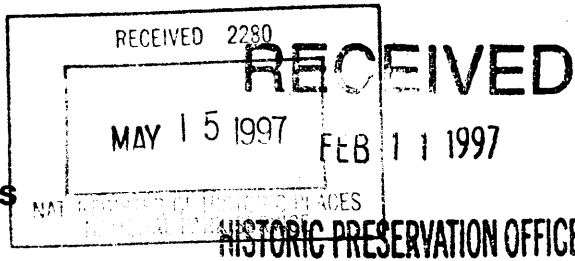


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



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### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

#### 1. Name of Property

historic name OCEAN CITY CITY HALL

other names/site number N/A

#### 2. Location

street & number 9TH STREET AND ASBURY AVENUE  not for publication N/A

city or town OCEAN CITY  vicinity N/A

state NEW JERSEY code NJ county CAPE MAY code 009 zip code 08226

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official [Signature]

Date 4/21/97

Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources / DSHPO

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

[Signature]  
Edson R. Beall

6-13-97

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
ONE (1)		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
ONE (1)	ZERO (0)	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

ZERO (0)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/city hall.

police station

fire house

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/city hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

BEAUX\_ARTS CLASSICISM

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls BRICK, STONE, TERRA COTTA

roof ASPHALT, GLASS

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations N/A  
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE  
POLITICS/ GOVERNMENT  
SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1914

Significant Dates

1914

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

VIVIAN B. SMITH, AIA

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

OCEAN CITY CITY HALL

Name of Property

CAPE MAY CO, NJ

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.3 ACRES

Ocean City, NJ Quad

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 536560 4347580
Zone Easting Northing
2

3
Zone Easting Northing
4

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title MICHAEL F. SULLIVAN, CLA, ASLA PP/DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

organization CITY OF OCEAN CITY date FEBRUARY 6, 1997

street & number 9TH ST. & ASBURY AVENUE telephone 609-525-9371

city or town OCEAN CITY state NEW JERSEY zip code 08226

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name CITY OF OCEAN CITY C/O MAYOR HENRY KNIGHT

street & number 9TH STREET AND ASBURY AVENUE telephone 609-525-9371

city or town OCEAN CITY state NJ zip code 08226

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
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Continuation SheetOCEAN CITY CITY HALL  
CAPE MAY CO, NJSection number 7 Page 1**Narrative Description**

Ocean City City Hall is a five-bay by seven-bay, three-story building within the Beaux - Arts Classical style. The building is comprised of brick, stone and terra cotta around a steel frame. It was designed to be a monumental edifice expressed in a simple, regular building mass. City Hall is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Ninth Street and Asbury Avenue. The primary facade is on Asbury Avenue with the secondary on Ninth Street.

**Asbury Avenue Principal Facade:** This facade, (photo #1 & #2) which faces west, was the location of the original primary entrance to the offices on the 2nd and 3rd floors. This entrance is recessed in an archway flanked by double columns. A grand entry stair (photo #3) leads to this entrance from the sidewalk of Asbury Avenue. Two massive flanking walls enclose the stair. They are of brick with stone copings. Two monumental cast iron light fixtures stand on either side of the entry stairs. The globes on the fixtures have been replaced over time. The lamps are electric.

The base of the facade includes the granite water table supporting brick walls. On either side of the entry stair there are three rectilinear window openings for the first floor. Those windows correspond with the spaces created by the monumental terra cotta columns which begin on the second floor and rise to support the entablature above the third floor. Between each pair of columns (except for those flanking the entrance) the windows are rectangular with heavy muntains. The windows for the second floor offices have classical pediments supported by ornamental corbels. The frieze has raised terra cotta letters spelling out "CITY HALL" (photo #3). Above the cornice a clock is framed in terra cotta laurels. The corners of the structure are quoined with recessing of brick courses. The composition of the facade with the columns, entablature, modillions, pediments and ornament make full use of the classical elements which embody the Beax-Arts Classicism style.

**Ninth Street Secondary Facade:** This facade faces south (photo #4). It is five bays wide. This facade was originally for fire vehicle access. The five arched openings permitted parking of the fire vehicles. Four of the five have been filled in with windows as the ground floor was converted to offices. The center archway (photo #5) is now used as the main entrance to City Hall. Above the entrance is an ornamental terra cotta balcony supported by corbels (photo #6). Above the first floor, this facade repeats the classical vocabulary of the Asbury Avenue facade: columns, pediments, corbels, and entablature.

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**East Elevation:** This facade faces a narrow alley to the east. It is comprised entirely of brick with rectangular window openings (photo #7). The windows have stone lintels. The terra cotta cornice wraps around this facade from Ninth Street, but stops short of the hose tower. The most distinctive feature from this vantage point is the hose tower (photo #8), which projects above the cornice of the building. It has three small windows with wooden louvers. The tower has its own terra cotta cornice detail.

**North Elevation:** This facade faces a narrow alley to the north. It is comprised of brick with large rectangular window openings (photo #9). The windows have stone lintels. The hose tower projects beyond the facade. Double-wooden doors are located at the base of the tower (photo #10).

Exterior doors are oak, with custom brass hardware featuring the Ocean City seal.

**Roof:** The roof is comprised of a lower section at the perimeter, with a steeply-sloped transition to the parapet of the upper roof. The lower roof has a new roof membrane with the steep portion having asphalt shingles. Three skylights are located on top of the roof. One skylight serves the laylight over the main entrance interior stairs.

### Interior

The building is almost symmetrical, reflecting the shape of the parcel it was built on. The Asbury Avenue entrance opens into the west corridor/vestibule of the 2nd floor. The corridors on both the 2nd and 3rd floors form a rectangular system which wraps around the central building core. On the second floor private offices are arranged on the outside perimeter of the corridor. The inside of the corridor gives access to the ladies restroom and the skylights.

The 3rd floor corridor is similar to the 2nd, but terminates at the council chamber as it wraps around the core.

The 1st floor has been converted to office space from its former use as a fire/police department. There were formerly five (5) truck bays on the first floor facing Ninth Street that permitted drive-through access for the fire trucks. The first floor is now divided into offices and a conference room. Acoustical tile ceilings have been installed to visually screen the electrical and HVAC equipment. Flood-proofing measures have been installed at first-floor doorways.

