



*Seventy-fifth
Anniversary*

OF

Kearny Town Hall

402 KEARNY AVENUE

KEARNY, NEW JERSEY 07032

1909 — 1984

MAYOR

Henry J. Hill

TOWN COUNCIL

Roland Boggio

George McLaughlin

Richard Naprawa

Rosemary Robertson

Kenneth Lindenfelser

Barbara Thompson

Daniel Sansone

Peter McIntyre

RESEARCH BY:

Jessie M. Hipp,
Town Historian

PHOTOGRAPHS BY:

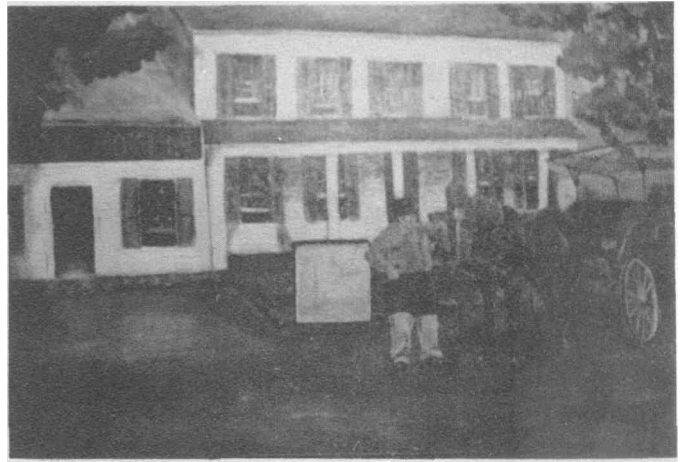
Ernest Zarnowski,
Det., K.P.D.

November 1984

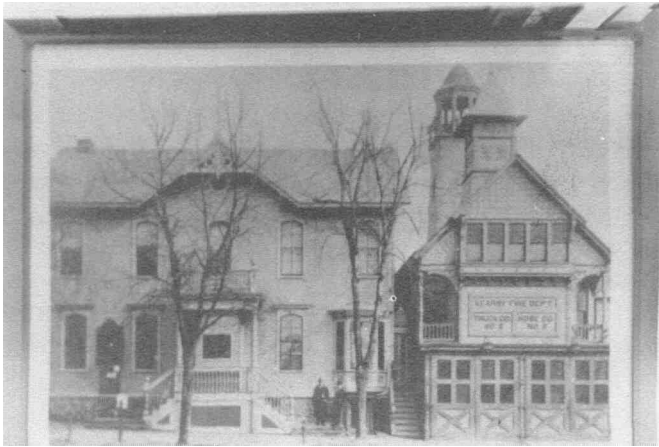
FOREWORD:

The history of the Town of Keorny has been a record of growth and expansion since March 14, 1867 when an Act of the New Jersey Legislature created THE TOWNSHIP OF KEARNY, separating the area from the Town of Harrison.

Immediately needing an Official Seat of Government, the new Township of Kearny rented three rooms in the old Lodi Hotel, a well known 1867 landmark on the northeast corner of Schuyler and Harrison Avenues. Here the first Election of Town Officials was held on April 8, 1867. These three rooms in Lodi Hotel served as the Township's Official Seat of Government for six years.



1867-Lodi Hotel



1873 Building

By 1873 the six-year-old Township of Kearny required additional space for municipal business to properly serve the needs of the Township. The Town Officials voted to build a wooden structure on Kearny Avenue next to Knox Presbyterian Church to serve as the Town Hall, Court and an Elementary School in 1873. The property was purchased from John Williams for \$2,000.

Expanding municipal needs indicated the need for more office space. A new two-story brick Kearny Public School #2, Nathan Hale, was built in 1880 on the corner of Kearny and Johnston Avenues. The classes and students of the wooden structure were moved into the new school building, allowing more room for Township affairs. This small wooden Town Hall/Court House served as Kearny's Town Ha'll for thirty-six years ~ 1873 to 1909 — when the New Municipal Building was completed. The old wooden structure was then sold to Knox Presbyterian Church for their Sunday School.

