

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or 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 listed in 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 South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company Office Building

other names/site number Public Service Corporation Building; Camden Free Public Library

## 2. Location

street & number 418 Federal Street  not for publication

city or town City of Camden  vicinity

state New Jersey code NJ034 county Camden code 007 zip code 08103

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I 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/Title

Date

John S. Watson Jr., Assistant Commissioner Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO

State or 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 this 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

Edson H. Beall

1-5-05

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)			buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	1	0	
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site			sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure			structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object			objects
		1	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  
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Commerce/Trade Business Office Building	Education Library

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
Late 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Revivals	foundation Brick, Concrete
Beaux Arts	walls Brick
	Limestone
	roof Asphalt
	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**

(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.)

**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):**

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Architecture
- Commerce
- Industry
- Transportation
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1902-1929

**Significant Dates**

1901, 1903, 1904, 1910, 1929

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Thomas Stephen

**Primary location of additional data**

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

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company Office Building  
Name of Property

Camden, New Jersey  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 0.43

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	489655	4421733	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				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 Paul W. Schopp, Principal  
 organization Paul W. Schopp, Historical Consultant date 24 February 2004  
 street & number Post Office Box 648 telephone 856-786-1499  
 city or town Palmyra state NJ zip code 08065-0648

#### 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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Camden City Properties  
 street & number 520 Market Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor telephone 856-757-7125  
 city or town Camden state NJ zip code 08101

**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.

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New Jersey, Camden County: South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company Office Building

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## Summary Building Description

The City of Camden's South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company Office Building was designed by the prolific Camden architect, Thomas Stephen, in the *Beaux Arts* style during the fall of 1900. The structure is the only *Beaux Arts* commercial building in Camden of note, and points out the breadth of Stephen's work as a designer of buildings. Although the quality of his work varied, the South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company Office Building, along with the Antonio Mecca House in the City, rank among his finest creations. The South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company Office Building, more familiarly known as the Public Service Corporation building, is located at 418 Federal Street, Camden, New Jersey. The structure is oriented in a northerly direction and is bounded by Federal Street, a vacant lot to the east, the Camden County Jail on the west and Taylor Avenue, an unpaved paper street, on the south. The nominated property is part of the parcel designated as block 170, lot 40 on the City of Camden tax maps.

The building consists of three principal structural blocks. Construction of the main building, which fronts on Federal Street, first began in 1901. The second block, a two-story addition to the east at the rear of the main structure was built in 1903-4, shortly after the completion of the Federal Street building and the Public Service Corporation's acquisition of the South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company. According to a 1900 Philadelphia publication that reported on the building trades in the region, "Mr. Stephen says he is making plans for quite a large addition to be erected to the main building in the rear, but will not be considered until completion of the main structure."<sup>1</sup> Construction of the third block, a three-story addition to the rear, westerly side of the main building and separated from the 1903-4 addition by an alley, did not occur until 1929. The architect for this section is currently unknown. It does not share the uniform height or construction characteristics of the two earlier blocks. The buildings have a brick foundation and brick walls laid in common bond with the façade heavily ornamented with Indiana limestone. The main structure is two stories high and three generous bays wide, front and sides. The first addition also features two stories and eight unevenly spaced bays deep and slightly off-set to the east that includes a service door facing Federal Street. The rear, or principal façade of this block exhibits Classical Revival styling with five symmetrical bays and a centered door. The rear, western block is three-stories high, about nine bays in depth and slightly offset to the west. The rear façade is also designed according to a modest Classical Revival plan with five symmetrical bays.

## Original 1901 Construction

The original block has a hipped roof with an asphalt-shingle covering that descends to a parapet wall. Extending above the parapet wall on the west-side of the structure is a projecting end wall chimney with a limestone chimney cap beneath which is a frieze ornamented with mutules (Photograph #1). Attached at the rear of the original chimney is another unornamented brick chimney of recent vintage (presumably with a modern flue). Rising above the parapet at the rear of the main structure is a square, brick elevator shaft. The parapet wall of the Federal Street façade is stepped and topped with antefixes of alternating heights in the form

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<sup>1</sup> *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, Vol. XV, no. 44, 1900.

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of anthemia. The enriched entablature typifies the *Beaux Arts* style (Photograph #2). The cornice is supported by modillions beneath which are molded dentils, frieze and three-part architrave. The façade is dominated by six engaged, monumental Ionic columns. The entablature is supported by pilasters at each corner of the façade and the six, smooth columns. There is one column inside each corner pilaster, both resting upon the same large limestone pedestals. Two sets of paired columns surround the entrance and sit upon limestone pedestals. The entrance is approached by three granite steps that curve gracefully around the surrounding pedestals. To the west of the steps and adjoining is a modern handicap ramp with a simple metal railing. Each of the three principal divisions of the façade has a large, arched opening that extends from floor level almost to the top of the first floor. The arches rise up from pilasters topped by capitals with a cyma reversa and cyma recta pattern above a fascia. The arches are ornamented with regularly spaced incised blocks that culminate with a large modillion that supports plaques with the words (left to right) “gas,” “electric” and “railway” (Photograph #3). The three-part motif of the architrave is repeated in a band topped with dentils that joins the sides of each plaque. At the second floor each division of the façade has paired, one over one, double-hung metal windows with flat casings and sills. The windows appear to be relatively recent replacements. A fascia runs beneath the window openings and rests upon the first floor dentils and plaques.

The arches to each side, east and west, have fixed, paired windows with a glass infill in the arches above. This is no doubt a departure from the original windows that were described as being “...large plate glass windows and grill work of iron.” In the middle arch are modern aluminum doors flanked by sidelights and a two-part transom above, all framed in aluminum. Above the window and door openings is the original molded limestone header that continues the line of the capitals supporting the arches. The door and transom unit is topped by the same arched glass infill as the windows. Until recently the façade exhibited a careful balance of contrasting colors and finishes that typified *Beaux Arts* styling. The large corner pilasters that support the end of the limestone cornice are flat, pressed, red brick. At the bottom of each end pilaster is a blank plaque. Just above the plaque are mounted metal flagpoles with support arms. The top of each corner pilaster is decorated with a limestone swag and wreath enclosing an eagle. The recessed areas framed by the façade’s large limestone columns were also constructed in red brick and provided a pleasing contrast to the first floor’s ornamented arched openings, the large modillion above and the inscribed limestone plaques. The second-floor windows are framed entirely with limestone. Unfortunately, a year or two prior to selling the building to the City of Camden, Public Service Corporation painted the building’s exterior with gray paint.

The east elevation of the main structure is likewise divided in three parts by raised brick pilasters (Photograph #4). In each division is a large, blank, three-part arch with thin pilasters supporting flat capitals upon which a three-part compound arch rests. The compound arches extend up to keystones. Above the arches in each division of the east elevation are two double hung metal windows with limestone sills and lintels. The three-part architrave and frieze found on the front of the building has been executed in brick and runs back on the east elevation over the lintels. They wrap around each pilaster to create a continuous line of frieze and architrave across the east elevation. The parapet wall with continuing pilasters rises disproportionately above the frieze and architrave. The top of the brick wall is flat and without ornamentation. Marks found on the east elevation indicate that a continuation of the entablature has been removed. The west side of the main block is

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similar in design to the east side, but with some notable differences. Within the first floor arches are paired, metal, double hung windows. Although the flat capitals supporting the arches and keystones above remain, the headers have been removed in favor of flat lintels with a metal finish. Above each window is a three-part, vertical, opaque transom. The windows appear to be replacements of original fabric. The chimney is built out from the pilaster dividing the second and third (southerly) opening. The third arch is not fully developed, and is slightly cropped at its southern edge because of a two-story built-out section of the 1929 addition that abuts the main structure. There are six second-floor windows, with limestone sills—two per division. The sash appear to be new metal replacements. The brick frieze and architrave, similar to that found on the east elevation, runs back from the main facade and is interrupted by the chimney. The parapet wall and pilasters continue above the architrave in the same manner as the east side of the main block. The entablature has likewise been removed.