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All interior spaces retain most of their of architectural integrity. The major alteration has been the installation of suspended ceilings in first and second floor corridors and restrooms. Terrazzo floors, marble, tile and wood paneled wainscots and wood remain intact after almost eighty years (photo #11 & #12).

The architect designed two major decorative elements for the building, compared to which the rest of the public spaces are of secondary importance. These two major elements are the **monumental stairs** between the first and second floors, and the **Council Chamber** on the second floor. The remaining public spaces are comprised of the corridors on the north, west, and south sides of the building on both the first and second floors.

The first of these two highlights to be seen by the visitor is the central **monumental stairway** and stair hall, first viewed from the vestibule. The visitor enters the vestibule (photo #14) from the exterior through large double wood doors, with custom hardware featuring the Ocean City seal on the estutcheon (photo #15). The doors have an eared surround, and are surmounted by a lunette window with vertical muntins. The wood is finished with a dark stain and a transparent finish.

The vestibule has marble wainscotting with plaster walls above, and a terrazzo floor. The terrazzo floor, like that throughout the corridors and restrooms, is surrounded by a five-color mosaic border of small tiles.

The vestibule contains three marble steps leading up to the central hall; first viewing the stairway from a level three steps leading up to the central hall; first viewing the stairway from a level three steps lower increases its aspect of monumentality. The vestibule has a cornice at the ceiling, probably composed of pressed metal moldings.

The monumental marble stairs (photo #16, #18 & #19) descend from the third floor to a landing in a double dog leg, then join for the central run to the second floor. The wood hand rails, supported by geometric iron balusters, flare out at the bottom of the run and terminate in newels topped with brass knobs and braced by elaborate S-scroll brackets (photo #17).

The stairway is lighted by a large laylight in the ceiling (photo #20). The laylight is divided into nine unequally-sized sections by wood mullions. The yellow decorative glass in the laylight is original. Light is provided at the roof level by a glass and copper skylight structure, and passes through an opening in the attic floor.

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The skylight at both roof and stairway-ceiling levels has hinged elements, and was originally intended to provide ventilation as well as light.

One of the most elaborate lighting fixtures in the building hangs in the vestibule. A half-sphere of opalescent glass is supported by five bronze ribs, and hangs from five chains.

The fixture in the center hall is a similar half-sphere, but is attached directly to the ceiling instead of being hung by chains. Sconces are constructed of similar but smaller half-sphere fixtures supported on arms; the first floor center hall and the stair landing each has two sconces (photo #13).

The vestibule, stairhall and stairway are in good condition overall. Historic fabric is intact, and has not been deliberately altered. The problems which exist are minor, are primarily cosmetic, and have been caused by routine wear and tear over eighty years of use.

The marble wainscot and baseboard is in good condition except for staining on the wainscot, and one misaligned piece of marble baseboard. On the east and west walls of the vestibule it appears that old radiators have been removed, and replaced by smaller units; however, the stains remain from the original radiators on the marble wainscot. There is other, less noticeable discoloration on the marble stairs and baseboards. This is probably a result of an accumulation of polishes and grime.

The **Council Chamber** is the most elaborately-finished space in the building (photo #21, #22 & #23). A wood entablature surrounds the room, supported on each wall by eight pilasters, ending in Ionic capitals (photo #24). A paneled wood wainscot connects the pilasters at the bottom of the wall.

The entablature, pilasters, and wainscot are stained a dark shade. The plaster fields between the pilasters and above the wainscot are divided into small upper and large lower areas by a horizontal enriched-talon molding; each section is decorated by a rectangular panel formed by plaster moldings.

The ceiling above the entablature is coved and coffered. The coffering is probably achieved through applied pressed-metal beams. The floor is narrow boards painted a dark brown; the aisles are covered with carpet.



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The east and south walls each have two windows. Each window is a double casement with double hoppers above, which open in. The windows have small panes separated by heavy muntins.

All lighting was originally provided by one large chandelier (photo #25) and two sconces (photo #26) on each wall. Additional indirect lighting has been added on top of the entablature, at the base of the cove ceiling, and shielded from view by the addition of horizontal molding at the top of the entablature. The center chandelier has an opalescent bowl-shaped glass base with six chains. The sconces each have two candles with bare lamps supported on arms.

The Council Chamber is generally in excellent condition. The fabric of the room itself is very little altered, with the exception of some additions resulting from developing technology. This consists of grilles and registers for heating and air conditioning, two electric ceiling fans, and speakers for an amplification system. The major alteration was the removal of the railing and council members' bench to make room for a larger table.

The corridors on the first and second floors are treated alike. The floors are terrazzo, with same the five-color mosaic tile border found in the vestibule and front hall; the baseboards are marble. The walls have white tile wainscotting terminating in a wood rail, with plaster above.

Doors into individual offices are original. Each has a lower wooden panel, with glass above; the glazed transom above was originally operable to facilitate ventilation. Original hardware features hexagonal door knobs. Some doors and door casings have been removed and the opening blocked. On the east side of the first floor, the light well has been converted to a closet; windows opening onto the light well have been removed and replaced with a door and sidelights.

Modern suspended acoustic tile ceilings have been installed. Lighting is by fluorescent fixtures in the ceilings. The ceilings also conceal heat and air conditioning ducts.

Two massive benches (photo #27), which are probably original to the construction of the building, are located in the first floor corridor to the east and west of the central stair. The benches on the first floor have had moldings removed from the back panels, and one panel itself has been removed and replaced with plywood. The benches are in good condition otherwise.

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The women's room on the first floor and the men's room on the second floor retain many original features. The amount of intact historic fabric is unusual in an area which is often subjected to frequent modernizations.

The restrooms continue the use of white tile wainscot, but without the terminating wood rail. Here, the wainscot ends in a white quarter-round border tile. The floors are terrazzo with five-color mosaic tile border.

The original marble stall partitions with louvered wood doors are intact.

Original toilet, urinal and lavatory fixtures have been replaced with modern fixtures.

