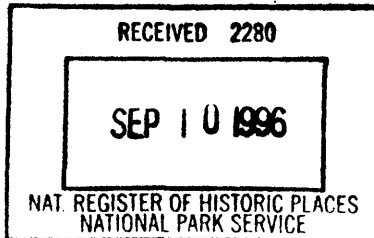


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



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HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

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 Ventnor City Hall

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 6201 Atlantic Avenue not for publication

city or town City of Ventnor vicinity

state New Jersey code NJ county Atlantic County code 001 zip code 08406

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] 8/20/96
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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] 10-10-96
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Edson H. Beall

Ventnor City Hall
Name of Property

Atlantic County, New Jersey
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	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/city hall

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/city hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Jacobethan Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Slate

other Terra Cotta

Narrative Description

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

Please see continuation sheet Section 7, Page 1

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Politics/Government
Social History

Period of Significance

Please see continuation sheet Section 8

Page 1 1928-1946

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Vivian B. Smith, AIA

Criteria Considerations

(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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Please see continuation sheet Section 8, P. 1

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Please see continuation sheet Section 9, Page 1

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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:

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Ventnor City Hall**Narrative Description:**

Ventnor City Hall is a Jacobethan-style municipal building of brick and terra-cotta, with some wood and stucco "half-timbering." It occupies a whole city block, but it was designed with a variety of massing volumes, roof lines and materials to minimize its size and help it fit into a residential context.

EXTERIOR

Ventnor City Hall is a three-bay by eleven-bay, two-and-a-half story, steel-framed structure with two longitudinal interior brick bearing walls. The exterior walls are brick with terra cotta trim. The lower slopes of the truncated hipped roof are clad in color-variegated textural slate; a built-up roof covers the flat center section. Six false chimneys, three on the south and three on the north, are each topped by two decorative terra cotta chimney pots of varying designs. A functional chimney with a brick diaper design but no chimney pots is located in the northwest quadrant of the building. Terra cotta oriel windows, window mullions, buttress caps, and pinnacles give the building a Jacobethan vocabulary while adding visual texture.

The building has four public entrances, symmetrically located on each facade. The Cambridge Avenue (east) facade (Figure 2), location of the original American Legion entrance, is dominated by the three-story Memorial Tower, with crenellated battlement, which projects beyond the plane of the building onto a bluestone terrace surrounded by a terra cotta balustrade; an engaged octagonal tower is located in the south corner formed by the tower and the primary plane of the building. The tower has three open arches leading to a faience and quarry tile platform on the first story level, providing protection to the entrance.

The Atlantic Avenue (south) facade (Figure 1), location of the original primary entrance to the municipal offices, has a recessed doorway in a projecting gable, with an oriel window at the second-story level; the door is reached by a flight of stone steps, flanked by decorative iron lighting standards. An engaged octagonal tower is located in the

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west corner formed by the gable and the primary plane of the building. Window bays are separated by one-and-a-half story buttresses; on the eastern end of the facade, window bays are alternately capped at the third-story level by dormer windows, or secondary gables projecting through the eave line. At the western end, the last three bays, which indicate the location of the Council Chamber/courtroom on the interior, are finished with stucco and wood in a half-timbered style; the center of the three bays is a projecting, overhanging gable. This half-timbered finish is possibly an allusion to an Anglo-Saxon moot hall.

The Sacramento Avenue (west) facade has a one-story, flat roofed portico with three open arches in the center bay at the first-story level; the portico extends into the slate terrace with terra cotta balustrade, and protects the entrance. Above, the half-timbered treatment of the second story is interrupted by a protruding brick gable in the center. The entrance on this facade is no longer functional.

The north facade on Ocean Avenue is similar to the south facade, with the exceptions that there is no engaged octagonal tower connected with the center protruding gable, and the entrance is at grade rather than at the first-floor level. The second-story area of the three western bays have a half-timbered treatment. Toward the east end, a protruding one-story bay at grade contains a secondary entrance for the police department, located in the basement.

Exterior doors are varnished oak, with custom wrought-iron hardware, and leaded glass windows. Double hung window units are divided by terra cotta mullions. Original steel casement windows have been replaced with aluminum windows with removable muntins.

INTERIOR

The building is nearly symmetrical in plan, and straightforward in layout and internal circulation. The basic footprint of the building was dictated by the long, narrow configuration of the lot. On the first floor, as built in 1928, an entrance is centered in each facade, with

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longitudinal and transverse corridors meeting under a central rotunda. On the second floor, monumental stairs in the center of the west side provide access to the east-west corridor under another central rotunda; the Council Chamber at the west end is balanced by the American Legion room at the east end.

Imposed onto this simple and functional plan are subtle details which enhance the architectural character of the building. The design of the interior continues the Jacobethan theme. Major doors throughout the building are constructed of oak, with linen-fold panels (Figure 4). The intersection of the east-west and north-south corridor axes on both the first and second floors is an octagonal space with a ribbed, vaulted ceiling (Figure 6). Decorative plaster and woodwork reflect the Jacobethan design.

Woodwork includes elaborate door heads on the doorways to the Mayor's reception area, the American Legion Room (Figure 4), and the Council Chamber. The doorways are highlighted with composition insets which give the appearance of elaborate carving.

The terrazzo floors in the rotundas, corridors, and restrooms are divided into one-foot squares by thin brass strips, and surrounded by a border. The border, which includes transverse strips across the corridors at the locations of the pilasters, is gray, and the field is brown. Decorative faience tile medallions are set into the floors in the center of each rotunda, and under the tower at the Cambridge Avenue entrance. On the second floor the design is Ventnor's seal (Figure 7); on the first floor, the seal is repeated, and is surrounded with the points of the compass; at the Cambridge Avenue entrance, the design is the American Legion emblem.

