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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Federal Building

other name/site number: Flathead County Library 24FH

2. Location

street & number: 247 First Avenue East

not for publication: n/a  
vicinity: n/a

city/town: Kalispell

state: Montana code: MT county: Flathead code: 029 zip code: 59901

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination    request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets    does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant    nationally    statewide X locally. (    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Maurelle Shup Signature of certifying official/Title MTSHPO Date 6-28-94

Montana State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency or bureau

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  
   see continuation sheet

   determined eligible for the  
National Register

   see continuation sheet  
   determined not eligible for the  
National Register

   see continuation sheet  
   removed from the National Register

   see continuation sheet  
   other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

for  
Signature of the Keeper  
Edson H. Beall

Date of Action  
6-24-94

Entered in the  
National Register

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**5. Classification**

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Ownership of Property:  private  public-local  public-State  public-Federal

Category of Property:  building(s)  district  site  structure  object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> building(s)
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic and Architectural Properties of Kalispell, Montana

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**6. Function or Use**

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**Historic Functions:**  
GOVERNMENT/government office

**Current Functions:**  
EDUCATION/library  
EDUCATION/education-related

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification:**  
Colonial Revival/Georgian Revival

**Materials:**  
foundation: CONCRETE  
roof: ASPHALT  
walls: BRICK  
other: N/A

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**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

The Federal Building is an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style of architecture. Identifying features include the masonry construction, the double-hung first-floor windows with nine lights in each sash, semi-circular fanlights, sidelights, and consoles and springing stones, the overall symmetry of the building's 5-bay plan, the dentils under the cornice, and the flat roof surmounted by a balustrade. The lack of ornamentation and pediment around the front entrance is unusual. The second-floor windows are paired. There is some decorative brickwork underneath the first-floor windows and in a belt at the base of the second-floor windows. Corbelling of the bricks is used to create pilasters in slight relief, with corbelled capitals. The basement of the building is brick. The front door is today flanked by two concrete flower urns instead of the original globe lights. The front doors are modern replacement doors. An entrance on the north side of the building (not original) goes to the School District offices on the top floor.

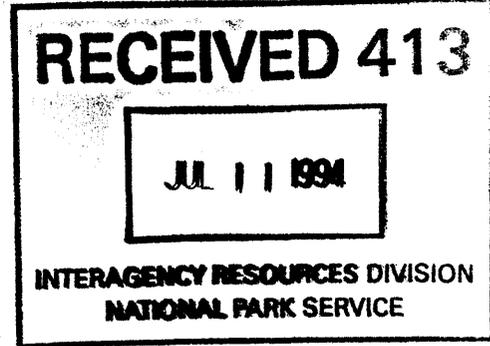
Remodeling has included installing air conditioners in some of the first-floor windows and the construction of a two-story rear addition on the building in 1978. The addition was built to match the main part of the building, although some of the detailing was simplified (for example, instead of an actual balustrade the roofline has brick parapets). There is a concrete ramp for handicapped access on the south (rear) of the building, and a large garage bay on the north side of the building.

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Most of the interior is now used by the Flathead County Library and has been significantly remodeled with dropped ceilings, carpeting, etc. On the first floor there is one section of marble wall remaining, and on the second floor the west end of the room still has exposed wood ceiling beams. The third floor has more original interior materials, including marble stalls in the bathrooms, the original woodwork, and some original doors and transoms.

A historic photograph of the building shows that the second-floor windows on the west elevation had striped awnings at that time.

When the Federal Building was completed in 1917, the *Kalispell Bee* described it as follows:

...Marble, hardwood, polished brass and gleaming walls constructed with extreme thoroughness make it one of the most beautiful buildings in this part of the state.

There are two stories and a full basement. The first floor is given over entirely to the postoffice, the second to the two forestry offices, land office, postoffice inspector and the weather man, who also has a big instrument platform on the roof. In the basement are janitor's workroom, heating plant, storage space and a rest room, with toilet and shower bath adjoining for the use of the mail carriers.