### **The 1903-04 Addition**

The first addition to the main building, also a Thomas Stephen design, is modest in its architectural pretensions compared to the main, Federal Street block. This may have resulted from the buildings being situated on an enclosed site until recently, with buildings formerly standing to the immediate east (Photograph #5). At the northeast corner of the structure is a small, ten-foot by fifteen-foot, two-story section that extends east to the property line. Facing Federal Street is a steel door approached by three formed concrete steps. Around the door and covering the first floor of the elevation is a smooth stucco finish. The brick wall above is unfinished. The east elevation had two window openings, first and second floor, which have since been bricked closed. The rear also had two window openings, the first floor opening now featuring brick infill. The second floor opening still retains the original double-hung wood window with a transom above.

Behind this “bump-out” is a flat brick wall that runs southerly to the rear property line at Taylor Avenue (Photograph #6). The top of the parapet wall is finished over the entire structure with a flat cap that extends slightly and provides definition to a simple, functional wall. Above is a flat roof with a built-up asphalt covering. At the middle of the roof is a one-story structure, about ten feet by fifteen feet, with a gabled roof. This structure is finished with corrugated metal walls and roof. There are seven openings, first and second story, on the east elevation behind the ten by fifteen-foot addition. The window openings have limestone sills and soldier course lintels. All the openings, with one exception, has double hung wood sash with transom similar to that found in the front “bump-out” section of the structure. In the last opening near the southeast corner are paired windows. A metal fire-escape services a second story door in the third bay from the south that was once a window opening since partially filled to accommodate the exterior door installation. The door is a flat metal door in a steel frame of recent vintage.

The south elevation is a balanced, five-bay design with modest Classical Revival styling (Photograph #7). Raised brick corner pilasters frame the elevation’s openings, two evenly spaced windows east and west on the first and second floors with a centered door and window above. The pilaster at the east-end of the elevation has a base about eight inches high, the top of which slopes back toward the building forming a water table. A

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band of brick laid in a soldier course runs across the pilasters, returns, and continues over the entire elevation. The water table and soldier course are interrupted by the door opening. The pilaster capitals have a two-part architrave, narrow frieze and four-part cornice above. At the inside edge of the pilasters the capitals return and form an entablature that runs across the top of the south elevation. Above the entablature is a parapet with the same flat cap that runs above the entire building. The first floor windows, while apparent, have been closed and finished with smooth stucco. The limestone sills and soldier course lintels remain. Above the door is a recessed plaque formed with brick headers without inscription, the top of which runs parallel to the top of the windows. The area between the first and second floors is decorated with horizontal, rectangular shapes formed by brick headers. The second floor windows also have limestone sills and soldier course headers. The sashes are modern, metal, double-hung, one-over-one replacements with a fixed transom above. The west-side of the first addition is now on an alley. Immediately off Taylor Avenue on the western elevation's first floor are two paired windows with seven single windows running north. The windows have been infilled, their location marked by the exposed sills. The same fenestration is found on the second floor although the windows remain. All have one-over-one wood sash. The elevation has been finished with textured stucco. A metal fire escape runs from the roof down to the alley from about midway on the elevation almost to the opening onto Taylor Avenue.

### **The 1929 Addition**

The second, western addition to the main building, built in 1929, is a rather plain three-story structure with few architectural embellishments. Only the rear façade has noticeable, if understated, Classical Revival design features. A small, two-story structure appears to have been an early addition to the Federal Street side of the structure. Facing Federal Street are double metal doors set slightly to the west with a metal window featuring eight lights centered above (Photograph #8). In front of the double doors is a concrete loading dock. Between the loading dock to the west, and the main building to the east, is a narrow enclosed entrance to the main building with a solid metal door facing Federal Street. At the top of the structure is a parapet wall, behind which is a metal box housing heating and cooling equipment. Immediately behind the two-story section a large, three-story structure rises and runs south to the property line. On the Federal Street side, behind the heating and cooling enclosure atop the two-story section of the building, are two one-over-one, double-hung metal windows of recent vintage. The long, flat brick wall facing west has few openings, one at ground level for a door and five evenly spaced openings at the rear, second story (Photograph #9). Modern metal windows are one-over-one replacement sash with a fixed transom above. The 1929 block has a built-up asphalt roofing system behind a metal-capped parapet wall. About midway back the parapet wall extends upward another ten feet and runs about twelve feet. Behind this wall is a small, gabled structure that provides covered access to the roof.

The south elevation features five evenly spaced bays separated by six raised pilasters on the first floor (Photograph #10). The two corner pilasters are slightly wider than the four centered pilasters. An elevated concrete foundation forms a water table upon which the four central pilaster bases rest. Basement windows, since infilled, were aligned with the first and second floor windows above. A recessed brick wall runs up



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between the pilasters to limestone window-sills. The five windows are one-over-one, double-hung wood sash. About four feet above the window tops is a fascia and molded, cast stone cornice. The south elevation continues up another three feet to a limestone belt course that forms a sill for the five window openings. Above the window openings are smooth limestone lintels. The three windows to the east have been modified to accept shorter, one-over-one metal sash. The windows to the west are one-over-one sash with a transom above. The smaller windows are significant visual intrusions to the understated yet balanced Classical Revival south elevation. The carefully proportioned south elevation continues up to a fascia and molded, cast-stone cornice. The spacing between the window tops and the fascia and cornice is similar to that found on the first floor. Above the cornice is a belt course. The parapet wall runs about five feet to a pediment with a molded limestone cap. Beneath the pediment is a circular limestone medallion with the words "Public" above and "Service" below a triangular Public Service Company symbol. On the alley side of the structure, facing the earlier 1903-04 addition, are four evenly spaced bays marked by pilasters that rise only to the top of the second floor. In each bay are three, double-hung windows with one-over-one wood sash. The third floor windows are aligned above the second floor windows. The four-part wood windows are divided horizontally. The wall has a textured stucco finish slightly different than the western wall of the 1903-04 addition. At the end of the alley between the additions is an entrance into the 1901 block of the building. A solid metal door is approached by five wood steps.

### **Current Interior Description**

The 1901 building's interior remains largely intact although some renovations have been performed to accommodate the structure's change from an office building to a public library. The basement beneath the original building has a brick foundation, portions of which have a stucco finish. The area has been broken into a number of small rooms and spaces meant to house mechanical systems, the elevator machinery and telephone equipment. There are paired, subterranean openings to the outside below the exterior arches on the east and west elevation first floors. The openings, now closed, are used in some instances to vent mechanical systems. In the southwest corner is a stairway to the first floor. Beneath the structure's first addition is a full basement with brick walls. This area has also been broken into smaller spaces by curtain walls to accommodate storage areas. Under the later addition is a basement with a concrete foundation that remains entirely open except for the columns of concrete encased steel that support large, encased steel girders. This area is now used for storage. In the original block's first floor the area remains open with a high, second story ceiling. The original plaster walls and ceiling remain. A circulation desk has been installed against the western interior wall. Behind the desk are three paired window openings with molded plaster casings surrounding the arched tops, complimenting the arched top doorways on the 1901 façade (Photograph #11). The original marble steps with decorative iron balustrade and wood rail are located in the southeast corner of the room and leads to a balcony with matching iron balustrade overlooking the library room (Photograph #12, 13). Centered against the rear wall is the elevator shaft.