In these areas, also, suspended ceilings of acoustic tile have been installed; lighting is by fluorescent fixtures in the ceiling.

Windows in the women's room, which previously opened onto the lightwell, have been blocked up. In the men's room, one window sash has had the glass replaced by plywood, and an outlet for ventilation inserted.

United States Department of the Interior  
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Continuation SheetOCEAN CITY CITY HALL  
CAPE MAY CO, NJSection number   8   Page   1  **Narrative Statement of Significance**

The Ocean City City Hall is a significant embodiment of the early 20th-Century construction boom along the burgeoning shore of southern New Jersey. The architectural style is an excellent example of Beaux-Arts Classicism, which was reserved for major public buildings of the era. It has stood since its construction in 1914 as a conspicuous landmark of Ocean City's municipal government. City Hall embodies the strength, the vision and the history of the people of Ocean City. It meets criteria A and C through its association with local politics and government and for its place in the architectural history of Ocean City.

**History of City Hall**

The City of Ocean City was incorporated in 1887, with the Commission form of government incorporated in 1911. Prior to the erection of the present City Hall, the Commissioners held their meetings in the Massey & Edwards building at Eighth Street and Wesley Avenue. The building of a new City Hall would prove to be a distillation of the influences of an economic boom time at the Jersey Shore, the bold vision of a new Mayor and Commission, an expression of the citizen's will through the democratic process and the talents of a young architect.

In 1896 the current City Hall site at Ninth Street and Asbury Avenue was shown on a map by J.D. Scott as undeveloped "Borough Property". In the fall of 1896, Volunteer fire Company #1 decided to build their permanent headquarters on the site. In 1903 their firehouse is shown as a wood-frame structure with the truck bays fronting on Ninth Street and hose tower on the southwest corner. A 1908 photograph is consistent with this description.

After their election in 1911, there is evidence of the Commissioners intent to create a City Hall at the corner of Ninth and Asbury. The Commission negotiated the acquisition of a property adjacent to Volunteer Fire House #1 from Mr. Charles Chalmers for the price of \$6,500.00. After this purchase, there was now sufficient land to construct a new City Hall.

The pressure of rapid development in Ocean City pointed to a greater need for a hub of local government. Since its settlement by Ezra, Wesley and James Lake in 1879, Ocean City has undergone steady growth. They had begun the settlement as a Methodist Camp meeting in the hopes of attracting worshippers to the healthful beach environment.

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Demand for a share of this utopian existence grew sharply as real state prices boomed from 1880-1881. Thus, a religious experiment turned quickly into a lucrative business venture. Mass transportation infrastructure was necessary to support this growth.

In 1880 a rail line connected Somers Point to Philadelphia, but a ferry connection was the only means to link the mainland with the north end of Ocean City. The north end was flourishing around the Tabernacle at Eighth Street, which was the center for religious services. 1880 also saw the first street to be opened, Asbury Avenue, which ran from the Tabernacle to Sixth Street. In 1883 the first highway was built to connect Ocean City to the mainland. It was called "the Turnpike" and it was a two-mile horse-and-buggy bridge which ran from the south end to Beesley's Point (Upper Township). A railroad linked Ocean City to Tuckahoe by 1884, called the West Jersey and Seashore Railroad. These improvements continued to make the island more accessible to beachgoers thereby promoting development. The development of Ocean City marched on until the Depression of 1893. But by 1896 the recovery was beginning.

The electric trolley started in 1895 by the Ocean City Electric Railroad Company was becoming a success. It ran from the north end to 59th Street. The Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore Railroad line provided a direct connection between Philadelphia and Ocean City. The numerous expansions of rail service made it possible for more and more visitors and summer residents to acquire a share of the Ocean City experience.

The industrial revolution also contributed to the development pressures of Ocean City. Indoor plumbing, heating, electricity and telephone service all served to heat up the market for housing. Perhaps more than anything, the development of the automobile gave nearly unlimited access, for those lucky enough to own a car, to housing opportunities beyond the central cities. Nationwide interest in auto travel was growing. In 1900 the first automobile show was held in New York City in Madison Square Garden. The American Automobile Association was created in 1902. The interest in the use of automobiles and the development of roads was also a local focus. In 1905 the Cape May Automobile Club conducted auto speed contests to promote automobile transportation. The Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders realized the economic benefits to the tourism industry and undertook a massive road and bridge construction program between 1900 and 1915. Cars were bringing weekend vacationers by the thousands. This signaled a new era for the seashore resorts.

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The Ocean City Sentinel reported early in 1912 that plans were approved for a new auto bridge between Somers Point and Ocean City.

This was sponsored by the Ocean City Automobile Bridge Company. This new bridge, known as the "Somers Point Boulevard Bridge", would enter Ocean City at Ninth Street. The bridge was completed in 1914. This made the 9th Street location of a new City Hall a natural anchor at this end of the bridge. The City Commissioners planned to pave Ninth Street as a gateway to City Hall and the City.

On December 6, 1912, the commissioners passed a resolution to advertise for competitive plans for a new City Hall. On December 12, 1912 the Ocean City Sentinel reported that resolution, but also that "Some Taxpayers Don't Want Big City Hall," and that the public is unhappy with increases in appropriations. Mayor Headley made his case for a new City Hall in the December 19, 1912 Sentinel with the following points:

*The Existing firehouse is dilapidated.*

*The City needs to modernize fire service to meet the growing needs of the City.*

*The new City Hall will house #1 and #3 fire companies.*

*Ocean City is the only town in the County without a Hall.*

*It will be a source of pride for its citizens.*

*There is a need to plan for the future needs of the City.*

There was ongoing debate over the benefits of a new City Hall. Organizations and citizens argued the costs versus the benefits. Some questioned the location. The commissioners directed the Young Men's Progressive League to review the submissions of the City Hall plans and to make a recommendation.

The Sentinel reported on February 27, 1913 that the Progressive League has recommended the plans of Vivian B. Smith, AIA and Earl M. Henderer, associated architects. The League also recommended that the Hall be sited near the proposed Ninth Street auto bridge. Additional input was sought from a group of Architects from Drexel University. In a "blind" review they also recommended the plans of Smith and Henderer. In April of 1913, Ordinance #45 was passed to provide for the payment of the new City Hall.