The front entrance opens into the postoffice lobby, which extends north and south, with a turn east at the north end. General delivery, stamp, parcels post, postal savings, registry and money order windows and the letter package drops are at the south end. Postmaster Sam Hilburn has his office at the north end. Boxes of four or five sizes, to accommodate patron's purposes, face the entrance and extend around the corner.

The lobby is paved with red tile. The walls are based with marble and finished on up with smooth, white plaster, with a heavy beam design. Above the tier of boxes are large elliptical windows of a sightly design.

Back of the partition, the first floor is given over to the postoffice workmen, which is finished with every thought for convenience. It is equipped with new sorting racks and other pieces of furniture. From the ceiling a closed corridor is suspended the length of the room and part way down the two sides. It is for the use of the postoffice inspector, who may enter it secretly from his private office and view the entire workroom through shutters and peek holes without being seen.

Mail will be received through a double back door opening into a paved court. The carriers also will leave through this way. There is a space set aside for them to tie their horses.

A stairway from the lobby leads to the second floor. An iron gate has been fitted across the stairs for locking at night, so the lobby may be kept open.

Weather observer H. B. Dick has a large room at the right of the stairs. His room opens into a well with a circular stairway leading to the roof. There he has a platform on which his weather instruments will be set. They will be connected with cables in his office so he can tell all about the weather without going outdoors.

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The office force of the Flathead forest will occupy the two remaining rooms across the west side of the building and one on the south end. Supervisor Warner will have a private office and there will be a large work room and a drafting room.

Superintendent McLaughlin and the Blackfeet forest force will have similar quarters on the southwest corner. Register F. O. Williams and Receiver O. E. Thomas, of the land office, will have their rooms on the east side and the postoffice inspector has his office, when he will visit the city, on the northeast corner.

The flooring of the post office was yellow pine. The *Kalispell Times* commented in 1917 that "we think a good deal of vertical grain Oregon fir flooring in this section but the treasury architect hails from south of the Mason and Dixon line."

In 1956 the post office built a new loading platform. At that time, sections of lawn north of the Federal Building were removed and replaced with a parking lot for government workers. Judging from a historic photograph (see attached copy), at one time the building had a large awning over the front entrance.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Areas of Significance: Architecture  
Government

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1917-1943

Significant Person(s): n/a

Significant Dates: 1917

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder(s): Wetmore, James A.

### NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Federal Building, completed in 1917, is significant under Criteria A, for its significance to the development of Kalispell as the regional trade and government center, and C, for its excellent historic architectural integrity. For many years the Colonial Revival-style building housed the offices of the post office, the U. S. Forest Service, the U. S. Land Office, and the U. S. Weather Bureau. It thus represents in physical form the strong influence of the federal building on the Flathead Valley. The U. S. Forest Service, in particular, has had a large influence on the development of the Flathead Valley because it manages millions of acres of public land in the area.

The Federal Building is one of the most substantial, high-style buildings in the city of Kalispell. The Georgian Revival style is relatively rare in Kalispell; the City Water Department at 336 1st Avenue East and the Waggener & Campbell Funeral Home are two other examples of the style. Little of the interior fabric of the Federal Building remains. The rear addition, built in 1965, does not significantly affect the overall integrity of the building because of its location and relatively small massing. The central addition, however, does significantly change the massing of the building, but the materials and style are very close to those of the original building.

First Avenue East was the focus of transportation-related businesses in early Kalispell. In 1906, the west side of this block contained a livery stable (where the Federal Building now is), the city pound, a blacksmith shop, and "old shacks, tumble-down buildings and unattractive back yards." The proprietors of the livery on the corner, which was built in 1900, included Emory Walker (ca. 1900), V. M. Bishop (ca. 1903-07), Dan Ledgerwood (ca. 1907-09), and James N. Stephens (ca. 1915). Hubbart's livery and boarding stable was built by 1894 and was located on lot 10 to the north of the later, and larger, livery stable.