The ornate railing of the monumental stairs from the first to second floors is of ornamental metal. The balusters are wrought iron, with a wood handrail. Set into the iron balusters at regular intervals are triple rosettes; a large center rosette is flanked by two smaller ones above and below. Everything except the wood handrail is painted

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black; the wrought iron balusters have been painted black from the time of construction but the rosettes are made of brass or bronze and were originally unpainted.

Ornamental plaster is one of the primary forms of decorative expression in the public spaces, and complements the woodwork and faience tile. At the base of the first and second floor octagonal vaulted ceilings decorative cornices surround the rotundas, and ribs spring from small consoles; one feature of the decoration are vines bearing fruit. The spandrels of the closed and open arches also have decorative plaster.

In the corridors, the ceilings are segmentally arched. Regularly spaced pilasters have decorative plaster capitals, and are connected at the height of the capitals by a cornice. The wainscoting and the pilasters are composed of textured plaster scored to resemble stone; on the first floor, pilasters are clad in marble. Quoins of textured plaster surround the windows in the oriel, and consoles support the ceiling of the oriel where it intersects with the main body of the building.

The south alcove of the first floor rotunda has a cove ceiling. The south (Atlantic Avenue) vestibule has a cove ceiling springing from a cornice. The east vestibule (Cambridge Avenue) has a plaster cornice. The Council Chamber has a cove ceiling springing from a wood cornice, but ending in a plaster cornice. Over the dais, the lower cornice includes decorative blocks; the centerpiece is a shield featuring a "V" (Figure 3).

The only area where the English reference is absent is in the American Legion Room; apparently architect Vivian B. Smith thought that a Colonial Revival style would be more appropriate to the patriotic function. Here, doors have feathered panels and quarter-round moldings, and door surrounds have pediments and dentil work (Figure 5). A very fine distinction is made between the two stylistic areas: the doors between the corridor and the room have linen-fold panels on the corridor side and feathered panels on the side of the American Legion Room.

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Plaster is now painted a single cream color, but paint analysis suggests that originally in the rotunda the plaster frieze and ceiling were painted in a monochromatic scheme of yellowish white to pale pink. The corridors had a somewhat more complex scheme: the imitation stone wainscot appears to have been toned with a yellow wash, and the scored joints picked out with black penciling. The frieze was light gray with off-white wood moldings. The walls above the wainscot were yellowish white to buff. The Council Chamber had transparently finished wood, with all plaster painted a yellowish white. The only exception was the shield and "V" over the dais, which were picked out in red. The American Legion room was painted a uniform yellowish white or buff color on plaster and wood alike, except for the window trim which was finished naturally.

Lighting fixtures appear to have been custom made. The most elaborate fixtures are found in the American Legion Room. Two chandeliers hang from the ceiling by chains; the base of each chandelier is a wood ball painted blue, with applied gold stars. Below, the ball ends in a brass finial, and above, ten curved brass arms each support a chandelier with a bare bulb. A brass eagle surmounts the chandelier. Eight sconces feature a brass eagle above a blue shield with a brass perimeter. Each sconce has two brass arms which also hold candles with bare bulbs. On the south wall, a stained glass American Legion emblem is set into the wall. This originally opened on hinges, and the stained glass was backlighted by about a dozen bulbs. Lighting fixtures in the Council Chamber consist of four brass chandeliers and six brass sconces. Each chandelier has ten curved arms, at two levels, holding candles with bare bulbs. Each sconce has three curved arms with similar candles. Lighting in the corridors, rotundas, and vestibules are a variety of fixture either attached to the ceiling, or hanging by chains from it. Predominant are the fourteen fixtures hanging in the corridors and the south vestibule. Each of these consists of a perforated metal "crown" hanging by a chain; suspended from it is a translucent glass cylinder with a rounded bottom. In the center of each rotunda is a fixture with a similar perforated crown but which is attached directly to

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the ceiling; the translucent glass globe is a half sphere (Figure 6). The north vestibule has a similar fixture. The most elaborate fixture is the brass and metal lantern hanging over the monumental staircase; this translucent glass hexagonal fixture has a faceted bottom ending in a pendant.

The present appearance of the Ventnor City Hall, both interior and exterior, is very similar to its historic appearance. The integrity of its historic fabric is excellent. It has had only relatively minor changes made inside and out since its construction in 1928. Originally, the entrance vestibule on the Sacramento Avenue facade opened directly into the reception room adjacent to the Mayor's office. This vestibule has been closed off and is not functional. Some changes have been made within offices, such as the removal of counters and rearrangement of access doors.

In the 1950's, original steel windows were replaced with wood, and in 1977-1978, most of the wood windows were replaced with aluminum.

The Atlantic Avenue entrance originally was flanked by the city clerk's office on the west and the tax collector's office on the east. Each of these had a public space accessible from an inner vestibule room and the east-west corridor. During a mid 1970's repair and renovation project, customer-service counters were installed in the first floor corridor to serve these departments; the counters were removed, and the area dedicated to office use. The same renovation project resulted in installation of suspended ceilings in all offices and installation of central air-conditioning. On the exterior, terra-cotta balustrades in front of the three eastern-most windows on both the north and south facades were removed.

