

# A NEW MODERN UNITED STATES POST OFFICE BUILDING WILL BE SERVING YOUR COMMUNITY AT THIS LOCATION



**POST OFFICE GROUND BROKEN:** Edison Mayor Anthony Yelencics is shown breaking ground yesterday at the site where the township's first post office will be built. When it is completed, many township residents will have an "Edison" mailing address for the first time. The site is located at Rt. 27 and Willow Ave. Left to right are former Mayor Thomas Swales; former Commissioner Julius C. Engel; Professor Frank G. Helyar, former chairman of the Planning Board; Mayor Yelencics; Postmaster Edward Collins (face partly hidden); Mrs. Charles Wira, president of the Women for Edison, which has been a prime mover in getting the post office for the township; Arthur J. Parsons, real estate manager of the U. S. Post Office, Philadelphia District; Major Gen. Raymond E. Bell, commanding officer of Camp Kilmer, and Donald A. Myers, operations officer of the Philadelphia District.

**EDISON**—A four-year effort to get a centralized post office for this township reached the point yesterday where ground was broken at Route 27 and Willow Ave.

The building, which will have 5,000 square feet of space and an additional 1,000 square feet of loading space, is scheduled for completion by Nov. 1 or possibly before, according to Mrs. Charles Wira, president of the Women for Edison, which has been a prime mover in the endeavor.

The first thing that had to be

done was to change the name of the township from Raritan. The Post Office Department would not create a Raritan Post Office, because there are two other communities in the state with that name.

The Women for Edison agitated for a name change, and this was done by a public referendum.

The group then secured 4,000 names on petitions to the Post Office Department to create a township post office. It also was instrumental in having the name of the Edison Railroad Station

(PRR) changed from the Stelton Railroad Station.

The Chamber of Commerce and other civic groups got behind the move for the post office. The effort was aided largely by former Commissioner Brace Eggert, former Mayor Thomas Swales Jr., Professor Frank G. Helyar, Mrs. Wira's husband and former Mayor James Forgione.

Postmaster Edward Collins was instrumental in having the status of the present post office, which operates partly

from his home, to first class status.

The Army has also helped out. It lent the township three warehouses at Camp Kilmer for post office use.

Ground was broken yesterday by Mayor Anthony Yelencics as a large group watched.

Heretofore, all mail delivery has been handled by several outlying post offices, including Perth Amboy through its Fords branch, Plainfield, Rahway, Metuchen, Highland Park and others.



# Township's struggle for identity reflected by development of post office system

By David C. Sheehan

Edison, New Jersey, is a sprawling township of some 32 square miles and over 90,000 residents. It boasts four Zip Codes and several post offices. Such, however, was not always the case.

The story of our postal service in Edison is a story of struggle and a search for recognition of our identity as a cohesive community.

For years, the township had been served by the post offices of many surrounding communities — Fords in Woodbridge, Rahway, New Brunswick, Metuchen, Perth Amboy, Plainfield, Highland Park and others. To some, the question of where one's mail is delivered from or what postmark is used might seem unimportant, but to many residents, elected officials, community activists, the Chamber of Commerce, business owners and others, it became an almost consuming struggle for the township's identity, prosperity and future.

The struggle began in 1953, when there was a change in the name of Raritan Township to Edison Township. Part of the desire to change the name of the township from Raritan to Edison was to enable the establishment of a central postal facility in the township. The drive to change the name of the township, spearheaded by Mrs. Charles Wire and the Women For Edison group she headed, was successful in its efforts. To some, this would signal a victory, but to that group and others, it was a short-lived victory. Although the name of the township officially changed in 1953, that did not automatically signal the change of the name of any existing post office. A long, arduous task of wading through a maze of bureaucracy faced the groups wanting a centralized postal facility bearing the new name of the town.