The debate was not closed, however. Citizens were still objecting to the cost and the need for a City Hall. In June 1913, the Commissioner had been presented with a petition to settle the debate over City Hall with a public referendum.

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In agreeing to go along with the will of the citizens, Mayor Headley emphasized the need for a modern fire house and the paving of Ninth Street to accommodate new bridge traffic (the paving was included in the ordinance to build City Hall). A special election was held August 1, 1913 and the people voted to build a new City Hall.

On August 7, 1913 the Commission resolved to secure plans and specifications for a new City Hall. Vivian B. Smith and Earle M. Henderer were formally retained as architects on September 18, 1913. The cornerstone was laid on April 11, 1914. New Years Day, 1915, Mayor Headley held a reception at the new City Hall, at which tours were given between 9 am and 10 pm.

The creation of Ocean City City Hall is a significant historic symbol of Ocean City: it represents the transition of a Methodist camp meeting of the late 19th century to the expanding modern city of the early 20th century. City Hall is a tangible symbol of the shift from a religious association based at the Tabernacle, to a secular form of government housed in a monumental public building. It is a physical manifestation of the pressures of the building boom, the advances in technology and the self-determination of its citizens. It has been witness to the Great Depression, and two World Wars, and has remained the hub of local government in Ocean City since the time of its dedication in 1914.

### Architectural Significance

Ocean City City Hall (1914) was designed by Vivian Smith, AIA, in collaboration with Earle M. Henderer. Although little is known of Henderer, Smith was a prolific shore architect. City Hall was an early commission; Smith was twenty-eight and had opened his own office in Atlantic City in 1910.

Smith became a leading early-20th-century architect in the South Jersey coastal resort communities. Smith chose Beaux-Arts Classicism for Ocean City City Hall, a style which was at the end of its zenith in 1914.

City Hall is a fine example of Beaux-Arts Classicism. The significance of the style can be traced back to the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. It was during the Exposition that eclectic arrangements of classical architectural elements were composed to create monumental structures of importance. The eclecticism was rooted in the "Classical ideal" of Greek and Roman architecture.

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In addition to exposing the attendees to a classical ideal, the Exposition also awakened the public's interest in civic design. People realized that design could create a new aesthetic in their town and cities. This aesthetic or classical ideal represented power, honesty and virtue. It was natural that public buildings should be designed into exhibit these qualities.

It was also natural that Vivian Smith, AIA a young architect, would design Ocean City's first municipal building in the Beaux-Arts Classical style. The importance of the building is reflected in its construction materials and detailing. Monumental street facades feature a stone watertable, terra-cotta entablatures (with cornice, frieze and architrave), double columns, pediments and window and door surrounds set in brick fields. The Beaux-Arts Classical theme continues in the interior featuring terrazzo and mosaic-tile floors, marble stairs and wainscot and decorative metal railings, and in the Council Chamber, wood pilasters, entablature and wainscot.

While the style may not seem unusual for a public building, it was a significant change from the predominant styles of architecture in Ocean City. Prior to the erection of City Hall, the following styles were common: National Folk, Second Empire Victorian, Queen Anne Victorian, Shingle, Folk Victorian, Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, and Craftsman. All of these styles consisted, primarily, of wood construction. The stone, brick and terra cotta of City Hall composed in monumental facades was a striking contrast to the former modes of design and construction. It would mark 1914 as a significant point in the architectural history of Ocean City.

City Hall originally housed all City functions including the fire department, which had fire apparatus bays in the ground floor doors on the 9th Street facade. Today, Ocean City City Hall conforms with Smith's design intent except for conversion of the ground floor fire department space to office use. The exterior and the interior public spaces survive with most historic fabric intact.

The building has continually served as Ocean City's City Hall since completion in 1914. In addition, Ocean City City Hall has architectural significance because of its association with Vivian B. Smith, AIA, one of the leading South Jersey resort architects of the early twentieth century. Smith was born in Ocean City in 1886 to Lewis S. and Hannah Holmes Smith of Cape May County. After graduating from Ocean City High School he studied architecture in Philadelphia under Charles L. Hoffman and others, and returned to Atlantic City to work in the office of Harvey J. Shumway. He opened his own office in Atlantic City in 1910, at the age of 24, following Mr. Shumway's death.

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His practice included residential, commercial and industrial design, but he is best known for his public buildings, schools, and hotels. His commissions included the Music Pier in Ocean City, Flanders Hotel in Ocean City, Senator and Breakers Hotels in Atlantic City, Ventnor City Hall, Troy Avenue and Oxford Avenue Schools in Ventnor, and Ocean City High School.

He was an eclectic designer who worked in a variety of architectural styles then popular, and moved from one to another with ease; the styles he employed include Jacobethan, Spanish Colonial Revival, Second Empire, Chateausque, Late Gothic Revival, and Neo-Colonial. During World War I, working with the United States Army, he designed and supervised the construction of Belcoville, NJ a munitions plant and company town for 5000 residents owned by Bethlehem Steel Company. He died in 1952.

The significance that Ocean City City Hall plays in the career of Vivian Smith is related to the Beaux -Arts Classical style. After the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893; the classical ideal dominated the teaching of architecture. City Hall, as one of his earliest commissions, was ripe for him to employ his grasp of classical architectural design. As his later buildings show, he moved on to the other styles for the Flanders Hotel in Ocean City (Spanish Colonial Revival) and the Ocean City High School (Late Gothic Revival). His commissions outside of Ocean City also reflect a progression in style over his career. But his first large public building (City Hall) exhibits his Beaux-Arts training.



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## Boundary Justification:

The boundaries are the original and current lot lines, bounded by Asbury Avenue, Ninth Street and an unnamed public alley. The tax map identifies the property as Block 806 Lot1.