SITE

The Camden and Atlantic Railroad Company leveled twenty-foot sand hills over adjacent meadows in the area that was to become Ventnor when they were extending their tracks west of Atlantic City about 1886. The tracks ran where Atlantic

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Avenue is now located, and the city hall site was probably part of the area leveled. In 1891 the Carisbrook Inn was built directly north of the site; the 400-room inn was five stories tall and occupied the area now bounded by Ventnor, Cambridge, Ocean, and Sacramento Avenues, which is now divided into two blocks. The inn was considered to be the center of Ventnor's social and community life, and had a pedestrian bridge running over the railroad tracks to give patrons direct access to the boardwalk; this bridge passed over the present city hall site, which had the same street boundaries then as now. The hotel was demolished before the construction of the city hall. The site occupied by Ventnor City Hall was landscaped as a park before the building's construction; the city hall is the only building known to have occupied the site. The residential neighborhood surrounding the site remains very much as it was in 1928.

The sidewalks on site, including access walks for the building, date to the construction of the city hall, though the original grass verge between sidewalk and street has since been paved over. The major change to the site since 1928 occurred in 1994 when the original memorial plaza with flagpole at the Cambridge Avenue entrance was raised and ramps incorporated into the design to provide barrier-free access to the first floor of the building; the elevations have been changed but the original layout was preserved.

The condition of the building is fair to excellent. The building is currently undergoing exterior restoration to repair cracked and spalling terra cotta, corrosion jacking lintels, and poor repointing.

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Ventnor City Hall**Period of Significance:**

1928 - 1945

The intrinsic architectural and cultural significance of Ventnor City Hall coexist over a continuum of 67 years of use as Ventnor's municipal building; the period of its historic significance can be said to extend from 1928 to 1945, fifty years ago. The building retains its original use, from the Council Chamber on the second floor to the detention cells in the basement; throughout its existence, City Hall has played an integral part in the lives of Ventnor's citizens. The period of significance encompasses the design of the building by a leading local architect, its construction at the very end of the 1920's building boom, and its survival and adaptation following. Some periods were high points for City Hall and the City of Ventnor, starting with the gala celebration for the dedication of the building on 15 June 1929. Other times were not as positive; during the depression, city employees took 10% and then 25% pay cuts, and were paid in scrip, as well. The City Hall is a tangible manifestation of the history of Ventnor and its citizens, and its Period of Significance encompasses the first seventeen years of its existence; this period includes completion of its construction and its dedication, Ventnor's problems during the Great Depression, and the duration of the Second World War.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Ventnor City Hall is an historic resource of significance in a variety of interrelated areas. It has associations with the patterns of history during its Period of Significance: its construction was a municipal manifestation of the building boom on the South Jersey shore which reached its peak in the late 1920's, and it also incorporated a memorial to the veterans of the First World War. Shortly after its dedication, it became the seat of a government of a city that was struggling to survive a crippling economic depression, and then another world war.

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Architecturally, it was one of the high points of the career of a talented and prolific local architect, Vivian B. Smith, AIA; it was one of his works of which he was most proud, and the care in the design and the quality of construction is still evident in the richly-textured exterior and historically-detailed interior, which give it architectural significance.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The City of Ventnor City was incorporated in 1902. Before construction of the existing City Hall, a previous City Hall was located on the north side of Ventnor Avenue, between New Haven Avenue and Troy Avenue. Following the construction of the current City Hall, this building was demolished and a school built on the site.

In the mid-1920's, several issues raised by the pressures of expansion and civic pride culminated in the decision to construct a municipal building which would also serve as a war memorial. One issue was the need for additional school rooms, and the idea that the land under the old City Hall would be excellent for that purpose. The second issue was the inadequacy of the old City Hall for meeting the public's needs at that time as well as the future. The third issue was the public pressure for a "Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Building;" an earlier idea had been to build a memorial library. The city had already passed an ordinance to provide \$50,000.00 for this building, but plans had gone no further.

On April 14, 1924, a resolution was passed by which the City of Ventnor was to sell the existing Troy-New Haven-Ventnor Avenues site to the Board of Education for \$100,000.00; the \$50,000.00 already dedicated to a memorial was to be made available; and the Common Council was to take the \$150,000.00 and build a "Memorial Municipal Building" in a public park on the south side of Atlantic Avenue, between Newport and New Haven Avenues.¹

¹ Minutes of the Common Council of Ventnor City, April 24: p. 1804.

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The site between Newport and New Haven Avenues was abandoned without note in the minutes, and the next reference to the new building was a protest on February 9, 1925, by a Mrs. R. W. Richards who was "against the building of a Municipal Building on land situate on Atlantic Avenue between Cambridge and Sacramento Avenues."² In an apparent attempt to counteract such public protest, on the same date the Board of Trade voiced their unanimous support for the construction of the building.³ An Ordinance was introduced at the same meeting to provide for acquisition of land for the project.⁴ Three months later, on May 11, 1925, a resolution authorizing the sale of \$65,000.00 in bonds to pay for land bounded by Cambridge Avenue, Atlantic Avenue, Ocean Avenue, and Sacramento Avenue for a Municipal Memorial Building was adopted.⁵

In the Mayor's Message, read at the January 1, 1927, reorganization meeting, he stated:

"Before the present year passes, the new school should be started upon our present City Hall site...The long talked-of and many-times-promised American Legion Memorial Building, which we expect to build in conjunction with our City Hall should be started before the year is over. There are certain legal questions to be settled by the Court regarding the title to the site we have selected, before we can proceed."⁶

The matter of the unsettled legal question was revealed at the March 28, 1927 meeting, when it was reported that the Camden Atlantic and Ventnor Land Company was suing both the West Jersey and Seashore Railroad Company and the City of Ventnor for the land already purchased for \$65,000.00 for building the Public Municipal Memorial Building. However, the Land Company agreed that if they won the suit they would sell the land to the City for the \$65,000.00 plus another

² Minutes, February 9, 1925: p. 1909.