The first step to be taken by the Women For Edison was to acquire the signatures of 3,000 residents on a petition which would be presented to the U.S. Post Office Department in Washington, D.C. Letters were sent to U.S. Senators Clifford Case and Alexander Smith, Congressman Peter Frelinghuysen and the Post Office Department expressing the wish of the rapidly-growing community to have a centralized post office bearing the town's new name. Investigations ensued and the results published by the regional office in Philadelphia outlined the following steps which would have to be taken to improve the delivery of the mail in Edison:

1. The Stelton post office (located at the corner of Plainfield and Central avenues) would have its name changed to Edison.
2. City delivery service would have to be established.
3. The Nixon post office would be placed under the jurisdiction of the Edison post office.
4. Delivery routes within Edison would be enlarged and adjusted and the new areas

would also be served by the Edison post office.

The longest and hardest of these steps to achieve was step 4. Steps 1 through 3 were fairly simple bureaucratic steps. Step 4 required a survey of the township to insure that street names were not duplicated or confusing and house numbering had to be checked to insure logic and uniformity.

Efforts were made by groups and individuals other than Women For Edison. Former

in Edison." Patten is quoted as saying that at his meetings with post office officials in Washington regarding the change in name and improvement in postal services "looked rather dismal" but that since meeting with the post office's Office of Changes, "the picture looked brighter and encouraging."

Despite official "optimism" at this point, the struggle was not yet over. A tug-of-war was developing between Edison of-

Groundbreaking ceremonies were attended by former Mayor Swales; Julius Engel, a township commissioner; Prof Helyar, a former Edison Planning Board chairman; Maj. Gen. R.E. Bell, commanding officer of Camp Kilmer; and several U.S. Post Office officials. A dedication ceremony was held at the new Edison post office on October 9, 1958. The Edison High School marching band provided musical selections; an invocation



Photo by Daryl Stone

**THE NIXON STATION** Post Office was placed under the jurisdiction of the newly-formed Edison Post office during a series of steps taken to improve the mail delivery service in the area.

Mayor Thomas Swales Jr.; Mayor Anthony M. Yelencsics; and George Evener, president of the Menlo Park Civic Association, collected signatures on necessary petitions. The group took these signatures to B.B. Barnes, assistant postmaster general in Washington, D.C., where a conference was held including Mayor Yelencsics, Mrs. Wira and township clerk Oscar Kaus. According to newspaper reports of the day, "the group was informed that a duplication of street names would have to be corrected."

The group told the assistant postmaster that this had been accomplished. Other barriers placed in the way of the post office activists were that street signs had to be posted and that neighboring post offices were voicing objections to the establishment of an Edison post office. A final appeal was made by Mrs. Wira, directly to President John F. Kennedy.

Congressman Edward Patten became a willing participant in the fight to give Edison a post office of its own. Some of his desire to see the change, he admitted in the press, arose after he mailed out over 400 pieces of mail to his constituents in Edison which were returned to his offices because of the Edison mailing address. The newspaper account says that Patten "would use all his efforts to solve the confusion

officials and the Borough of Metuchen. Metuchen Mayor Walter Timpson was quoted in area newspaper reports in 1963 (when it appeared that finally a central post office would be approved) as saying, "Anyone looking at a map can see that Metuchen is right in the middle of the township..."

Postal officials assured us about our post office and said it represented a long 50-year plan. If they change it now because of this pressure (from Patten and Yelencsics) I would consider it poor planning." Upon learning of the nearly-approved establishment of a central mail facility to be located "somewhere along the Miracle Mile" (Route 27), Mayor Timpson added, "If this is true about Edison's facilities, I think Mr. Patten ought to remember that he is also representing Metuchen as well as Edison."

Mayor Yelencsics received a letter from Congressman Patten in late October 1963 "assuring him that a central post office will be established with proper facilities in Edison Township and all residents will have the Edison mailing address." In that letter, Patten wrote that the establishment of the new system is "as a result of the many requests for central service made to him by Yelencsics, township officials, industry, businessmen and residents."

was delivered by Rev. Duffy of St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Church. Speakers included Congressman Frelinghuysen, Mrs. Wira and many postal officials. The benediction was delivered by Rev. Lloyd Williams of the Stelton Baptist Church. Edison now had a post office to call its own. The old Stelton post office, which for a while bore the name "Edison Post Office," has reverted to use as a private residence. The bustling little Nixon station post office still exists. And the gigantic Kilmer General Mail Facility, located in the old Camp Kilmer site, is reported to be expanding to cope with the volume of mail it handles daily.