The second floor of the main block is accessed by a stairway running up from the second-story mezzanine. The space is also a large, open library room. In the northeastern corner is a room with single door that is used

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to house special collections. The eastern, or 1903-04 block of the structure has been divided in to a series of spaces meant to facilitate library use. Immediately behind the large library room on the first floor is a hallway. At the east-end of the hall is a doorway to a utility room. At the west-end is a door to a video room. A hallway, without door, runs south back to a large open classroom. Off the hallway behind the utility and video rooms is an office to the west and bathrooms to the east. At the rear of the classroom is a stair to an exit door. These spaces appear to have been created when the building was converted to library use in 1982. The second story of the structure's first addition is also broken into a series of offices and meeting rooms. In a meeting room against the eastern wall is a door leading to a fire escape. At the rear of the second floor is a door leading to a large, open boardroom that runs across the rear of the structure. A number of large windows light the room. The 1929 addition, like the original block, retains its high two story ceiling and open interior spaces. A large, open room, now used for library purposes, covers more than half of the structure's total floor area. Centered in the rear, or south wall, are two doors leading to rest rooms. Behind this space and accessed by double doors in the southeast corner of the room is a large classroom, also open and two stories high, that fills the balance of the building's floor area, first and second stories. The windows in the section of the structure are at the second story level. The walls and ceiling appear to have their original plaster finishes. The second floor (at the third-story level) is a continuation of the large, open library room of the structure's original block. Behind the wall to the west are a number of rooms: rest rooms, offices, storage areas and classrooms. About midway into the room a curtain wall has been erected. It runs east to west halfway across the room and then turns on a diagonal and runs back to a doorway to a fire escape. Behind this area at the rear of this section of the building are more offices and classrooms.

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## Statement of Significance

The South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company Office Building is significant under National Register Criteria A and C. The building's principal connection with the growth of the public utilities industry in New Jersey makes it a strong candidate for Criterion A because the property is "...associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history." It is one of the few remaining buildings in New Jersey that represents and aids in interpreting the important turn-of-the-twentieth-century era of public utility consolidation. The public utilities industry played a crucial role in societal, industrial and technological advancement, a role that utilities continue to play today and will do so into the foreseeable future. Corporations like South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company and the Public Service Corporation of New Jersey provided much of the impetus for the state's rise from agrarianism to industrialization and residential developments during the last century. The property has statewide significance in the following areas: architecture, commerce, industry, transportation and [other:] public utilities.

The South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company Office Building is also significant under Criterion C as the building embodies "...the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values..." This structure is the last remaining *Beaux Arts* style commercial building in the City of Camden. The South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company Office Building has a period of significance from 1901, when the building first opened, until 1929.

## National Historical Context

The industrial and transportation revolution in the United States during the 1830s ushered in a brief era of relatively small and primitive manufactories and nascent railroad operations. With the technological advances that followed this period, residents in many American cities soon abandoned their oil lamps for manufactured gas piped underground into their houses. Most U.S. cities possessed gas plants by the 1850s.<sup>1</sup> At this time, horse car [rail] lines began to appear in urban centers, laid along metropolitan streets.<sup>2</sup> The Civil War accelerated the pace of developmental advancement as the military required new and improved technologies to prosecute the armed conflict. Following the cessation of hostilities, America embarked on a new age of industrialization that did not end until well into the twentieth century. This era fostered many inventors and innovators seeking to capitalize on the rise of manufacturing. Thomas Edison's perfection of the electric light bulb in 1879 cascaded into a new industry as electrical generating stations appeared across the landscape, starting with the nation's urban centers. Wires leading from the power plants to businesses and homes provided electricity for lighting and appliances as they became available. Within ten years of Edison's success, visionaries had successfully electrified street cars, relieving the thousands of horses formerly used to pull these cars through city streets. The companies supplying gas, electric and street car service to U.S. cities

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<sup>1</sup> Morgan, 1912, pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, 1941, pp. 16-34.

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began primarily as independent local operations often limited to specific sections of the given metropolis or community.

During the final quarter of the nineteenth century, the rise of industrial titans and the federal government's *laissez-faire* approach to the capitalist marketplace permitted unimpeded vertical and horizontal integration within business sectors, leading to mergers, pools, consolidations and the formation of trusts and holding companies. Railroads, steel, sugar, oil, meatpacking, mining and other industry arenas created huge corporate empires by absorbing weaker competitors, the formation of stock trusts, or consolidating smaller firms into national, statewide or regional monopolies. The public utility industry grew from the latter strategy. The utility services these companies provided proved to play a crucial role in America's continuing industrial expansion. In 1890, Congress passed the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, but its vague and confusing language made the law cumbersome to enforce. Although the government initially used the law for breaking labor strikes, President Theodore Roosevelt used the act as Congress intended and became known as "the trust buster," proactively pursuing enterprises that sought to monopolize trade for financial gain. Over the years since Teddy Roosevelt, the government has initiated numerous anti-trust actions against other businesses. However, public utility has been the one industry largely immune to government legal proceedings. By its very definition, a public utility is "A privately owned and operated business whose services are so essential to the general public as to justify the grant of special franchises for the use of public property or of the right of eminent domain.... It is always a virtual monopoly."<sup>3</sup> Hence, the government viewed the public utility's position of providing critical public services as outweighing its inherent financial evils, although most states formed Public Utility Commissions during the early 1900s to provide governmental oversight of utilities, their operations and the rates charged for gas, electric and transportation services.

The federal government's viewpoint changed, however, as the utility industry gained a dubious reputation across America during the first 30 years of the twentieth century. Civic outrage finally spurred Congress to pass the Public Utility Holding Company Act in 1935, providing a measure of protection to the "...public, investors and consumers from [the] economic effect of complex, unwieldy and dishonest organization of public utilities and particularly from [the] effect of false, misleading and irresponsible security advertising."<sup>4</sup> Senior utility management had little to say about the legislation. Thomas McCarter, board chairman of Public Service Corporation of New Jersey, told an audience in December 1935, "...the so-called Public Utility Holding Company Act, which, if constitutional, and if carried into effect would wreck most of the utility holding companies in the country."<sup>5</sup> State and federal legislators passed other laws regarding public utility taxation and regulation over the years. Within the last ten years, many states have instituted a deregulation program for utilities, hopeful of introducing competition from other providers, but these recent developments are beyond the scope of this document.

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<sup>3</sup> Black, 1990, p. 1232.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1233.

<sup>5</sup> McCarter, 1939, p. 422.

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### Local Historical Context

The City of Paterson hosted the first gas company chartered in New Jersey, formed during 1825, although the corporation did not actually construct its gasworks until 1847.<sup>6</sup> Between 1825 and 1870, the New Jersey State Legislature incorporated over 70 firms formed to supply gas to various cities and communities in the state.<sup>7</sup> In a move to standardize incorporation procedures and encourage an expanded gas supply, the state legislators approved an act in 1874 which provided a mechanism for forming local companies specifically to manufacture and sell gas "...in any of the cities and towns of this state."<sup>8</sup> By 1911, 265 corporations featured the word "gas" in their name.<sup>9</sup> In South Jersey, ten of the principal urban centers featured manufactured gas plants by the 1850s. Incorporators formed Trenton's first gas company in 1838 and, ten years later, a group of investors formed the Camden Gas Light Company.<sup>10</sup> All of these gas companies had local management, small gasworks and very limited gas distribution. The gas these companies generated was almost exclusively used in lighting streets, dwellings and factories. Only in the future would gas cooking and heating become a reality.<sup>11</sup>

The rise of local electric companies during the 1880s and early 1890s paralleled the growth of individual gas companies. The early power firms employed rather crude technology to generate the electricity, making the business very dangerous and unreliable. Like its gas predecessor, electricity served as a lighting method, although some locations close to the powerhouse could also operate motors. The brightness of arc lamps and incandescent bulbs eclipsed the fuzzy and faint yellow light generated with gas. As electric streetcars became a reality, the local trolley companies either purchased power from a local company or would often construct their own powerhouses. The Camden Horse Railroad electrification is a case in point. After completing its original wired route on Federal Street in May 1890, the streetcar company purchased steam from the Camden Lighting and Heating Company to run its own generators. As the firm's trolley routes expanded, it erected its own powerhouse on the eastern bank of Cooper's Creek.<sup>12</sup>

In 1900, the South Jersey Gas, Electric and Traction Company incorporated and began the process of consolidating local gas, electric and trolley firms operating in South Jersey through mergers and stock swapping.<sup>13</sup> Three years later, the Public Service Corporation, a holding company formed to further consolidate many of New Jersey's electric, gas and streetcar corporations, became a reality and the South Jersey Gas, Electric and Traction Company became the new corporation's Southern District.<sup>14</sup> As the twentieth century dawned in New Jersey, electricity had supplanted gas for lighting in many communities and

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<sup>6</sup> Conniff and Conniff, 1978, p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> Hood, 1871, pp. 52-57.