³ Minutes, February 9, 1925: p. 1910.

⁴ Minutes, February 9, 1925: p. 1910.

⁵ Minutes, May 11, 1925: p. 1943.

⁶ Minutes, January 1, 1927: p. 2131.

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\$10,000.00 cash.⁷ Assured that the site purchase was going to go through one way or another, on May 9, 1927 the Common Council appointed a Special Committee to pursue the preparation of plans for the new City Hall.⁸

The committee was authorized on June 20, 1927, to obtain from five architects pencil drawings of a New City Hall; each architect was to receive not more than \$100.00.⁹ Neither the names of the architects nor the relative merits of the five sketches were reported in the minutes, but on August 22, 1927, a motion was made authorizing a contract with Vivian B. Smith for the architectural work for New City Hall.¹⁰

The contract was signed September 12, 1927, and the Special Committee for securing an architect was discharged.¹¹ A set of blueprints, dated September 13, 1927, exists for the schematic design of City Hall; six sheets, 15" x 33", depict floor plans and elevations. The final design differed very little from this conceptual design.

The President of the Council was advised to appoint another Special Committee to oversee the construction of City Hall, which he did on September 26.¹²

In the Mayor's Message on January 1, 1928, he reported: "Now as to the City Hall and American Legion Building, plans have been drawn and bids should be received some time during the next thirty days, so I hope that you have same by beginning of next year. It will be a beautiful building and one which every tax-payer should feel proud of."¹³

⁷ Minutes, March 28, 1927: p. 2159.

⁸ Minutes, May 9, 1927: p. 2174.

⁹ Minutes, June 20, 1927: p. 2191.

¹⁰ Minutes, August 22, 1927: p. 2221.

¹¹ Minutes, September 12, 1927: p. 2227.

¹² Minutes, September 26, 1927: p. 2230.

¹³ Minutes, January 1, 1928: p. 2261.

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The plans and specifications were presented by the Special Committee at the January 23, 1928 meeting, and accepted by the Council

On March 12, bids for General Construction were received and rejected¹⁴ because they were higher than the authorized bond issue.

New City Hall plans were adopted at the March 26 meeting, and the project was directed to be rebid, with bids to be received on April 9, 1928. The extant blueprints show the building as constructed; when examined closely, revisions made before the rebidding can be discerned. The revisions are dated March 24, 1928.^{15 16}

On April 9, four General Construction bids were received. Previous bidders Samuel L. Litzie and David Lutz & Co. both submitted bids substantially lower than their first bids, but were both underbid by newcomer Samuel H. Headley, whose base bid was \$182,400.¹⁷

In the traditional annual address on January 1, 1929, Mayor Sweigert reported that "A modern memorial and municipal building is under course of construction, and will be completed and occupied in the near future providing proper and necessary accommodations for the entire City Department, except the fire department, which is already occupying the new fire station, with a complete compliment of apparatus."¹⁸

By May, thoughts were turning to plans for the opening celebration, scheduled for Saturday, June 15, 1929. The Special Committee on the City Hall was authorized to work in conjunction with the James Harvey Post of the American

¹⁴ Minutes, March 12, 1928: p. 2280.

¹⁵ Blueprints, "Ventnor Municipal Building," Vivian B. Smith, AIA, Dec. 5, 1927, Revised March 24, 1928: sheet 7.

¹⁶ Minutes, March 26, 1928: p. 2289.

¹⁷ Minutes, April 9, 1928: p. 2292.

¹⁸ Minutes, January 1, 1929: p. 2382.

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Legion to plan the ceremonies. In addition, \$1,000 was authorized for planting ornamental flowers around the building.¹⁹ The Special Committee sought an "artistic arrangement of flower beds;" Chairman Scull said "he was not satisfied with merely a rural appearance, and sketched out a plan which would be more in conformance with the idea of beauty suitable as a setting for the handsome Tudor structure."²⁰

Vivian Smith presented his Certificate of Final Completion and the building was accepted by the Common Council on June 10, 1929.²¹

The celebrations on the day of the dedication began with a parade at 3:30, followed by the ceremony. The firing of a shot from a cannon was a signal for former mayors each to cut a ribbon opening the building. Visiting Legionnaires were escorted to the new dining room on the second floor, and served an ample supper.²²

The new City Hall was an obvious source of civic pride. It was reported as being a "striking departure from the usual type of municipal architecture, its lines being simple and plain rather than ornate."²³ In his annual address on January 1, 1930, Mayor Sweigert stated that "Our new City Hall has been of great benefit to the city in permitting the conduct of city business in a very satisfactory manner. The building has been admired by persons from all over the United States."²⁴

With the advent of the Depression in October of the same year, both private development and civic expansion came to a rapid halt. The City of Ventnor was soon reduced to asking employees to take first a ten percent, and then a twenty-

¹⁹ Minutes, May 13, 1929: p. 2442.

²⁰ *Atlantic City Daily Press*, Tuesday, June 11, 1929: p. 10.

²¹ Minutes, June 10, 1929: p. 2453.

²² *Atlantic City Daily Press*, Saturday, June 15, 1929: p. 10.