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All photographs are of: Ocean City City Hall, Cape May Co., NJ

All photographs were taken in February, 1997 by Michael F. Sullivan

All negatives are located at: The Division of Planning  
and Community Development  
City Hall  
9th Street and Asbury Avenue  
Ocean City, NJ 08226

<u>Photograph Number</u>	<u>Description of View</u>
1	Asbury Avenue Facade
2	Asbury Avenue Facade
3	Asbury Avenue Entrance
4	Ninth Street Facade
5	Ninth Street Entrance
6	Ninth Street Balcony
7	East Elevation
8	Hose Tower
9	North Elevation
10	Hose Tower Doors
11	Terrazzo/Tile Floor
12	Tile/Wood Wainscoting
13	Wall Sconce (Hall)
14	Vestibule
15	Estutcheon Detail
16	Marble Stair
17	Marble Stair
18	Marble Stair
19	Marble Stair
20	Laylight
21	Transom Window (Council Chambers)
22	Council Chambers
23	Council Chambers
24	Pilaster Detail (Council Chambers)
25	Chandelier (Council Chambers)
26	Wall Sconce (Council Chambers)
27	Hall Bench

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## Historic Photographs (photocopies)

### Photo Number

### Description

H-1

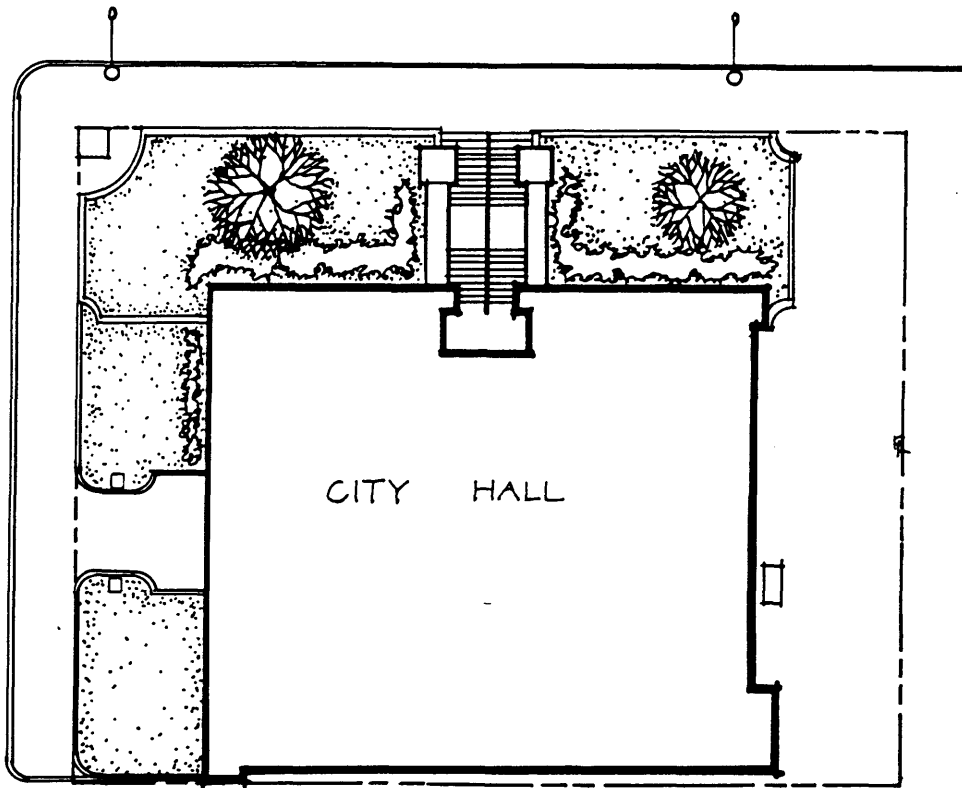
City Hall 1915, view from corner  
of Ninth Street & Asbury Avenue.

H-2

City Hall, Ninth Street Facade, Fire  
Department Bays, Circa 1920

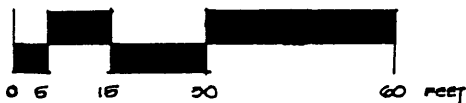
ASBURY AVENUE

NINTH STREET



PUBLIC ALLEY

THIS PLAN IS BASED ON THE PLAN ENTITLED "SURVEY OF CITY HALL", DATED JULY 1994, PREPARED BY JOHN R. WALKER, P.L.S., WALKER, PREVITI, HOLMES & ASSOCIATES, 801 ASBURY AVENUE, OCEAN CITY, NJ



