speaker.....	The Honorable Robert A. Roe <i>U.S. Congressman</i>
"Sing We and Chant It" - (by Morley)	Combined A Cappella Choirs of J. P. Stevens and Edison High Schools - Under the Direction of Miss Ginny Moravek, <i>Choir Director, JPS</i>
Remarks	Mr. Charles A. Boyle <i>Superintendent of Schools</i>
Remarks	The Honorable Stephen J. Capestro <i>Director - Board of Chosen Freeholders County of Middlesex</i>
Health Trailer Dedication.....	Dr. A. Peter Capparelli <i>Edison Health Officer</i>
Presentation	Mrs. Marge Szebenyi, <i>President</i> Clara Barton Democratic Club Cherry Tree planting in honor of former Congressman Edward J. Patten
Presentation	Mrs. Dora Engel, <i>President</i> <i>Bonhamtown Senior Citizen Club</i>
Presentation	Mrs. Lee Santangelo <i>Municipal Vice-Chairlady of the Edison Democratic Organization</i>

"Battle Hymn of the Republic" (by Peter Wilhousky)	Combined A Cappella Choirs of Edison and J. P. Stevens High Schools Under the Direction of Mr. Winston Hughes <i>Choir Director - Edison</i>
Benediction.....	Reverend Samuel C. Carpenter <i>Pastor - Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church</i>
Ribbon Cutting	The Honorable Anthony M. Yelencsics <i>Mayor of Edison</i>

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Robert Price, President of the New Jersey Chapter A.C.I. presents Mayor Anthony M. Yelencsics, Township of Edison, with the "Grand Award" from The New Jersey Ready-Mixed Concrete Association and The New Jersey Chapter of the American Concrete Institute, for our new Municipal Complex.

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