²³ *Atlantic City Daily Press*, Saturday, June 15, 1929: p. 29.

²⁴ Minutes, January 10, 1930: p. 2515.

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five percent cut in pay; even then, they had to be paid in scrip for a number of years. At one point, the city had some street lights disconnected to save \$2,500 a year in electricity. On July 8, 1936, it was announced that the lights in front of City Hall were to be connected for the summer season.²⁵ Two months later, painting the interior of City Hall was suggested as a suitable WPA project for which to apply for a grant, along with several other projects throughout the city.²⁶ The result of the application for the City Hall painting was not reported, though several WPA projects were funded over the next few years.

SOCIAL HISTORY SIGNIFICANCE

Historically, Ventnor City Hall is a civic expression of the building and development boom in New Jersey shore resorts between World War I and the Depression. It was built when Ventnor City was expanding at a rapid rate, with sewers being laid, bulkheads built, streets paved, and even parts of the inland waterway known as the Thorofare being filled in to make additional land.

The building of the City Hall was the culmination of the city's expansion; its dedication was held the year of the Wall Street crash. The city, like the rest of the nation, began a downward spiral which transformed it within three years from a proud municipality which could spend \$275,000 on its new City Hall, to one which had street lights disconnected to save \$2,500 a year in electricity.

In addition to exemplifying city pride, the building was intended as a memorial to soldiers and sailors lost in all wars, and incorporates the American Legion Room and Memorial Tower as symbols of the municipality's remembrance.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The City Hall is architecturally significant because of the quality of its design and construction. A paid competition

²⁵ Minutes, July 8, 1935: p. 2947.

²⁶ Minutes, September 9, 1935: p. 2963.

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was held with five architects submitting pencil sketches for review. Vivian B. Smith, a local architect active professionally and socially in the Ventnor community, submitted the winning sketch, and went on to design a carefully planned and executed building which has served the community's needs for more than sixty-five years with few changes.

The Jacobethan style pays homage to Ventnor's namesake resort city in England. The style also allowed Smith to vary the volumes, roof line, and materials to sensitively blend the relatively large structure into the surrounding residential neighborhood. The combination of brick and terra cotta trim with wood and stucco half-timbering, the protruding south and north entrance gables with their oriel windows, the massing of Memorial Tower, the portico at the west entrance, the two engaged octagonal towers, the secondary gables, the false chimneys with terra cotta pots, and the terra cotta window mullions all serve to vary the texture and massing to give the building visual interest.

In addition, Ventnor 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 1910, at the age of 24, following Mr. Shumway's death.

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

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from one to another with ease; the styles he employed, in addition to the Jacobethan style of Ventnor City Hall, included Beaux-arts Classicism, 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, a munitions plant and company town for 5000 residents owned by Bethlehem Steel Company. He died in 1952.

POLITICAL/GOVERNMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE

Ventnor City Hall has acquired significance in its community through its years of serving city residents. Throughout its existence it has housed all major municipal functions, including city offices, courtroom, police station, and jail. Only the fire companies, schools, and water treatment plant are in separate buildings.

In addition, it originated as, and continues to be, the site of the City's memorial to war dead. As the century has passed, separate memorials have been added to the landscaped area east of Memorial Tower for World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the War in the Persian Gulf, and members of the Ventnor Police Department.

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Bibliography:

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Smith, Vivian B., AIA, Blueprints, "Ventnor Municipal Building," Dec. 5, 1927, Revised March 24, 1928: sheets 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 (stored in attic of Ventnor City Hall).

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Boundary Justification:

The boundaries are the original, and current, lot lines, which include the entire block bounded by Atlantic, Sacramento, Ocean, and Cambridge Avenues.

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Ventnor City Hall

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Name of Property: Ventnor City Hall
County and State: Atlantic County, New Jersey
Photographer: Penelope S. Watson
Date: May, 1992
Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates
12 N. Pearl Street
Bridgeton, NJ
Description of view: South facade, looking north
Photograph number: 1

Name of Property: Ventnor City Hall
County and State: Atlantic County, New Jersey
Photographer: Karin Reed
Date: November, 1995
Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates
12 N. Pearl Street
Bridgeton, NJ
Description of view: East facade, looking west
Photograph number: 2

Name of Property: Ventnor City Hall
County and State: Atlantic County, New Jersey
Photographer: Penelope S. Watson
Date: February, 1996
Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates
12 N. Pearl Street
Bridgeton, NJ
Description of view: Council chamber/courtroom, looking west
Photograph number: 3

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NJ Atlantic County
Ventnor City Hall

Name of Property: Ventnor City Hall
County and State: Atlantic County, New Jersey
Photographer: Penelope S. Watson
Date: February, 1996
Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates
12 N. Pearl Street
Bridgeton, NJ
Description of view: Jacobethan motif doors to American
Legion room, from corridor
Photograph number: 4

Name of Property: Ventnor City Hall
County and State: Atlantic County, New Jersey
Photographer: Penelope S. Watson
Date: February, 1996
Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates
12 N. Pearl Street
Bridgeton, NJ
Description of view: Colonial revival motif doors to
American Legion room, from inside
room
Photograph number: 5

Name of Property: Ventnor City Hall
County and State: Atlantic County, New Jersey
Photographer: Penelope S. Watson
Date: May, 1992
Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates
12 N. Pearl Street
Bridgeton, NJ
Description of view: Lighting fixture in first floor
rotunda
Photograph number: 6