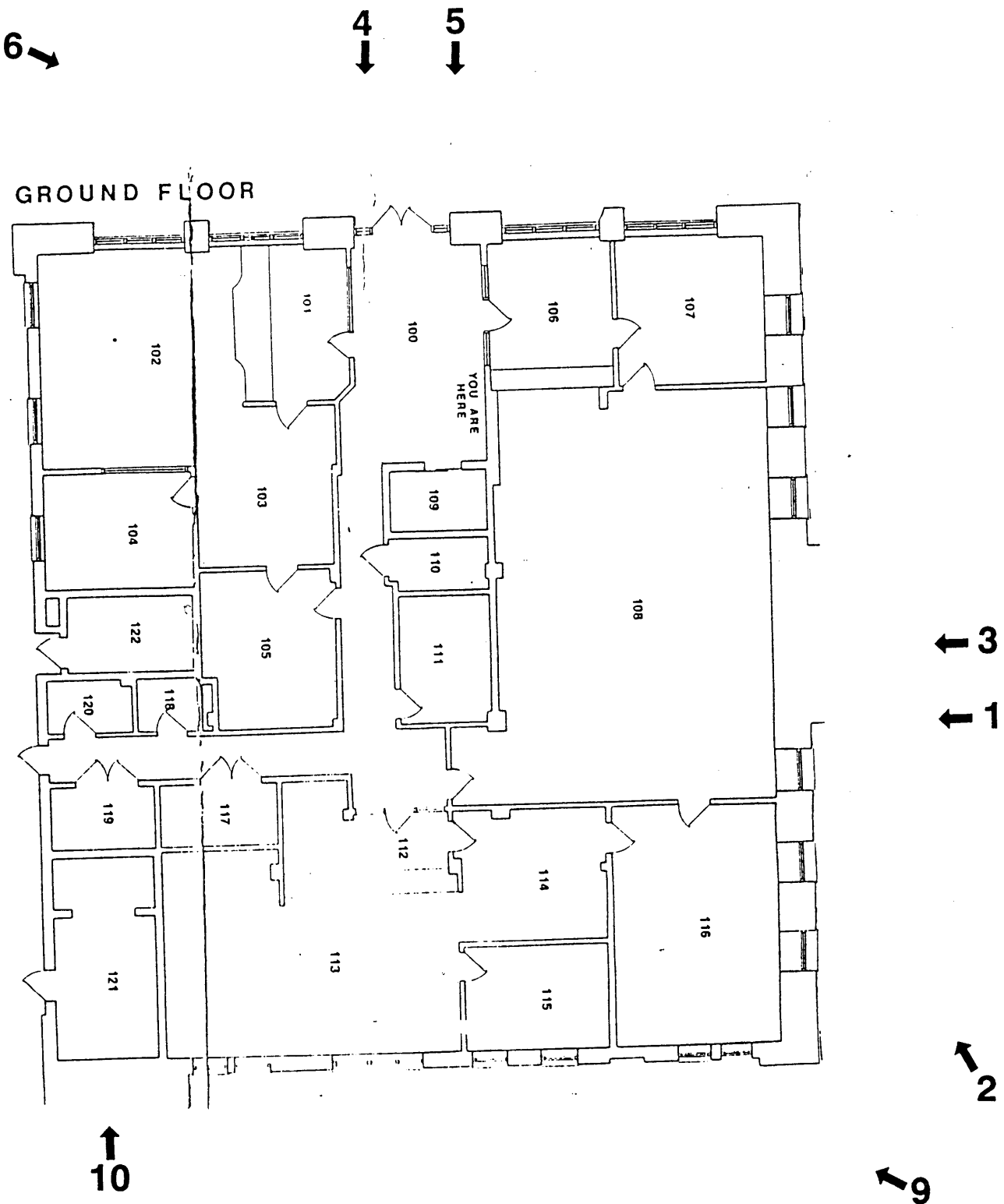
NORTH



SITE PLAN OF CITY HALL  
 BLOCK 806 LOT 1  
 CITY OF OCEAN CITY  
 CAPE MAY COUNTY, NEW JERSEY  
 SCALE: 1" = 30' AUGUST 28, 1996