HISTORY OF KEARNY TOWN HALL BUILT 1909:

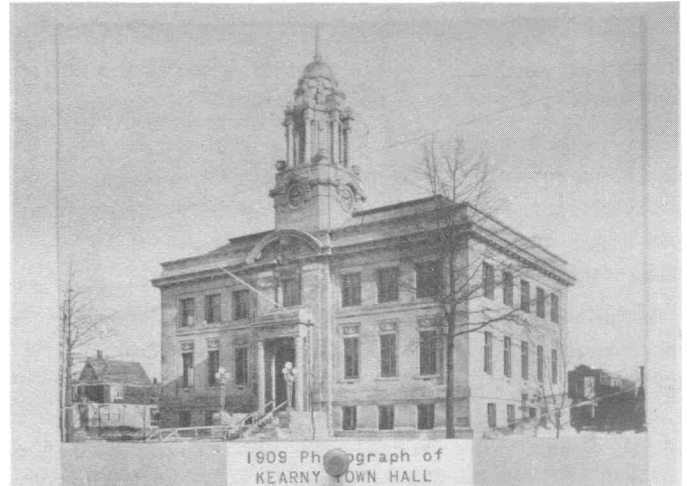
Influx of new industries in the Township and completion of the Arlington Depot of the Erie-Lackawanna R.R. in 1875, causing a home building boom, forced consideration of erecting a larger Town Hall. In 1899 the Township of Kearny was designated the Town of Kearny, the 13th Town in the State of New Jersey.

On April 12, 1905 the Town Council authorized purchase of land on Kearny Avenue, opposite Grove Street, the Minutes stating:

April 12, 1905. (6) "Resolved by the Council of the Town of Keorny, that a warrant be drawn to the order of Burton E. Canfield, Treasurer, for the Sum of Twenty-Six Hundred and Fifty Dollars (\$2,650.) for the purpose of paying for the Town Hall Site, and that the Treasurer be and he is hereby authorized to pay the same to the Estate of S. B. Fuller on receipt of deed for the plot purchased as per contract, when the deed and title of said plot are approved by the Town Attorney."

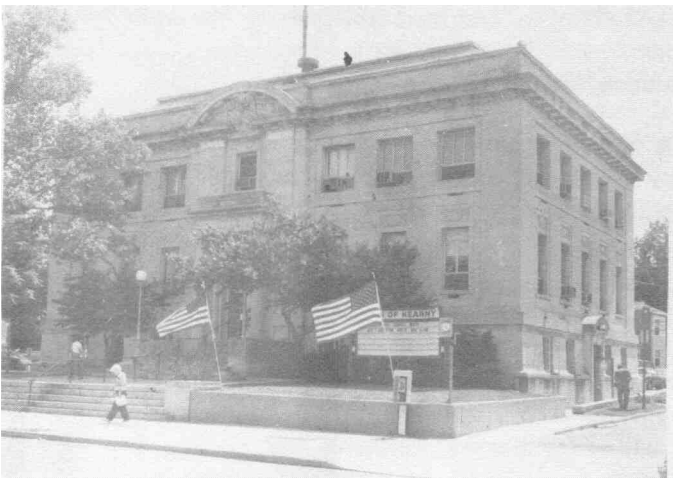
Registered Voters at the November 1908 Election authorized the erection of the present Kearny Town Hall. The architect engaged by the Town Council was Herbert E. Davis of New York; cost estimate \$65,000.

On August 16, 1909 the cornerstone of the new Town Hall was laid by Mayor Louis M. Brock, Kearny's 2nd mayor. The building exterior is Indiana limestone, with granite base. Graceful decorative panels top each window on the first floor. The center front entrance had an ornamental cornice. Above it, a tall Tower bearing a clock on each of its four sides and stone urns at its four corners was erected on the roof. The Tower was topped with an unusual metal Spire called locally "The Oil Can" which it did resemble. The finished building was stately in appearance. In fact, the January 11, 1910 issue of "Architecture", a wellknown professional publication, described Kearny's new Town Hall as "It is of pronounced French architecture, well proportioned, and of agreeable detail", adding, "The Tower is especially interesting as it is strongly reminiscent of colonial work."



