Virtual Snapshot Series

The State House Annex
The Annex

The New Jersey State House Annex is a U-shaped building located next to the New Jersey State House. The Annex was built between 1927 and 1931 and has been home to all three branches of government. Initially built for the Executive and Judicial Branches in the 1920s, today it is home to the Legislative Branch.

What does each branch of government do?
- The Legislative Branch MAKES the laws.
- The Executive Branch ENFORCES the laws.
- The Judicial Branch INTERPRETS the laws.
History

Construction of the State House Annex occurred in two stages. The east wing (on the left) was built between 1927 and 1928, and the west wing (on the right) between 1928 and 1929.

There were three major public areas in the Annex — the State Library, the State Museum, and New Jersey’s highest courts. Additional office space in the building was utilized by the Highway Department, the Department of Conservation and Economic Development, and the Department of Banking and Insurance.
The East Wing

The New Jersey State Library opened in the east wing of the Annex in May of 1931. The State Library started collecting books and documents in 1704, and became an official institution in 1796. The library serves as an information resource for all three branches of government.

Today, the State Library is located next to the State House Annex and can be used by all New Jersey residents.
The West Wing

The main attraction in the west wing of the Annex was the New Jersey State Museum. The State Museum was established by law in 1895. Visitors to the museum could explore North American Indian Art, natural history specimens, and a replica of the world’s first full dinosaur skeleton — *Hadrosaurus foulkii*.

The museum opened to the public on October 29, 1929 — the same day the U.S. stock market crashed. The market crash sparked an economic downfall that led to the worst financial crisis of the 20th century, the Great Depression.

Today, the State Museum is located within walking distance of the New Jersey State House.
The Judicial Branch

In 1931, the State Judicial Branch moved into the State House Annex. Three levels of courts heard cases:

- The Supreme Court: the court of law
- Court of Chancery: the court of equity (justice)
- Court of Errors and Appeals: the court of last resort

The courts were restructured in 1947 in an effort to make the justice system more efficient. The New Jersey Supreme Court is now the highest court in the state. The Supreme Court reviews the rulings of lower courts and interprets statutes, regulations, common laws, and the New Jersey and U.S. Constitutions. Today, the Judicial Branch is located in the Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex in Trenton.
Notable Court Cases

Because the New Jersey State House Annex was home to the Judicial Branch and the highest court of the New Jersey, famous court cases were reviewed and heard here.

The most famous case of the 1930s was the Lindbergh kidnapping. In 1932, the infant son of Charles Lindbergh, the first aviator to fly solo and nonstop across the Atlantic Ocean, was taken from his home near Hopewell, New Jersey, and later found dead. The man charged with the kidnapping, Richard Bruno Hauptman (pictured left), appealed his guilty verdict at the State House Annex. Ultimately, the court upheld Hauptman’s conviction and he was put to death in 1936.
Notable Court Cases

In 1975, Karen Ann Quinlan was hospitalized after falling into a coma. She was placed on a respirator to help her breathe. Karen’s family believed she would not have wanted to be kept alive by a machine. There were no regulations regarding the rights of patients who were dying and unable to communicate. Doctors feared they would be accused of murder if they followed the Quinlan family’s wish to remove the respirator.

In the first case of its kind, the New Jersey Supreme Court appointed Karen’s father as guardian of his daughter to make decisions regarding all lifesaving measures, including removing the respirator. This historic ruling allows families to decide to end life-sustaining medical treatments if patients are unable to express their own decision.
The Annex

Today, the State House Annex houses legislative offices for committee chairs and the Office of Legislative Services — an organization that provides legal research, bill drafting, and other support to the members of the Legislature without bias towards any political party.

The former courtrooms, library, and museum are used as public hearing rooms for committee meetings. Committee hearings provide citizens the opportunity to voice their opinion about bills that may become laws.