PREPARED BY  
 MICHAEL F. SULLIVAN, CLA, PP  
 CERTIFIED LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
 AS00612

*Michael F. Sullivan*  
 DATE 8-28-96

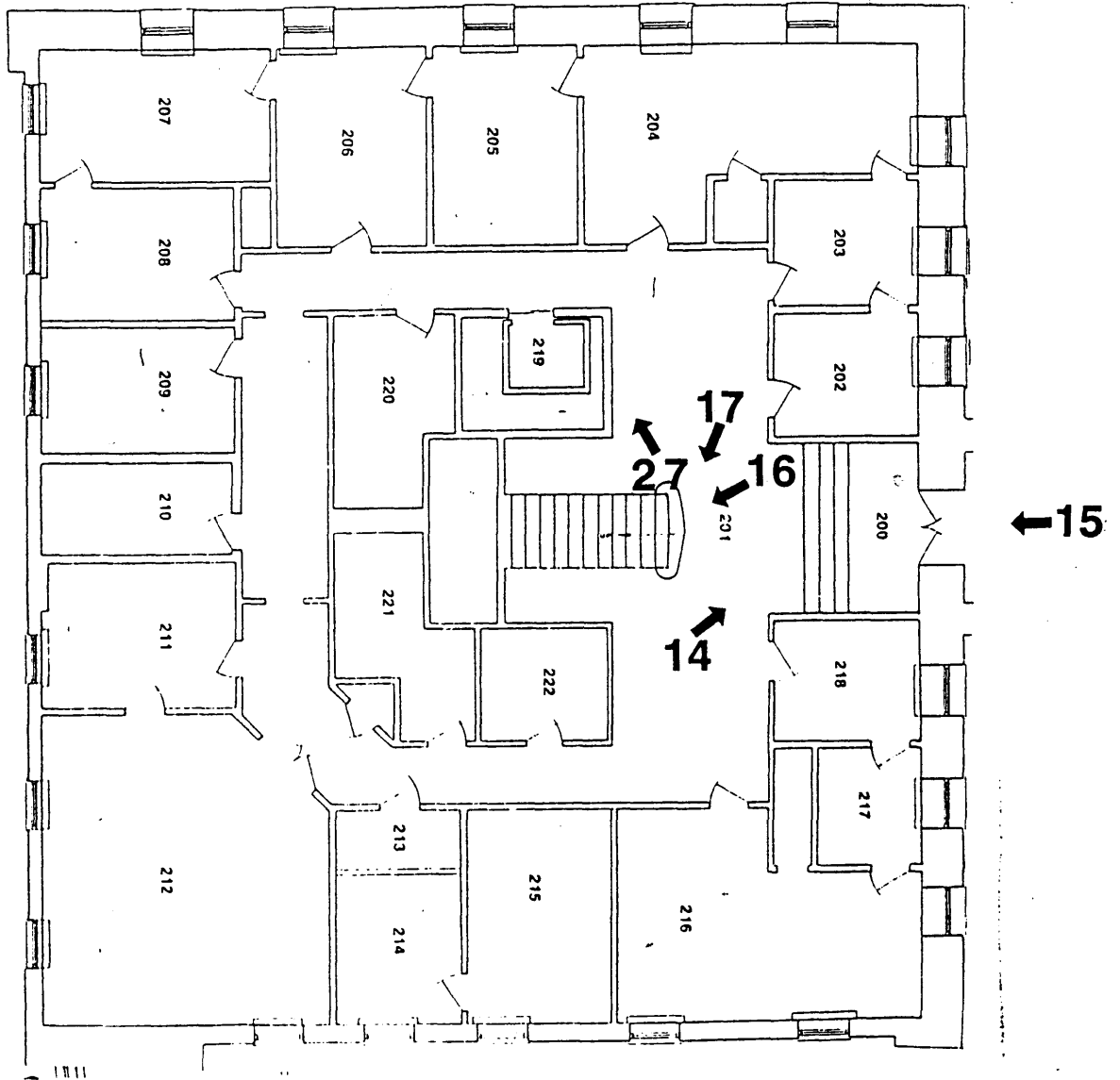


**GROUND FLOOR PLAN**

WITH PHOTO LOCATIONS

OCEAN CITY CITY HALL, BLOCK 806 LOT 1 CAPE MAY CO., NJ

**SECOND FLOOR**

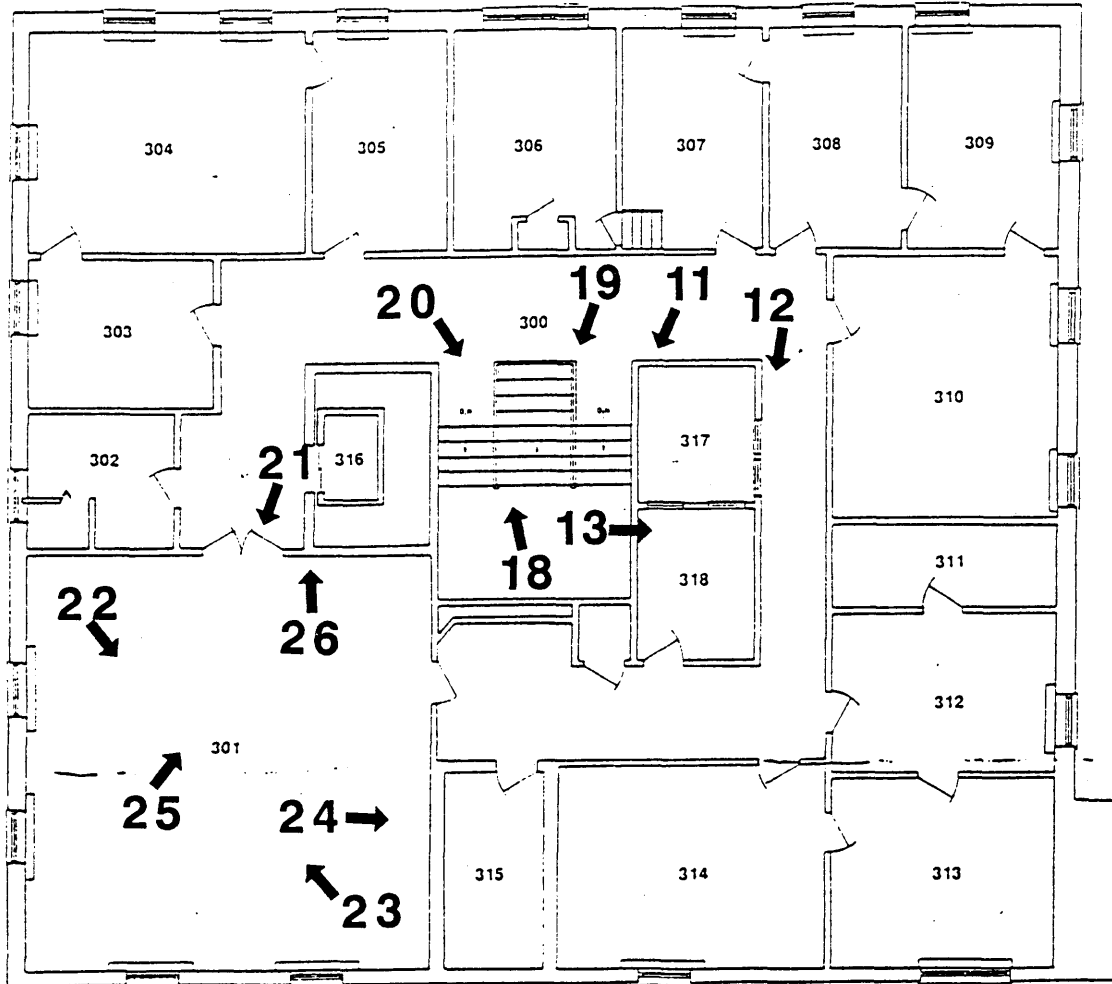


**SECOND FLOOR PLAN**

**WITH PHOTO LOCATIONS**

**OCEAN CITY CITY HALL, BLOCK 806 LOT 1 CAPE MAY CO., NJ**

THIRD FLOOR