<sup>8</sup> *NJPL*, 1874, pp. 124-132.

<sup>9</sup> Secretary of State, 1914.

<sup>10</sup> Hood, 1871, pp. 52-57.

<sup>11</sup> Conniff and Conniff, 1978, pp. 32-33.

<sup>12</sup> Francis, 1952, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Secretary of State, 1914, p. 651.

<sup>14</sup> Secretary of State, 1914, pp. 581-582; Francis, 1952, p. 11.

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the gas companies began to advertise gas appliances like ranges and water heaters to bolster the diminishing demand for gas. At that time coal and heating oil dominated the fuel industry. By 1925, Public Service had established a gas house-heating department, but this business did not experience dramatic growth until after World War II. In the post-war years, domestic and industrial use grew exponentially, leading to the gradual closure of producer gas plants in deference to natural gas supplies.<sup>15</sup> Public Service ended all manufactured gas production in 1965.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, trolley operations in the Garden State peaked during the first two decades of the twentieth century. During 1926, 600 million passengers traveled on Public Service trolleys and buses. Two years later, Public Service Corporation merged various transit subsidiary companies to form Public Service Coordinated Transport.<sup>17</sup> Electric streetcar service began to wane in South Jersey, and the various routes had become completely motorized using gasoline and diesel buses and all-service vehicles (capable of running on the road or under trolley wire) by 1935.<sup>18</sup> The freedom that automobiles offered New Jersey residents had an increasingly deleterious effect on bus operations. The ridership losses increased in the years following World War II. In 1971, the transit division reorganized as Transport of New Jersey, discarding its old name—Public Service Coordinated Transport—and began operating bus routes subsidized with state funds.<sup>19</sup> In 1980, Public Service withdrew entirely from the public transportation sector of its business when it formally transferred all of its transit operations to New Jersey Transit, a state-owned, quasi-public corporation.<sup>20</sup>

As electrical power technology improved, power companies constructed new and larger power plants, adding capacity for the ever-increasing residential and industrial electricity demands. In 1913, Public Service began erecting its Burlington Generating Station, which would replace five smaller and obsolete power stations, including the one on Cooper's Creek in Camden. The company fed five substations with 13,200-volt transmission lines.<sup>21</sup> While the Camden and Trenton gas plants provided Public Service customers with gas, the Burlington Station supplied consumers with electricity. The concept of interconnectivity with other power corporations in adjoining states began in 1928, when Public Service joined with the Philadelphia Electric Company and Pennsylvania Power and Light "...to form the world's first integrated electrical pool, the forerunner of today's PJM interconnection. (The PJM name, an abbreviation for Pennsylvania Jersey Maryland [was] adopted in 1956."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Conniff and Conniff, 1978, p. 269.

<sup>16</sup> Calabro, 2003, p. 119.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Francis, 1952, pp. 13-14.

<sup>19</sup> Conniff and Conniff, 1978, pp. 234-235.

<sup>20</sup> Calabro, 2003, p. 120.

<sup>21</sup> Conniff and Conniff, 1978, pp. 134-135.

<sup>22</sup> Calabro, 2003, p. 119.

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Public Service Corporation merged its Public Service Electric Company and Public Service Gas Company to form Public Service Electric and Gas in 1948.<sup>23</sup> In 1960, the company erected its second major generating station at Duck Island, Mercer County. The Mercer Station supplied some additional much-needed generating capacity for South and Central Jersey's burgeoning suburban and industrial growth. Over the years, Public Service made improvements and expanded its generating plants.<sup>24</sup> In 1977, the corporation entered the nuclear power arena when its first Salem Generating Station came on-line. The United States Congress passed the Federal Energy Policy Act in 1992, which opened the door to deregulation of the energy industry. For Public Service and other energy providers in New Jersey, the opportunity for deregulation came in 1999, when Governor Christine Whitman signed the Electrical Discount and Energy Competition Act into law. The corporation transferred its generating stations to a new corporation called PSEG Energy, while PSE&G continues to deliver both gas and electricity to its consumers.<sup>25</sup>

### Formation of the South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company

In a move to consolidate many of South Jersey's local utilities, a group of men from New York, Newark, Camden and other locations within New Jersey incorporated the South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company on 31 August 1900. This corporation resulted from the merger of the Camden Gas Light Company, formed in 1848; Camden Gas Light and Fuel Company, incorporated in 1900; Camden and Burlington Gas and Electric Company, chartered in 1900;\* East Side Gas Company, charter filed in 1899;\*\* Gloucester City Electric Light Company of Camden County, incorporated in 1888; and the Consumers Gas Company of Woodbury and Woodbury Electric Light and Power Company, created in 1886. Less than a year later, on 4 January 1901, the S.J.G., E. & T. Co. directors merged the Trenton Gas and Electric Company, incorporated in 1899; and the Camden Lighting and Heating Company, formed in 1884, into their growing corporation.<sup>26</sup> At the time S.J.G., E. & T. Co. acquired the Camden Lighting and Heating Company, a local newspaper reported, "The South Jersey Gas, Electric and Traction Company, which has reached out with boldness that has surprised financial and business circles in adding to its constantly growing combination of gas and electric plants has made another big acquisition to its chain of lighting and power plants."<sup>27</sup> More mergers occurred on 27 February 1903, when the River Shore Gas Company, incorporated in 1899; Burlington Gas Light Company, chartered in 1852; Bordentown Gas Light Company, created in 1853; Gloucester City Gas Light Company, which became a corporation in 1872; Suburban Improvement Company, incorporated in 1897; Camden Gas Company, created in 1901; Stockton Electric Light and Power Company, formed in 1891; and

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Conniff and Conniff, 1978, p. 358; Calabro, 2003, p. 121.

<sup>25</sup> Calabro, 2003, pp. 120-121.

\*In an intermediate consolidation step, Elizabeth-based attorney Frank Bergen incorporated the Camden & Burlington Gas and Electric Company based on the merger of the Moorestown Gas Company; the Mount Holly Electric Light and Power Company; the Mount Holly Gas Light Company; New Jersey Gas Improvement Company; Peoples Gas Company; Peoples Gas Company of Haddonfield; Merchantville Gas Company; and the Merchantville Light, Heat and Power Company.

\*\*Chartered at a time when local residents referred to East Camden as East Side.

<sup>26</sup> Secretary of State, 1914, p. 651.

<sup>27</sup> *Post-Telegram*, 15 December 1900.

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Beverly City and Township Gas and Water Company, chartered in 1872, became part of the South Jersey conglomerate.<sup>28</sup>

Initial incorporators included such notable New Jersey figures as Anthony R. Kuser, a Newark-born financier; Thomas N. McCarter Jr., a Newark attorney who went on to form Public Service Corporation; Uzal H. McCarter, a Newark banker, brother of Thomas Jr. and president of Fidelity Trust Company; Forrest F. Dryden, President of Prudential Insurance Company and son of its founder; Chandler W. Riker, a prominent Newark attorney; John L. Kuser, Newark-born industrialist and brother of Anthony; William J. Thompson, the so-called Duke of Gloucester City, who served as a New Jersey State Senator during the 1890s and founded the Camden, Gloucester & Woodbury Railway, a trolley line; John J. Burleigh, Camden-based railroad official, financier and industrialist who served as president of the Delaware & Atlantic Telephone & Telegraph Company and numerous other New Jersey corporations; New Jersey State Senator Herbert W. Johnson of Merchantville; and Frank Bergen, Elizabeth-based corporate and municipal attorney. Some of these men already served as officers of the companies being merged to form South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company. For example, Anthony R. Kuser, first president of S.J.G. E. & T. Co., functioned as the secretary of the Camden Gas Light Company; president of Camden & Burlington Gas & Electric Company; president of the Gloucester City Electric Light Company; and the vice president of Consumers Gas Company of Woodbury. Thomas N. McCarter Jr., secretary and treasurer of the South Jersey corporation, also served as secretary of the Gloucester City Electric Light Company. Attorney Thomas A. Nevins held all outstanding stock shares of the Camden, Gloucester & Woodbury Railway and Charles Watson occupied the position of president with the Camden Gas Light Company.<sup>29</sup>