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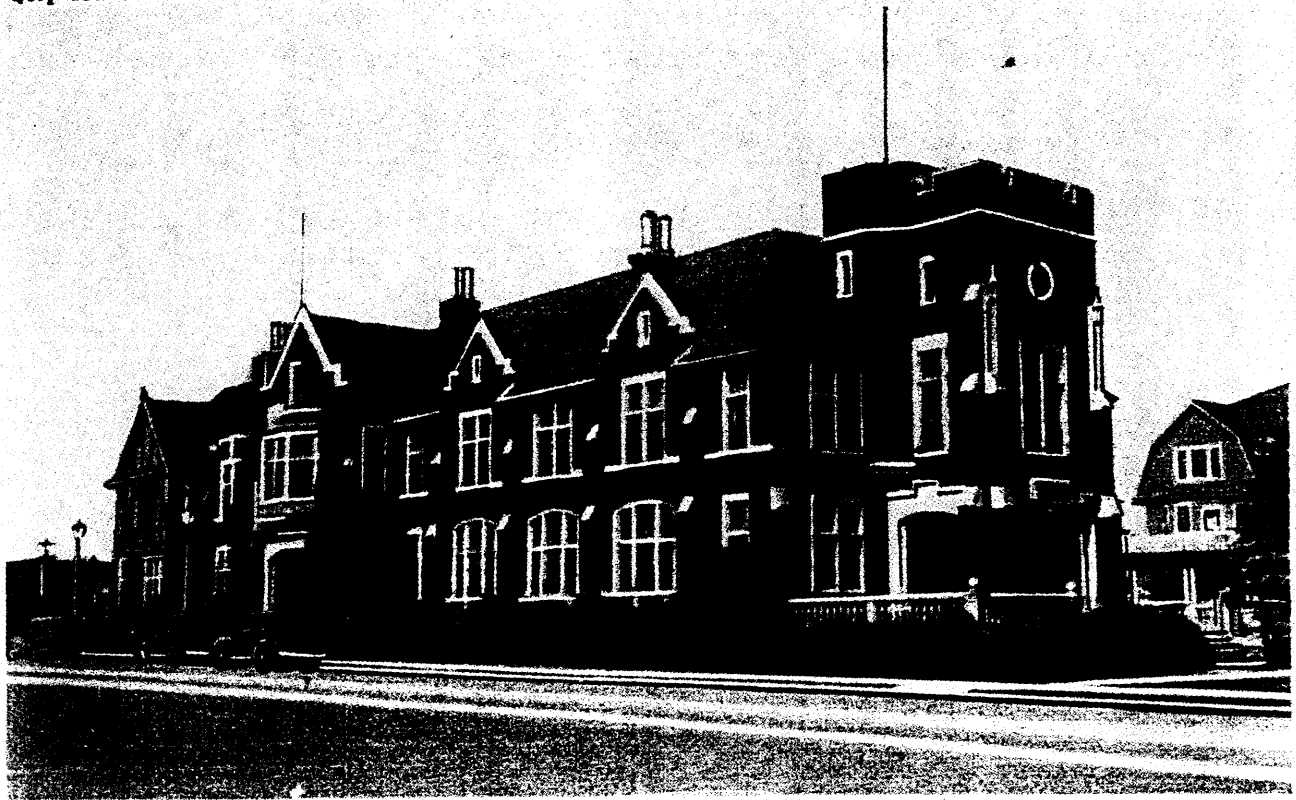
Section number Add. Doc. Page 3

NJ Atlantic County
Ventnor City Hall

Name of Property:	Ventnor City Hall
County and State:	Atlantic County, New Jersey
Photographer:	Penelope S. Watson
Date:	May, 1992
Location of negative:	Watson & Henry Associates 12 N. Pearl Street Bridgeton, NJ
Description of view:	Faience tile seal, first floor rotunda
Photograph number:	7

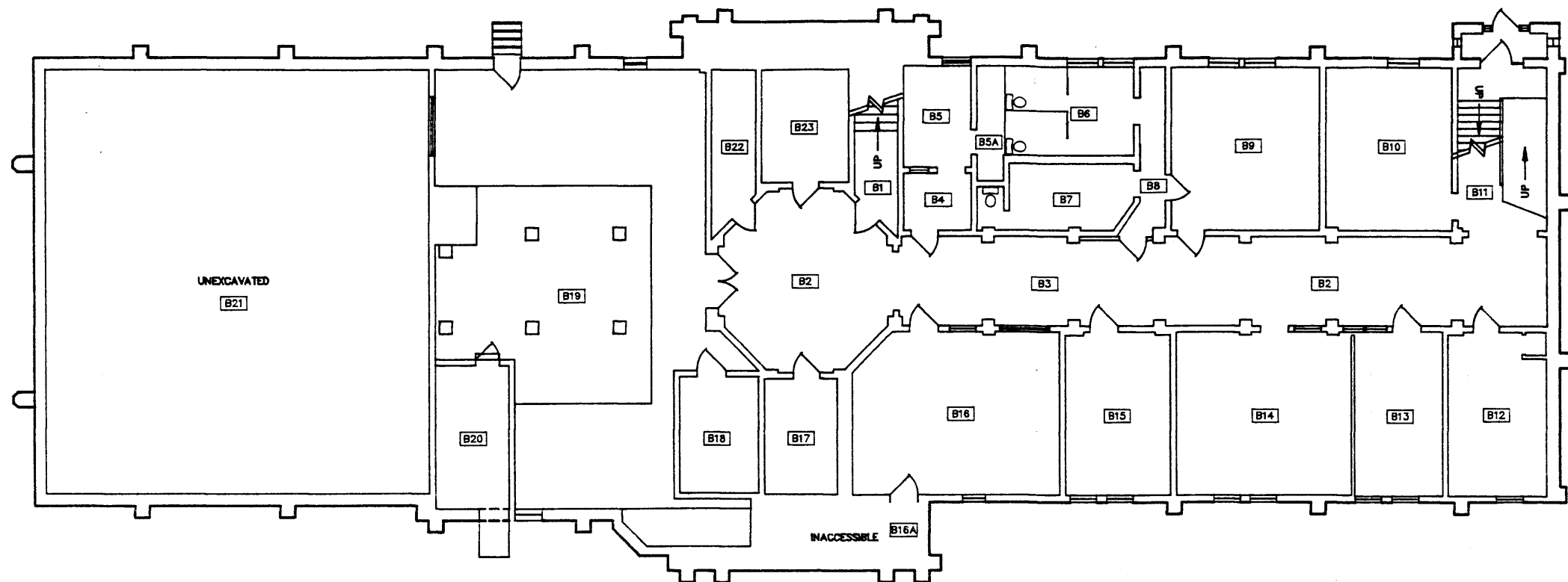
City Hall, Ventnor, N. J.

