

DIOCESAN HOUSE

This property at 808 West State Street originally consisted of a house built in 1912, a Casino built in 1927, and a Solarium built in 1935. The original owner was Frank J. Wetzel, the inventor and manufacturer of the Wetzel Mechanical (Coal) Stoker. By 1927 Wetzel found it necessary to entertain prestigious visitors he met in his role as special representative to the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Consequently, in 1927 he built the casino and swimming pool to meet those entertaining needs.

The Casino was designed and constructed by an architect named William W. Slack. By 1935 the Wetzel property consisted of the house located on one 50' wide lot facing West State Street and three 50' lots that faced Carteret Avenue. The Solarium was designed and built by Slack in 1935 and is the present large meeting room. In 1936 Wetzel bought the 100' lot from E.C. Hill that was immediately adjacent to the Wetzel home. This resulted in property consisting of six building lots that totaled frontage of 150' and a depth of 200'. In order to give himself some empty space near his home, Wetzel demolished the Hill mansion and the space remains open.

Wetzel died in 1940 and his widow, Anna R. Wetzel, retained the property until 1942 when she signed it back to the First-Mechanics National Bank. The bank advertised the property for sale and the Diocese bought it in 1943.

The bank's original asking price was \$40,000 and the Diocese bought it for \$25,000.

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