### Architect Thomas Stephen

The South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company opened its first office at 401 Arch Street in Camden, but quickly contracted with Camden architect Thomas Stephen to draft plans for a new corporate office building at 418 Federal Street. Prior to a fire on 13 May 1900, a market house occupied 414-442 Federal Street. John S. Read and William S. Scull erected this public stall market in 1878—the last market house constructed in the city. Long before Read and Scull erected their market house, Camden's first city hall, built in 1829, occupied this plot of land. With the creation of Camden County in 1844, this building also served as the new county's first courthouse from 1844 until 1852, when Samuel Sloan completed his county courthouse.<sup>30</sup> The 1900 market house conflagration resulted in complete demolition, clearing the land for the S.J.G., E. & T. Co. building.<sup>31</sup> The company acquired the vacant land in September 1900 through a deed of sale from one of its main incorporators, Anthony R. Kuser.<sup>32</sup> The 31 October 1900 issue of the *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* reported:

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<sup>28</sup> Secretary of State, *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> Various references cited in Sinclair, 1993.

<sup>30</sup> Boyer, 1928, pp. 12-13.

<sup>31</sup> Boyer, 1928, pp. 18, 65.

<sup>32</sup> Camden County Deeds, Book 248, p. 127, 1900.



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Thomas Stephen...has just sent out invitations to a number of contractors in New Jersey and this city to bid on the construction of the South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company buildings to be erected on Federal Street, between Fourth and Fifth Streets, Camden, N.J. on site of the market house recently burned.... The structure will be of Roman brick and Indiana limestone with six massive columns in front. They will be 30 feet high bearing a massive cornice of same stone, large plate glass windows and grill work of iron, wrought iron gates at each side of the structure...Mr. Stephen says he is making plans for quite a large addition to be erected to the main building in the rear, but will not be considered until completion of the main structure....<sup>33</sup>

After opening the bids, Stephen contracted with the productive contracting firm of J.S. Rogers Company of Stanwick, Burlington County, to construct the office building.<sup>34</sup> Stephen completed the "large addition," cited in the above quotation, on the rear of the South Jersey office building in 1903.<sup>35</sup>

Thomas J. Stephen was born the son of Charles W. and Louise Streeper Stephen during 1863 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His father, Charles, worked as a self-employed carpenter and, in 1880, the census enumerator listed Thomas as a carpenter apprentice still residing with his parents. Thomas received his formal education at the Spring Garden Institute and the Franklin Institute Drawing School. He subsequently traveled to Europe for two years, where he studied architecture in Rome and Paris.<sup>36</sup> He then returned to the United States and, by 1887, Thomas resided in Camden, New Jersey, where city directories between 1888 and 1891 listed him as a "carpenter." In 1892, he reportedly relocated his residence to Merchantville,<sup>37</sup> although the 1900 census lists him living on Linden Avenue just outside the Borough of Merchantville in Pennsauken Township. However, the 1910 and 1920 census schedules do list him as living within the borough. He maintained his professional office in the Masonic Temple building on Market Street in Camden.<sup>38</sup>

One source describing Stephen's career states that he received "over 5000 commissions and at one time was the only architect practicing in South Jersey."<sup>39</sup> However, a growing number of other architects worked in South Jersey contemporaneous with Stephen, including Stephen Decatur Button. The twentieth century brought numerous new architectural firms to Camden and the South Jersey region. However, the "Philadelphia Architects and Buildings" website lists 55-60 commissions for Thomas Stephen: most being in Camden City or County with some in Philadelphia and outlying areas and also in Cape May and South Jersey.<sup>40</sup> Extant

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<sup>33</sup> *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, Vol. XV, no. 44, 1900.

<sup>34</sup> *Greater Camden* 1909:83.

<sup>35</sup> *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, Vol. XVIII, no. 28, 1903.

<sup>36</sup> Tatman and Moss, 1985.

<sup>37</sup> *The Community News*, Merchantville, 15 August 1953, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> *Hendricks' Commercial Register of the United States*, 1894, p. 10; *American Art Annual*, Vol. 21 [1924], p. 465.

<sup>39</sup> Greenberg, 1983, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> [www.philadelphiabuildings.org](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org) [accessed 08 December 2003].

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[2003] Thomas Stephen building designs in Camden City include the South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company Office Building; the Keystone Leather Company plant; the Volney G. Bennett Lumber Company stable [NR 8/5/93]; the East Camden Free Library; Smith-Austermuhl Building [NR 8/25/90]; Central Trust Company [SR 1/11/90]; Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Roman Catholic Church; and the Antonio Mecca house. The American Institute of Architects received Thomas Stephen into membership in 1901 and he received emeritus status prior to his death.<sup>41</sup> He retired from his practice in 1938 and continued his life in Merchantville until his death during August 1953.<sup>42</sup>

### **South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company Comes to Life**

As a public utility, South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction sought to create a regional system through linking the small closed gas and electric distribution lines found in the numerous individual companies merged to form the South Jersey corporation in 1900. Robert C. Pruyn, president of the National Commercial Bank of Albany, New York, predicted this linkage at a luncheon held in Philadelphia to discuss creating the S.J.G., E. & T. Co. During a conversation with Thomas N. McCarter Jr., Mr. Pruyn stated, "Young man, I am getting to be an old man but you are a young man and I predict that if this combination goes through, you will live to see gas pumped from Camden to Trenton and electricity sent from Trenton to Camden."<sup>43</sup> Recounting this conversation with Mr. Pruyn during a 1939 speech, McCarter indicated, "...then I reflected that for many years gas has been pumped not only from Camden to Trenton but as far as Plainfield and Somerville; and that electricity...may be sent not to Trenton to Camden but from the Kearny Station in Newark to the remotest confines of this Division [South Jersey] and conversely from Burlington to Bergen County. In other words, the whole system will be completely interconnected."<sup>44</sup> With the linkage completed of the small gas company systems, the South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company decommissioned the individual gas generating plants and moved all gas production to the Camden gas plant. In connection with these gas supply plans, the S.J.G., E. & T. Co. inaugurated its new Camden coke plant on 31 December 1902 to provide production fuel for the adjacent gas plant.<sup>45</sup> The new coke facility, constructed with 100 Otto-Hoffmann coke ovens, supplied coke to the Lowe water-gas apparatus installed at the gas works to provide the entire gas system's needs. The company also erected a new gasholder to provide uninterrupted service. The gas plant, located at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Cherry streets in South Camden, dated to 1852, when the Camden Gas Light Company first began operations.<sup>46</sup>

On the day of its incorporation, the South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company leased the Camden, Gloucester & Woodbury Railway in keeping with the "traction" part of its name. This trolley line extended from Kaighn's Point Ferry, Camden, to Gloucester, and on to Woodbury, Mantua, and National Park.

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<sup>41</sup> Tatman and Moss, 1985.

<sup>42</sup> *The Community News*, Merchantville, 15 August 1953, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> McCarter, 1946, p. 17.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Boyer 1928, p. 69.

<sup>46</sup> Boyer, 1928, p. 26.

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Gloucester City's William J. Thompson and his compatriots constructed the line beginning in 1893, which just happened to serve Thompson's horseracing track in South Gloucester until its closure by legislation in 1895.