Recently-retired postmaster Vincent Yaede, who served as Edison's postmaster for 22 years (and who himself played a large role in the change of the township's name and in the establishment of the Edison post office), says that he was glad he was there to help in the change of name to Edison. He and others felt that the centralized post office, named Edison, would bolster a cohesive identity to the township and "eliminate any recognition of a sectional name."

David C. Sheehan is co-founder and president of the Edison Township Historical Society. This is one of a series of articles for the Metuchen-Edison Review by society members on the history of the area.



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## Retiring postmaster helped name Edison

By **WISAM ALI**  
and **ALICE GALLAGHER**  
Home News staff writers

HN 11/190  
EDISON — Vincent Yaede, the township's postmaster of 22 years, says he's "one of the last of an old breed."

Yaede, 65, who officially retired Wednesday, became postmaster back in the days when the position was a political appointment. That changed in 1970, when the U.S. Post Service was established and all postal employees came under its jurisdiction.

Yaede was named postmaster in Edison — which was then named Raritan Township — in 1967 by the late Mayor Anthony Yelensics.

The appointment was recommended by two U.S. senators and a congressman and approved by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

In the 1950s, Yaede headed up the former West End Civic Association, which was instrumental in changing the township's name to Edison. The name change was prompted by the fact that there were three communities named Raritan in New Jersey, and the township wanted a stronger identity, Yaede said.

He said a referendum was held in the mid-1950s to allow voters to

choose between the names Edison, Nixon and Menlo Park. Nixon and Menlo Park were sections of the former Raritan Township; the name Edison was to recognize Thomas Edison's work in the township.

Yaede's group fought for changing the name to Edison, he said, "to eliminate any recognition of a sectional name."

"We felt the cleanest cut would be to go with a new name," he said.

Yaede was also a member of the Chamber of Commerce and the Kiwanis Club, and he served as a council member for the Job Corps in Edison.

Colleagues and friends honored Yaede at a retirement dinner yesterday at the Pines Manor on Route 27.

Expected to attend Yaede's retirement bash are state Senator Thomas Paterniti, D-17th, and Congressman Bernard Dwyer, D-6th.

Yaede, who worked at the township's main post office on Route 27, said his years with the postal service were "terrific."

"It was good that I was there to help out the township," Yaede said, "but at the same time, the postal service was good to me. I raised five children and they're all doing fine."



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# Edison Keeps Fighting, Hopes to Lick Problem of Central Post Office

EDISON—A resume of the 10-year struggle to obtain a post office was presented to Edward V. Dorsey, director of Post Office Changes, and to Congressman Edward Patten by Mrs. Charles Wira at the offices of Mayor Anthony Yelencsics.

Participating in the conference were Yelencsics, James Roosevelt, business administrator; Charles W. Wira, a civic leader who worked from the inception of the struggle; and Norman Freeman, councilman and former president of the Chamber of Commerce.

## Began in 1953

The struggle began in 1953, when a change of the name of Raritan Township to Edison was necessitated to obtain a post office. Former Mayor James J. Forgione and Commissioner Brace Eggert were the first signers of 3,300 signatures which were obtained for this purpose by The Women for Edison, who were then informed by the postal authorities that these petitions had to be in their hands.

However, Township Clerk Oscar Kaus had to retain these petitions for his files when the changeover from Raritan to Edison took place. The Women for Edison, under the leadership of Mrs. Wira, together with volunteers from the Edison Police Reserves, under the leadership of Wira, then conducted another campaign of

getting an additional 3,000 signatures for the postal authorities.

Numerous letters were written to Sen. Clifford P. Case, Sen. H. Alexander Smith and Congressman Peter Frelinghuysen Jr. A resolution of Planning Board recommending a Central Post Office was presented by its chairman, Prof. Frank G. Helyar, in 1955. Letters of endorsement were received from industries, Socony Paint Products, Westinghouse Electric, Lincoln-Mercury, Johnson & Johnson, as well as numerous civic organizations.