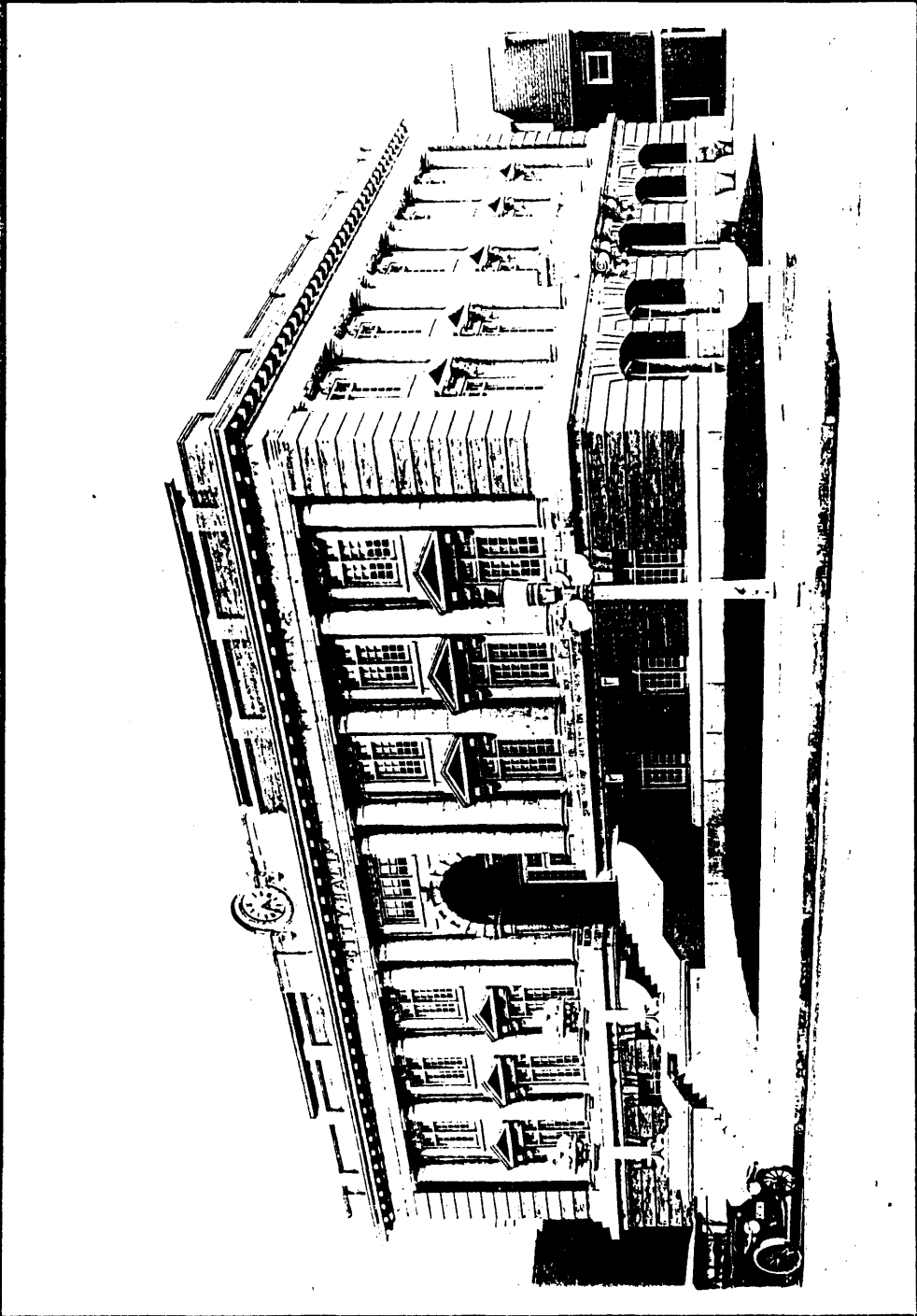
THIRD FLOOR PLAN

WITH PHOTO LOCATIONS

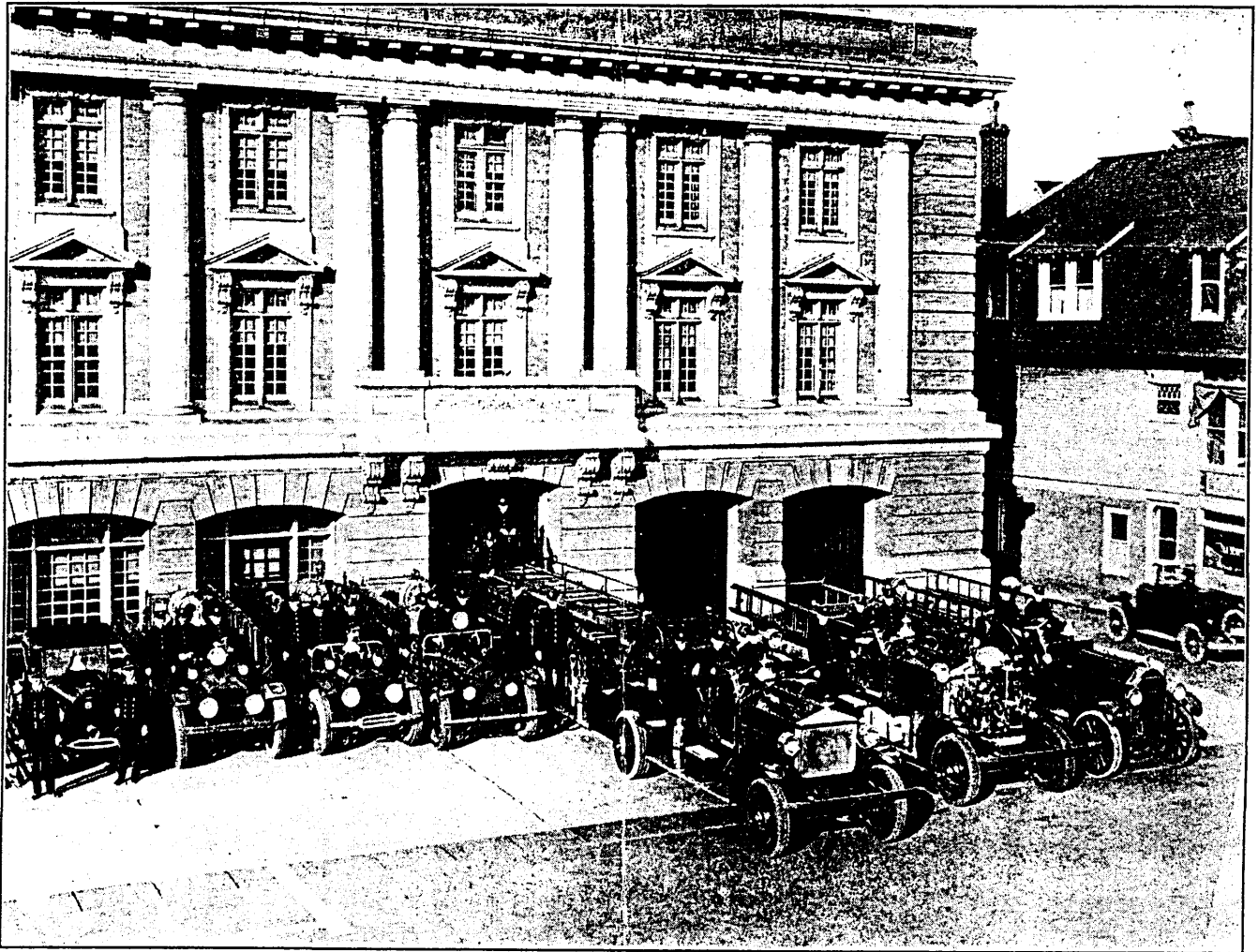
OCEAN CITY CITY HALL, BLOCK 806 LOT 1 CAPE MAY CO., NJ



Photo #H-1 Ocean City City Hall, Cape May County, NJ



# Ocean City-A Solid Community- Assures Permanence of Values



*A Substantial City With Substantial Protection*

ity, N. J.

Photo #H-2

Ocean City City Hall, Cape May County, NJ