### **The Rise of Public Service Corporation of New Jersey**

Attorney Thomas N. McCarter Jr. had gained much experience at corporate consolidation and mergers through his legal work for public utilities such as South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company and similar firms in northern New Jersey. On 6 May 1903, McCarter and 23 other original incorporating directors chartered the Public Service Corporation of New Jersey to further consolidate much of New Jersey's gas, electric and street railway operations under a single umbrella. Representatives from the South Jersey area included David Baird Sr. and Jr., both Camden business and political leaders; and John J. Burleigh. Other directors served on both the Public Service board and the South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company board. Among these men were Uzal McCarter, Anthony R. Kuser, Thomas C. Barr, John J. Burleigh, and Frank Bergen.<sup>47</sup> In a 1941 retrospective delivered to the federal Securities and Exchange Commission, Thomas McCarter Jr. revealed the philosophy behind forming the Public Service Corporation:

The traction lines were in my opinion over-capitalized, and it soon became a matter of common knowledge that they were short of money for necessary improvements. ...I conceived the scheme that the way to remedy the situation was to put all the utilities of the State that could be induced to join, gas, electric, and traction, into one corporation under one management, so that the strong would carry the weak over any temporary crisis, it then being generally believed that ultimately the traction properties would prove to be the largest earner of any properties. The gas business was solid and substantial with a background of history and of earnings. The great future of the electric industry was not then foreseen.<sup>48</sup>

On 1 June 1903, the South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company board voted to lease all of the company's holdings to Public Service, effective immediately, although the South Jersey corporation continued to function as a separate business entity. Less than a year later, on 2 May 1904, the Camden & Suburban Railway leased its streetcar lines and equipment to South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company. At the time they signed the lease, the Camden & Suburban Railway Company operated 134 pieces of equipment over 84 miles of track radiating from Camden. This street railway company incorporated in 1896 based on the consolidation of the Camden Horse Railroad and the West Jersey Traction Company.<sup>49</sup> With Public Service firmly ensconced in South Jersey, it began to expand its trolley operations through construction and leases. Similar expansion occurred in Public Service's gas and electric sectors. By 1909, Public Service designated the South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company's territory as the South Jersey District. During this year, Public Service reported its South Jersey District supplied 262,000 people with gas and annual sales of that fuel totaled *circa*

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<sup>47</sup> McCarter 1946, pp. 33-38.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78

<sup>49</sup> Francis, 1952, p. 11.

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938 million cubic feet dispatched through 435 miles of gas mains. The electric generation capacity at that time equaled 6,100 kilowatts and most electricity not consumed in street railway operations went to public street lighting and to businesses.<sup>50</sup>

The 1910 South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company annual report filed with the New Jersey Secretary of State reported a change in the corporation's address of record. For the first time, the South Jersey corporation possessed the same physical address as Public Service in Newark as the latter firm exerted full and firm control over its South Jersey subsidiary. The former S.J.G., E. & T. Company's office building at 418 Federal Street contained Public Service offices beginning in 1903 and the building quickly became known as the "Public Service Corporation Building."<sup>51</sup> No sooner had the incorporators formed Public Service than the corporation retained the services of Thomas Stephen to redesign the interior partitioning at 418 Federal Street, thereby better accommodating the new offices that Public Service would require.<sup>52</sup> From this building, the Public Service Corporation supervised all of its gas and electric generating and distribution operations in South Jersey as well as the streetcar business. Over time, the need for office space increased, leading Public Service to add another extension on the rear of 418 Federal Street in 1929. The Sanborn Map Company's plan of the building indicates that the 1929 addition consisted of "fireproof construction; steel frames; concrete floors and roof; brick curtain walls" and the addition contained an elevator.<sup>53</sup>

During the Public Service tenure at the building, it served the corporation well. Not only did it house corporate, sales, customer service and operational offices, but it provided a beautiful and fitting edifice for the utility company to interact with the public. Camden resident Frank Fulbrook recalled often walking to the building and entering the lobby to pay his gas and electric bills.<sup>54</sup> Public Service customer and Riverton resident Jane Schopp retains fond memories of attending cooking classes in the late 1940s that Public Service offered to teach newlyweds the fine art of preparing meals using gas ranges. She also learned how to assemble and wire lamps at 418 Federal Street as the company taught consumers to respect but not fear electricity through these lamp construction exercises.<sup>55</sup>

In 1959, Public Service shut down the massive coke ovens at its Camden gas plant. Once the region's only Public Service Corporation gas production facility, the Camden plant shipped gas to locations as far away as Raritan.<sup>56</sup> But in the 1950s, the company had discovered that natural gas drawn from wells in the Gulf of Mexico was less expensive, including transport costs, than continuing to manufacture gas. Five years after shutting down the coke works, Public Service closed the remaining portions of the Camden gasworks. After demolishing many of the buildings, the company installed white cigar-shaped horizontal tanks to hold the

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<sup>50</sup> Brown, 1909, p. 121.

<sup>51</sup> Munger and Long, Post Card, 1906.

<sup>52</sup> *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, Vol. XVIII, no. 36, 1903.

<sup>53</sup> Sanborn Map Company, Camden, New Jersey, Vol. 1, Pl. 17, revised to May 1977.

<sup>54</sup> Frank Fulbrook, personal communication, 21 January 2004.

<sup>55</sup> Jane Schopp, personal communication, 15 February 2004.

<sup>56</sup> *Camden Courier*, 4 July 1926.

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natural gas supplies necessary to maintain a constant flow to consumers. With the new tanks on line, the huge gasholders also fell into disuse.<sup>57</sup> Suddenly, Public Service had dramatically decreased its presence in Camden. The South Jersey Public Service bus operations had its headquarters and some operational offices at the Newton Avenue garage for a number of years, with satellite garages scattered throughout the region. So, as Camden's regional commercial, transportation and industrial importance diminished, Public Service determined it no longer needed to maintain a presence in downtown Camden, particularly after transferring its public transportation operations to New Jersey Transit in 1980.

Public Service finally closed its office building at 418 Federal Street sometime between late 1982 and October 1983, when the company sold the office building to the City of Camden for \$100,000.<sup>58</sup> The city government expended one million dollars and over three years rehabilitating the office building, reinventing the space as a replacement city library. The state library provided half of the required funds through a matching grant.<sup>59</sup> In February 1987, the city reopened its main public library in the former South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company building, having relocated the books, shelving, equipment and supplies from the city's deteriorated Carnegie Library at Broadway and Line Street.<sup>60</sup> Today, in 2004, this building still serves as the main branch of the Camden Public Library.

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<sup>57</sup> *The Energy People*, Vol. 13, no. 3, 1984, pp. 1-13.

<sup>58</sup> Camden Historic Survey, Vol. II, form for inventory no. 040879. Revisions to this form for the Public Service Building were made in October 1982. At that time, Public Service still occupied the building; Camden County Deeds, Book 3927, p. 306, 1983.

<sup>59</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19 December 1986, p. B12.

<sup>60</sup> Chronological information gained from plaque on building.

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### Boundary Description

The South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company Office Building is located at 418 Federal Street, Camden, New Jersey and is part of a parcel currently designated as Block 170, Lot 40, formerly Block 239, Lot 40, on the Camden City, New Jersey tax map. The nominated property begins at a point 135'± east of the centerline of Fourth Street along the southerly line of Federal Street; thence the property runs easterly 120' to a corner; thence turning southerly, the property extends 156.25' to a corner on the northerly line of Taylor Street, a public thoroughfare vacated by Camden City Ordinance No. MC1932, dated 24 February 1983, adopted 10 March 1983 and recorded 12 April 1983, Road Vacation Book 10, page 919; thence extending westerly 120' along the northerly line of Taylor Street (vacated) to a corner; thence turning northerly, the property runs 156.25' to a corner and the point of beginning.

### Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel of land historically associated with the South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company Office Building, including the 1903 and the 1929 additions to the rear of the main and original building.