Congressmen Joseph Dixon and Charles Pray had tried since at least 1903 to have money appropriated for the construction of a federal building in Kalispell, which in 1903 was considered the only one of the "larger cities" of Montana that did not have a "public edifice." In 1910 the purchase of the city lots was authorized by Congress, and three years later Kalispell was authorized to receive \$100,000 from the federal treasury to build a federal building on the lots purchased by the United States government in 1911. Contractors' bids ranged from \$79,000 to \$109,000 for the project, and the prospective builders were from Spokane, Helena, and Missoula and elsewhere. The general contractor ended up being Welch Brothers and Hannaman, based in Oakland, California. James Hannaman supervised the job and lived in Kalispell for 15 months, during which time he was married. The building was completed on time and "according to the strictest of specifications," despite problems with an extreme winter, "disturbed material markets," a scarcity of labor, and "congested" railway traffic caused by World War I. The acting supervisory architect for the building was James A. Wetmore of the U. S. Treasury Department.

The corner stone for the Federal Building was laid in August of 1916. A copper box placed in the corner stone contained numerous items memorializing the occasion.

The Kalispell post office was established in August of 1891, and it was located in four other buildings before moving into the Federal Building in 1917. The city's first delivery of mail by carrier was in 1902, and rural delivery began in 1903. In 1920 the postal service in Kalispell employed 18 people serving approximately 9,000 people. The post office was located on the first floor of the building, and the upper floor was used by the other federal agencies and the office of the post

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office inspector. In 1920 the basement contained postal service offices, storage space and a janitor's room, a boiler room, the fuel room, the postal carriers' rest room, and a shower bath.

The U. S. Weather Bureau station was established in Kalispell because of its "strategic position near the Canadian border, enabling it to report any air disturbances coming into the United States from Canada." The station was primarily an observation and monitoring station when it was established, and it was located on the roof of the Federal Building. The meteorologist gave weather information to the public and provided necessary information for airplanes. The Weather Bureau was moved out of the Federal Building and to the County Airport in 1949.

School District No. 5 purchased the property in 1966 and still owns the building. The building is currently occupied by school district administrative offices and by the Flathead County Library.

Federal Building  
Name of Property

Flathead County, Montana  
County and State

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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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See continuation sheet

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government (City of Kalispell)

University

Other - Specify Repository: Flathead County Library,  
Kalispell

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property:** less than one acre

**UTM References:**

A

**Zone**

11

**Easting**

699900

**Northing**

5341400

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Block 57, lots 7-12, Section 18, Township 28 North, Range 21 West, Montana Principal Meridian.

**Boundary Justification**

The legally recorded boundary of this property encompasses the significant resources.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title: Kathy McKay, Historian

street & number: 491 Eckelberry Dr.

city or town: Columbia Falls

date: May 1993

telephone: (406) 892-1538

state: Montana zip code: 59912

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## Property Owner

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name/title: Trustees of School District 5

street & number: 233 1st Avenue East telephone:

city or town: Kalispell state: MT zip code: 59901

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Elwood, Henry, *Kalispell, Montana and the Upper Flathead Valley* (Kalispell, MT: Thomas Printing, 1980), p. 64.

"Federal Building," (ca. 1949, probably *Kalispell News*), available in Montana - Kalispell - Post Office file at the Flathead County Library, Kalispell, Montana.

*Flathead Monitor*: November 30, 1900.

*Kalispell Bee*: September 2, 1902, p. 8; December 18, 1903, p. 4; "Ald. Rognlien Explains," July 13, 1906, p. 4; June 21, 1910, p. 5; "Federal Building for Kalispell in 1916," January 12, 1915, p. 1; "Occupy Federal Building," September 27, 1917, p. 1.

*Kalispell News*: "Who's Who In Kalispell," May 25, 1938, p. 3; "Three Major Business Blocks," August 9, 1956, p. 1.

Kalispell School District No. 5, archives, Kalispell, Montana.

*Kalispell Times*: "Thanks to Charley Pray Kalispell Federal Building," February 20, 1913, p. 1; "Sixteen Bids Submitted," March 16, 1916, p. 1; August 24, 1916; August 30, 1917.

Kalispell Water Department, "7th Annual Water Department Report," (1920), pp. 26-28.