

Historic Commission

Congratulations to the Northampton Township Police Department on relocating into a new home after almost 45 years at their previous headquarters. Those of us at a certain age can remember the original Township building utilized for approximately 20 years which for the first time consolidated all functions of local government at one location. Continuing with our series on a "Decade of Change the 1950's" we will examine the origins of the first Northampton Township Administration Building.

The Township throughout its history had never owned any buildings or land, most of their concerns were in maintaining the local roads and equipment was primarily stored in local barns. There was no Township Police and without Zoning ordinances no need to issue building permits, inspect construction work or plan for future growth, etc.

Records prior to 1932 are unavailable but it was known by then most Supervisors meetings were held at the Spread Eagle Inn in Richboro. There was usually only one meeting per month "open" to the public as required by the Second Class Township Code. Sometime during the 1930s the Township also started utilizing sheds or small garages for equipment storage in the rear of the Spread Eagle Inn's property. Rent was very cheap at approximately \$100 per year because the Spread Eagle Inn maintained a close affiliation with the Republican Party dominant in local politics at this time.

Most meetings were short and sparsely attended by local residents. Business conducted usually consisted of the Roadmaster's Report on road maintenance the previous month, Tax Collector's written tally of monies collected, and approval for any bills accrued to date. Ironically the Roadmaster during this period (paid per hour) was usually one of the Supervisors (paid per meeting). Some meetings were even held at the Supervisor's private residence and after dealing with major issues utilized the local firehouse in Richboro.

The Spread Eagle Inn at the corner of Second Street Pike and Almshouse Road still remains in Richboro recognizable by its Mansard roof. Relocated years ago from its close proximity to the roadway. It is used for alternative purposes currently. Originally there was a small barn or large Multi-purpose shed along Second Street Pike to the south. It was used partially for horses early in the 20th century but

with cars supplanting animals the barn was demolished in 1940. The owners of the Spread Eagle Inn started construction on a cinder block building but the new building was not finished until 1945, because of the material shortage during the war.

This building was rented in the late 1940s and early 1950s serving a number of tenants. It was utilized as a photography studio for a while and also a dealer in lawn equipment. The Township rented the building in 1956 for their meetings and shortly thereafter, required all ancillary groups such as the Planning Commission to use this central location. The main portion of the building did have a second floor which possibly was rented out to a local real estate firm.

In 1959 Northampton Township issued \$55,000 of General Obligation Bonds allocating \$25,000 towards purchasing this building and the balance after the construction of a road for the new Churchville Elementary School. The following year a wing extending from the main building was modified with 12' garage doors so Township trucks could be kept at this location. The "wing" was eventually turned into offices after completion of the Township Garage in 1968. The first garage bay became the Building Inspector's office, second Secretary-Treasurer (equal to present Township Manager), and third the newly formed Municipal Authority.

The front entrance to the building held the main meeting room (small by today's standards). The Police Department was housed in the rear of the building and a new "Roadmaster" hired in 1960 lived on the second floor until his death in 1966. There was a basement under the main building and for a time was used by State workers waiting to plow snow. Years later there were still old couches and chairs utilized by these men.

After the Roadmaster's death, the Township Police Department expanded into the second floor. Expanding with the growing population. They soon outgrew the ailing old headquarters and followed the Highway Department to a new building on Township Road. The building was sold shortly thereafter, converted to commercial purposes in the 1970s demolished in 1985 and the property currently part of the Tru-Mark Credit Union.