1909 Building, Marble Halls and Stairs and Stained Glass Window

The Hall's 1st and 2nd floor hallways were constructed of marble, the walls and ceiling having unusual ornamental frieze details. A graceful stairway with marble steps and ornamental balustrade with hardwood railings joined the 1st and 2nd floors, at the half-way-point of which a large and beautiful stained glass window was installed. The window bears the artists's name—Walter Jones, Studios, N.Y., dated 1910. It is valued at \$18,000. and considered irreplaceable, several of the glass pieces being hand-painted. Residents can view with pride this colorful and outstanding feature of their Town Hall,



Kearny Town Hall As It Is Today

June 9, 1913 the Town Hall's Tower and Spire met with disaster when struck by a bolt of lightning, causing severe damage to stone work on the tower, even cracking plaster in the office of Police Chief William Tolen in the Hall basement. Newspaper accounts of the storm said Supt. of Fire Alarms George Smack, Mayor Louis Brock and his son, Louis, Jr., Town Clerk William Ross and Street Commissioner Durkin were in the Tower making an inspection when the bolt struck. Though stunned, none suffered any harm. For public safety, the damaged Tower and Spire were removed from the roof, leaving the appearance of Kearny Town Hall as it is today.



Semi-circular Dais, with Railing

During 1960 the Kearny Town Council authorized modernizing the Municipal Chambers on the 2nd floor, making a semi-circular dais with desks for the Mayor, 8 Councilmen, Town Attorney and Town Engineer, with the Town Clerk and Assistant seated at a table before them, a wrought iron railing completed the New Look after the Town of Kearny Official Seal was placed on the Mayor's podium.

Other changes to the Town Hall authorized included installing outer and inner double doors of glass at the Entrance, these replacing the original metal doors.

To honor the Town of Kearny's War Dead, two handsome bronze Honor Rolls were installed on the Entrance Walls:—one bearing the names of 60 Kearny Servicemen killed in World War I and a second bearing the names of 178 Kearny Servicemen killed in World War II.

Included in the 1984 updating of Kearny Town Hall was authorization by the Mayor and Town Council to install on the Main Entrance Wall a third bronze Honor Roll bearing the twenty-one names of Kearny Servicemen killed in Korea and Vietnam. These three Honor Rolls will bring together and memorialize Kearny's 259 Servicemen killed in World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam—as a reminder to the many citizens who pass through these entrance doors of the sacrifice they made for their country.

During America's Bicentennial in 1976 the Bust of Major General Philip Kearny, Civil War hero and former Kearny resident for whom this town was named in 1867, was formally placed in a special niche over these Entrance Doors. It should be noted this historic Bust, at the close of the Civil War, had been presented to his first wife, Diana Bullitt Kearny and her family by members of the General's own Jersey Blues Regiment who fought under him. The Bust was given our Town by his Family when they learned Town of Kearny requests to the City of Newark for the statue of Major General Philip Kearny standing in Military Park, Newark, were refused. It was a gracious gesture for the General's Family in 1956 to give the Town this very personal sculpture.

Kearny's Bust remained in the lobby of First National Bank & Trust Co. of Kearny, where placed after being received, for twenty years. Under the Bicentennial Programs of the Town conducted by Kearny's American Revolution Bicentennial Committee in 1976 it was deemed suitable to have this important gentleman in Kearny Local History "brought home to stay." It is especially fitting General Phil should be with Kearny Servicemen who honorably served their country, but like himself did not return home from the wars. Kearny Town Hall Front Entrance has historic significance.

In this Year 1984, the present Kearny Town Hall is celebrating its Seventy-Fifth Anniversary. Its appearance is still "well proportioned and of agreeable detail" as described in 1910 by architectural professionals. The dignity offered by its marble floors, antique plaster frieze decor, marble stepped stairway and handsome stained glass window still remains despite other modernizations, making one proud.

And again additional working space for town business is needed. Purchase of a new building last year for the expanded needs of the Town Water Department and Kearny Police Department and removal of these departments from the present Hall made possible the Town Council's retaining the services of Architect Neil Siciiano to draw plans for utilization of space now available. Departments serving the public will occupy the renovated area, public access being more convenient from the street level entrance. Renovating and moving departments as they continue "business as usual" is hectic. However, the completed readjustment of space and departments will offer Kearny Residents the business-like service desired and which they and future generations should receive.

The purpose of this visual and written history of the Town of Kearny's "Municipal Chambers" from 1867 as a Township, to this Year 1984 when the current Town Hall is having its 75th Anniversary, is to acquaint Kearny Residents with a bit of their Local History.

Jessie M. Hipp, Town Historian, Town of Kearny
Photographs by Det. Ernest Zarnowski, K.P.D.

November 1984



**Looking thru to Kearny Ave. thru Glass Doors,
With W.W.I, W.W.II and Korea-Vietnam Honor Rolls
and Gen. Kearny's Bust in its niche.**