

Brighton on the Move

On March 22, 1953, the town of Brighton dedicated its long-awaited town hall. It was Brighton's first town-owned municipal office building and it was welcomed by town officials and residents alike. Costing \$365,000, the two-story reinforced concrete structure was erected on the nine-acre Twamley property just west of the Twelve Corners.

Prominent architect and Brighton resident, C. Storrs Barrows, presented his drawings to the town board in 1950, saying *"The year 1950 will be reflected in both the interior and exterior design. Brighton has passed through Early Colonial period, and its early architecture was largely in the Greek Revival or Classical period. In later years, there have been style adaptations – more as 'slipcovers' on the construction such as colonnaded fronts or built-up roofs. The cost of much of this ornamental, superfluous construction adds considerably to initial costs, as well as maintenance, and belongs to a period prior to 1950. Today, the best in design represents a clear-cut building built of lasting materials, and treated simply but in masses and openings so arranged to be beautiful."*

The new building was not Brighton's first venture into acquiring a town hall. In 1938, with options to purchase three-acres on Monroe Avenue where the Brighton Central School District offices are today, the town board hired local architect James B. Arnold whose design featured a graceful white tower "deliberately designed...to conform with American ideals of what a town hall should look like." (James B. Arnold). Even with substantial U.S. Public Works funding (\$92,000 for the \$200,000 project), voters rejected the proposal in July 1938. The uncertain economy of the Great Depression may have discouraged town residents from accepting the taxation necessary to finance the construction.

Fifteen years later, with a post-World War II economy booming, town residents rejoiced in the spacious, well-designed building. The main foyer was dedicated to Brighton's veterans. Under the bronze seal of the United States, a marble ledge contained a memorial book inscribed with the names of the Brighton men and women who served in World War II. Glass partitions separated offices from corridors, adding an air of spaciousness to the main floor.

The wood-paneled combination courtroom/town council meeting room was fitted with pews and a dais at one end for the justice of the peace or the town council. That space today is the assessor's office.

The Brighton Police Department moved into the lower level, as did the loan cupboard with wheelchairs, crutches, and other medical equipment provided by the town for its residents.

The Brighton Memorial Library also began in the lower level of the building with books donated by residents. In 1989, the police and courts moved into the new east wing, the loan cupboard was discontinued, and the library space became the town historian's office after the library moved into the west wing of the complex.

Now the town government is anticipating a move to temporary quarters in the SUNY Empire State University building on Westfall Road. The 70-year old town hall will undergo some much needed updates including accessible ramps to the front doors and first floor restrooms. The installation of a new HVAC system will necessitate the

disturbance of asbestos in the walls so all personnel will need to be out of the building for the duration of the rehabilitation work, projected to take from eighteen months to two years. Town government will continue to function in the temporary space along with town council and board meetings. Police and courts will remain on Elmwood Avenue as will the library.

Perhaps Brighton can look forward to a RE-dedication ceremony when all the dust has settled!