24

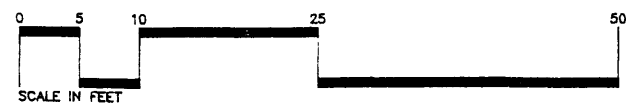


69887

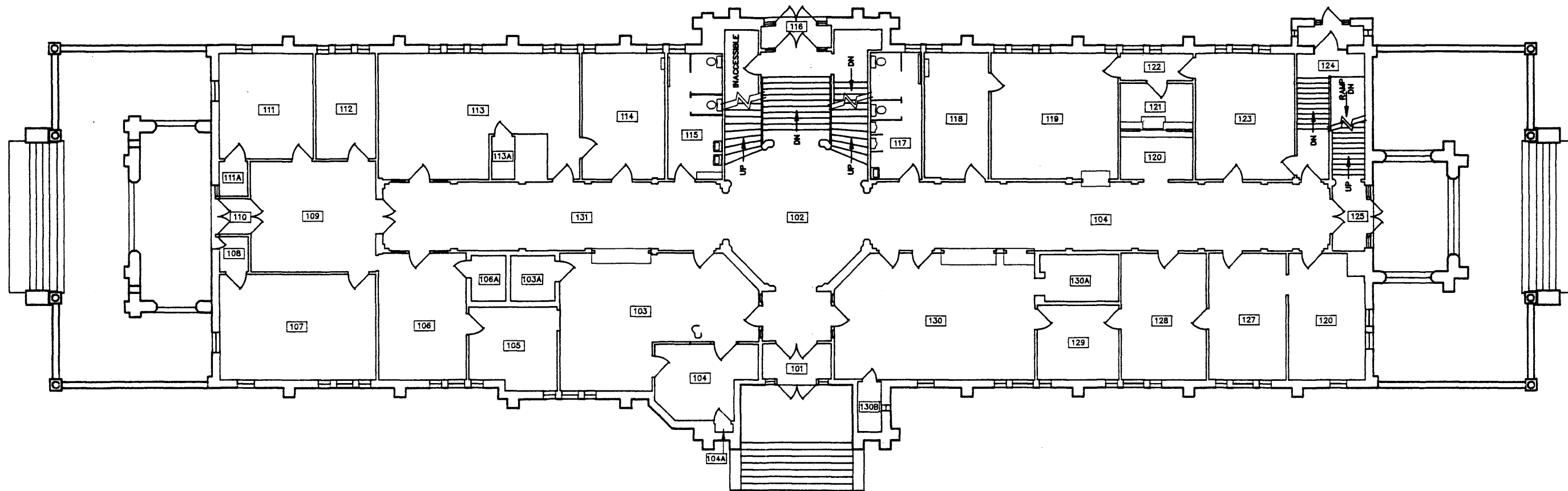
Ventnor City Hall postcard view, n.d.



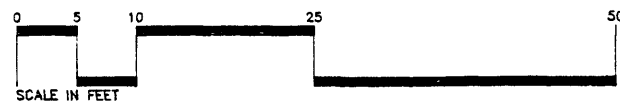
1 BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN
SK1 SCALE: 1/16"=1'-0"