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New Jersey, Camden County: South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction Company Office Building

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## Photographs

Photo No.	Description
1.	Photograph looking southeast showing west elevation of 1901 building, including original and appended chimney
2.	Photograph looking south from Federal Street showing façade of 1901 building
3.	Photograph looking southeast showing details of the 1901 façade
4.	Photograph looking west showing east elevation of 1901 building
5.	Photograph looking southwest showing east elevation of 1901 and 1904 building
6.	Photograph looking west showing east elevation of 1904 building
7.	Photograph looking north showing façade of 1904 building
8.	Photograph looking southeast showing west elevation of 1901 and 1929 building and loading dock detail
9.	Photograph looking east showing west elevation of 1929 building
10.	Photograph looking north showing façade of 1929 building
11.	Photograph looking north through easternmost arched doorway in 1901 façade from the interior
12.	Photograph looking south of interior staircase attached to rear wall of 1901 building
13.	Photograph looking south of interior staircase attached to rear wall of 1901 building

Photographer: Paul W. Schopp

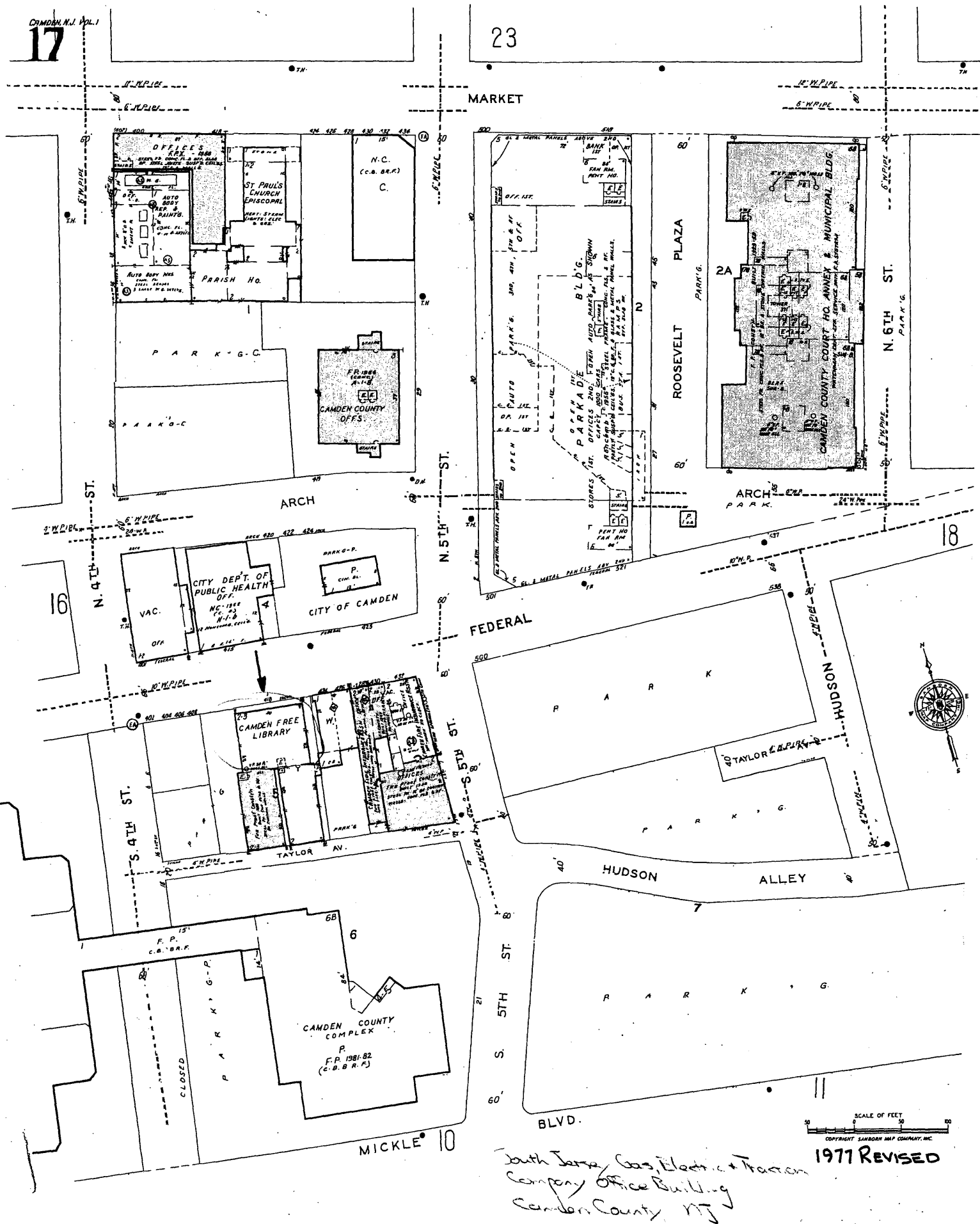
Date: 22 January 2004

Negatives on permanent file with:

Paul W. Schopp, Historical Consultant

223 Elm Avenue

Riverton, New Jersey 08077-1215



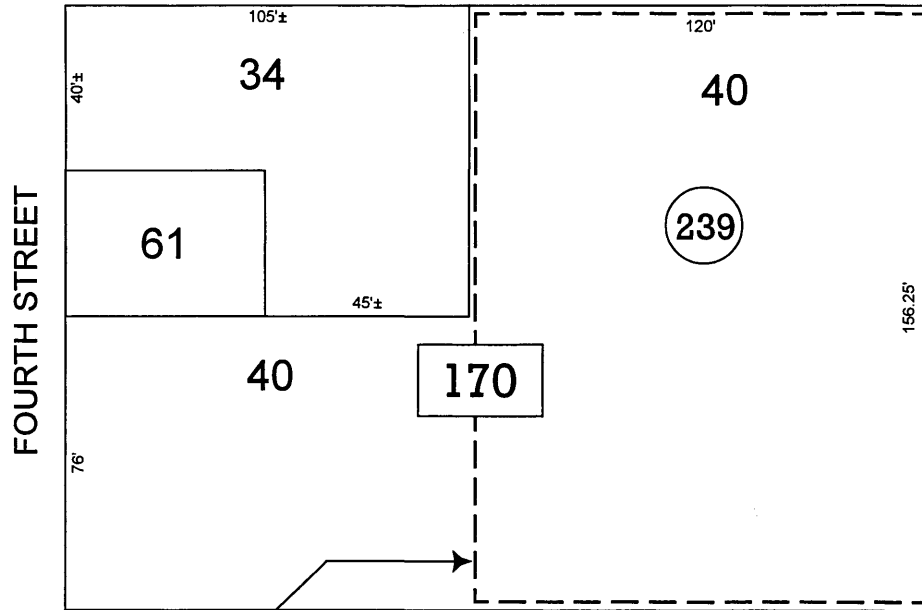
South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction  
Company Office Building  
Camden County, NJ

1977 REVISED

SCALE OF FEET  
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COPYRIGHT SANBORN MAP COMPANY, INC.



FEDERAL STREET



TAYLOR AVENUE (vacated 1983)