## Outlined Steps

Investigations followed, with the result that in 1955 the Regional Office in Philadelphia outlined four steps to improve postal service in Edison, namely:

1. Changing of the name of the post office of Stelton to Edison.
2. The establishment of city delivery service.
3. Transfer of the Nixon Branch to the jurisdiction of the Edison office.
4. Subsequently, it is proposed to adjust delivery routes in Edison and extend the limits of the area served by the Edison post office.

The first three steps were accomplished, with the fourth step incomplete.

Efforts were made by former Mayor Thomas Swales Jr.

and Yelencsics. Requests for more and more petitions were made. Yelencsics and George Evener, president of the Menlo Park Civic Association, obtained 2,500 signatures for the area of Menlo Park.

These were taken in 1960 to B. B. Barnes, Assistant Postmaster General in Washington, D.C., where a conference was held, including Yelencsics, Mr. and Mrs. Wira and Kaus.

## Correct Names

The group was informed that a duplication of street names would have to be corrected. This was done. Since then, two additional trips were made by the mayor and representatives to Patten for the improvement of the postal situation. Another investigation followed the trip, with a field trip of three days to representatives homes served by nine Post Offices regarding opinions.

In February 1961, a report from Washington on the recent investigation was sent to Mrs. Wira, which stressed the elimination of duplicate street names, the provision of street signs and also the opposition of a neighboring Post Office.

In 1962, the Edison Chamber of Commerce with John J. Bunker, former president, conducting another campaign with the cooperation of township officials. And the final appeal was made

by Mrs. Wira in a letter to President Kennedy, with clippings from area newspapers, including The Home News.

## State of Confusion

Patten received the letter together with letters from civic organizations and individuals and arranged several conferences. He said at the present meeting that he never realized the state of confusion in Edison until he received between 300 to 400 letters that he had mailed to constituents and which were returned to him because of the mailing address. He said that he would bend all his efforts to solve the confusion in Edison.

Dorsey stated that he would go to Washington and speak to his group and explore the distribution of mail with the identification of Edison primarily in mind for all areas of Edison, without disrupting the present mail service. His main objective is to improve and better the service.

This exploration of the situation, which will be a matter of the fulfillment of the fourth step promised by the postal officials, will take 30 to 90 days.

Patten further stated that at the prior meetings the picture looked rather dismal but that with the review presented and the exploration which was to be conducted by the director of Post Office Changes the picture looked brighter and encouraging.

THE RARITAN VALLEY'S  
LEADING NEWSPAPER

# THE DAILY HOME NEWS

MIDDLESEX COUNTY  
COMMUNITY NEWS

NEW BRUNSWICK, N. J., THURSDAY

AFTERNOON, JUNE 13, 1963.



NEW BRUNSWICK, N. J., TUESDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 29, 1963.

## Edison Claims It Will Have New Post Office . .

EDISON—Mayor Anthony M. Yelencsics today reported that a successful conclusion to the 10-year fight to have the township serviced by a central post office system is in sight.

Yelencsics reported that he received a letter from U.S. Rep. Edward J. Patten, D-15th Dist., yesterday assuring him that a central post office will be established here in the near future.

Yelencsics quoted Patten's letter as saying:

"The Post Office Department informs me that a central post office will be established with proper

facilities in Edison Township and all residents will have the Edison mailing address."

Patten wrote that the establishment of the new system is a result of the many requests for central service made to him by Yelencsics, township officials, industry, businessmen and residents.

In commenting on the letter, Yelencsics said he was "gratified" that the Post Office Department had decided to institute a central post office system for the township.

He said he was "particularly grateful to the industry, businessmen and residents of the township

whose interest in this problem has made our struggle for a central post office a success."

Presently nine district post offices serve the township.

The fight to centralize the system into one central post office that gives all residents an Edison address started in 1954.

Then, the late Mayor James C. Forgione protested to the federal Post Office Department the "carving up of the township's population areas to be served by out-of-town post offices."

Since then, the drive for a central post office has gained momentum.

Three years ago, Yelencsics, Township Clerk Oscar Kaus and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wira, who have been active in the movement, presented their case for a central post office to B. B. Barnes, assistant postmaster general in charge of regional post offices, in Washington, D.C.