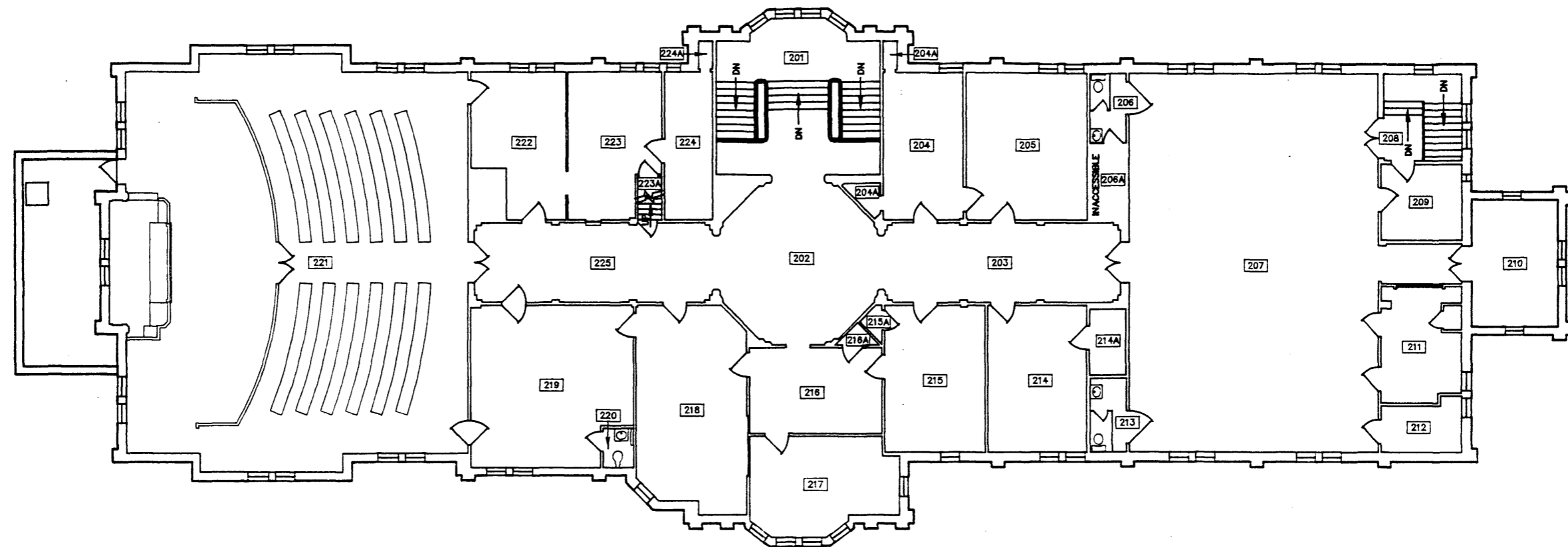
BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN EXISTING ARRANGEMENT Ventnor City Hall Watson and Henry Associates Architecture and Engineering		DETAIL NUMBER SK1 Project No.: 91039.3 April 1993
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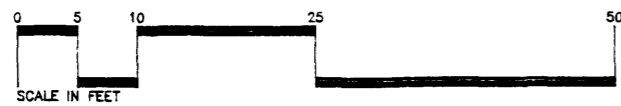
1 FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SK2 SCALE: 1/16"=1'-0"



FIRST FLOOR PLAN EXISTING ARRANGEMENT Ventnor City Hall		DETAIL NUMBER SK2
Watson and Henry Associates Architecture and Engineering	Project No.: 91039.3 April 1993	



1 SECOND FLOOR PLAN
 SK3 SCALE: 1/16"=1'-0"

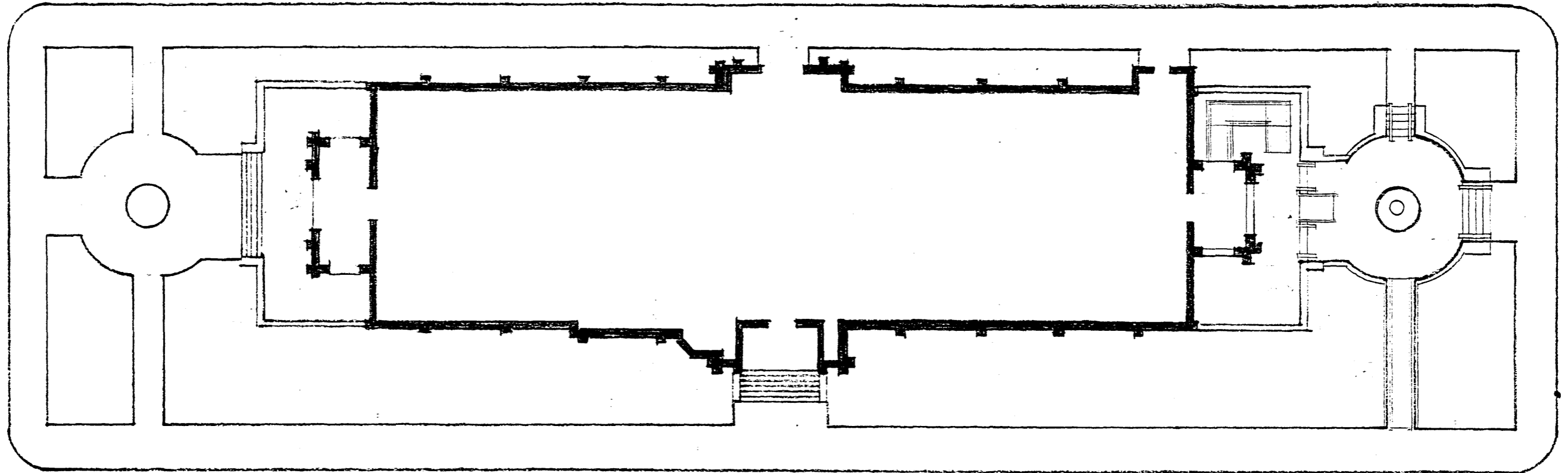


SECOND FLOOR PLAN EXISTING ARRANGEMENT Ventnor City Hall Watson and Henry Associates Architecture and Engineering		DETAIL NUMBER SK3 Project No.: 91039.3 April 1993
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SACRAMENTO AVENUE

OCEAN AVENUE

CAMBRIDGE AVENUE



ATLANTIC AVENUE

1 SITE SKETCH
 SK4 NOT TO SCALE



<p>SITE SKETCH EXISTING ARRANGEMENT Ventnor City Hall Watson and Henry Associates Architecture and Engineering</p>	<p>DETAIL NUMBER SK4</p>
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