Dotted Line Represents Nominated Property

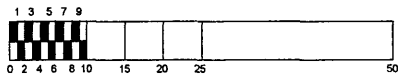
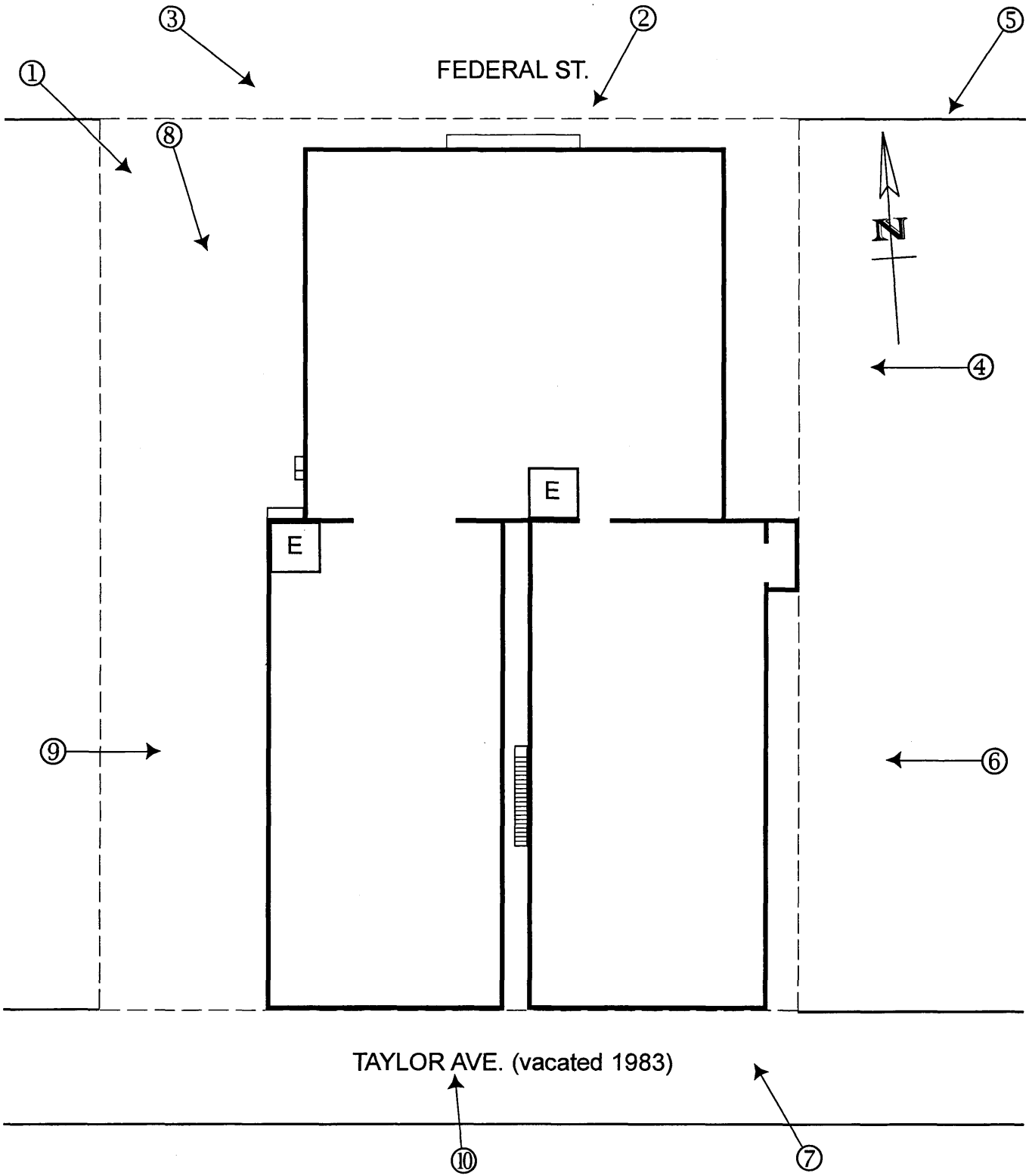
Paul W. Schopp, Historical Consultant  
Post Office Box 648 • Palmyra, New Jersey 08065

**City of Camden**  
**Plan of Tax Block 170, Lots 34, 40 & 61**  
**South Jersey Gas, Electric & Traction**  
**Company Office Building**  
**418 Federal Street**  
**City of Camden, Camden County, New Jersey**

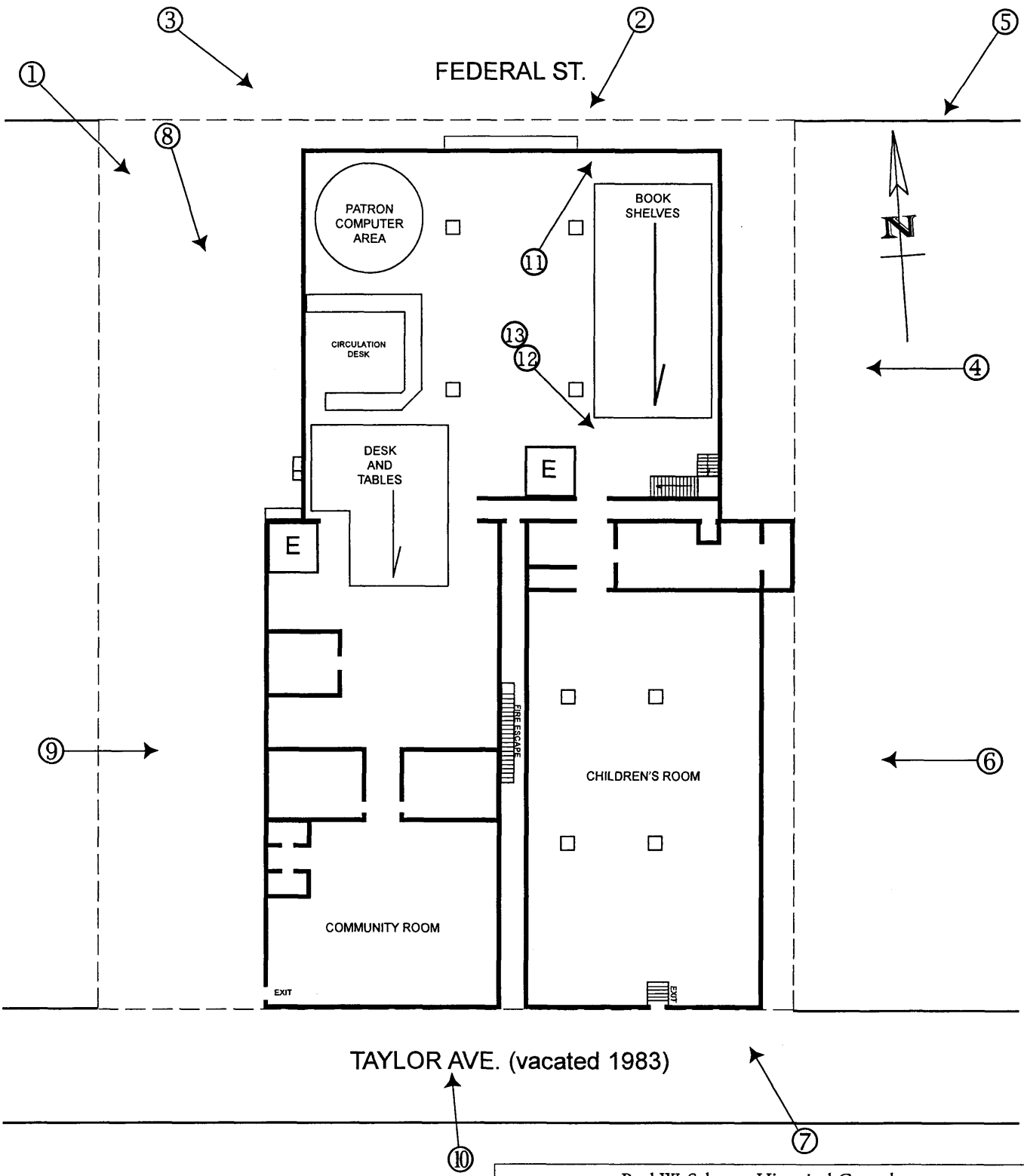
Prepared By:  
PWS

Date Prepared:  
19 May 2004

Scale:  
NOT TO SCALE



Paul W. Schopp, Historical Consultant Post Office Box 648 • Palmyra, New Jersey 08065		
<b>South Jersey Gas, Electric &amp; Traction Company Office Building</b> <b>418 Federal Street</b> <b>City of Camden, Camden County, New Jersey</b> <b>Camden Tax Block 170, Lot 40</b>		
Prepared By: PWS	Date Prepared: 16 February 2004	Scale: SCALE: 1 INCH = 25 FEET



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<b>Photograph Key Plan</b> <b>South Jersey Gas, Electric &amp; Traction</b> <b>Company Office Building</b> <b>418 Federal Street</b> <b>City of Camden, Camden County, New Jersey</b> <b>Part of Camden Tax Block 170, Lot 40</b>		
Prepared By: PWS	Date Prepared: 16 February 2004	Scale: SCALE: 1 INCH = 25 FEET



Public Service Corporation Building, Camden, N. J.