They took with them approximately 600 signatures from residents in the Highland Park Post Office.

They took with them approximately 2,600 signatures from township residents requesting improved mail service.

## . . . But Metuchen Officials Say It's News to Them

METUCHEN—A fierce tug-of-war between Edison and this borough over who will get the township's central post office has developed in the last 24 hours.

In that time, Edison Mayor Anthony Yelencsics, who has been pulling his end of the rope all along for a post office in Edison, gave a giant heave yesterday by quoting Rep. Edward Patten that a "central post office will be established with proper facilities in Edison."

### Do Not Want to Be Quoted

Metuchen Mayor Walter Timpson has been merely holding his end of the rope since last month by simply saying that the Post Office Department plans a 20,000-square-foot facility in the borough. All logic points to that structure as the central

post office—at least Yelencsics feels that way. And borough officials have been told it will be, but do not want to be quoted.

After Yelencsics' announcement, Timpson began pulling his end a great deal harder by stating that if a post office facility is planned for Edison "it's news to the real estate division of the regional post office headquarters in Philadelphia."

Timpson phoned representatives there yesterday who said "it was the first that they had heard of a facility for Edison."

It also was news to Metuchen Postmaster Holger Holm. However, Yelencsics believes that Philadelphia simply has not been informed "from the top"—or Washington.

Township officials believe that the new Edison facility

would be located along "the miracle mile" on Route 27 and would be government-owned.

Timpson said he had been trying to contact U.S. Sen. Clifford Case all day yesterday in an effort to clear up the mystery. The mayor is expected to talk to postal officials in Washington today about a possible Edison post office.

### Will Have to Find Out

"If Edison gets the post office, it would seem unlikely that the borough would also get one, but that's something I will have to find out," said Timpson.

He contends that Patten's letter may have been misinterpreted in the fact that all Edison residents might have an Edison mailing address, but the mail would be processed through

Metuchen's central facility.

"If this is true about Edison's facilities, I think Mr. Patten ought to remember that he also is representing Metuchen as well as Edison," said Timpson.

The mayor indicated that he would fight to retain the proposed post office for the borough, adding that "political geography should not determine where a central post office should be located."

"Anyone looking at a map can see that Metuchen is right in the middle of the township," he added. "Postal officials assured us about our post office and said it represented a long range, 50-year plan. If they change it now because of this pressure, I would consider it poor planning."



# UNITED STATES POST OFFICE EDISON, NEW JERSEY

## *Post Office Opens After Long Effort*

EDISON—The Edison Post Office was formally dedicated at ceremonies attended by township, state and Federal officials yesterday.

The opening marked not only the completion of construction on the building, but the erection of the township's own post office.

Speakers at the dedication ceremonies included Representative Peter Frelinghuysen Jr., Mayor Anthony Yelencsics and Postmaster Edward Collins.

Mrs. Charles Wira, outgoing president of the Women For Edison, told the group of the work done by her organization and other civic leaders in securing the post office for the township.

### **First Changed Name**

Before actual work on the post office was started, Mrs. Wira said, petitions were required to change the name from Raritan Township to the present designation. Mrs. Wira also cited the work of former Mayor James Forgione and Township Clerk Oscar Kaus, as well as others involved in acquiring the building.

Mrs. Wira said that the first headway was made on the securing of the post office when petitions with 3,300 names and endorsements of industrial and civic organizations were presented to postal officials. Mrs. Wira also praised Professor Frank G. Helyar in obtaining such petitions and endorsements.

Master of ceremonies for the dedication was Freeholder Joseph Costa, while music was supplied by the Edison High School Band.

Presentation of the flag was made to the Edison Township Police Reserves by Postmaster Collins. The key to the new post office was presented to Collins by Aaron Schurmann of the Marx Brothers Construction Co., builders of the post office.

The public toured the new building during an open house held after the formal ceremonies.



**OPENING DAY:** Edison Township and federal officials pose in front of the new township post office dedicated at ceremonies yesterday. From left are Township Mayor Anthony Yelencsics, Postmaster Edward Collins, Representative Peter Frelinghuysen Jr., and Mrs. Charles Wira, outgoing president of the Women for Edison.



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