

FEDERAL BUILDING

Cornerstone laying ceremonies took place on April 9, 1912 for the building of the Federal Building on Water Street. It was known for years as the Post Office...for indeed the Alpena Post Office was housed there...moving into this new office building on April 13, 1913. The Post Office remained there until moving into the building on North Second Avenue between the Thunder Bay River and Fletcher Street when it was erected and ready for occupancy in 0000.

The Federal Building is a massive two-story building constructed of Indiana Bedford Stone. The first floor was entered from Water Street through large swinging doors into a spacious lobby that had terrazzo floors and was wainscoted with rich, grey marble. The windows were of polished glass set in steel sashes. Various rooms were on the first floor...and all were used by the United States Postal Department.

At the end of the front lobby a stairway, covered in travertine marble, led to the second floor...and to a long hall with terazzoed floors. The first door one encountered on the right led to the office of the Civil Service Commission. Directly opposite that room was the one that was occupied by the Deputy Collector of Customs. This office was opened in the evenings. A customs office was necessary, for there were so many ships entering and leaving our harbor - both night and day. The room next to this housed the County Agricultural Society ...a branch of the United States Field Department of Agriculture.

The United States Weather Bureau occupied three rooms for their offices. And the National Re-Employment Service, a branch of the U.S. Department of Labor, also had offices on the second floor. In their offices, 5,500 people were registered for labor in four area counties. This number represented the active and inactive number of those who were registered at those offices.

The Federal Building has served our city and county well....and hopefully it will be allowed to continue. I have a bit of personal interest in this building (and others in Alpena) because my grandfather, Robert T. Haltiner, worked on them. He worked on the Federal Building, was construction superintendent for Memorial Hall (the Armory), built the fire station that once was on Ninth Street, the bank that was on the corner of Chisholm Street and Ninth Street (now an office building), the St. Bernard's rectory on the corner of Lockwood and Sixth Streets, Mayor Piepkorn's home on the corner of Mirre and Third Streets, and others. He was in charge of construction at Huron Portland Cement Company for many years...and during World War II was sent out east to head a crew of workers in the construction of military buildings and housing.

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