

Napa Post Office

Franklin Station

Research by: Christine Madrid French, Architectural Historian, Executive Director

Architect: Reed & Corlett of Oakland (Will G. Corlett) (Oakland Bank Building)

Contractor: K.E. Parker Company, bid \$98,840; Harry Lackore directing construction

Quotes:

- "It will not only be a handsome and dignified edifice, but it will embrace every modern convenience and facility for the efficient transaction of federal business. It will prove a wonderful addition to this city. Napa is fortunate indeed to obtain this new federal building." Architect William G. Corlett, *Napa Valley Register*, Jan. 18, 1932
- "Artistic and modern in every detail, the new Napa post office will be one of the most beautiful buildings in this city." *Napa Valley Register*, April 1932
- "We plan to buy our rock and lumber from Napa concerns and to buy such other building materials as possible in Napa. We will also employ a large number of Napa men." Contractor K.E. Parker, President of the company, November 1932
- "One of the most beautiful, if not the most beautiful federal buildings of any city of similar size in the entire country." *Napa Journal*, October 1933
- "On glancing at the building even from a distance, one is immediately impressed with the architectural splendor, high quality material and expert workmanship which were combined to give Napa one of the finest post offices in all of Northern California." *Napa Valley Register*, Oct. 28, 1933.
- "The beauty of the lobby will beyond any doubt prove a surprise to those who visit the building." *Napa Valley Register*, Oct. 28, 1933.

Timeline:

1931: Easterby property purchased by the Post office department late 1931 for \$20,000; 50 trees removed from the site; some residents used the timber as firewood. The Napa Post Office was located in the Young Building.

Dec. 1931: Architect William Corlett of Reed & Corlett received all data from the government and begins designing the building.

Jan 1932: Corlett visits Napa; first drawings completed

March 1932: 130 federal projects underway in California, involving \$66,000,000. Petaluma and Vallejo (Architect Charles Dean) both had post offices on the boards.



NAPA COUNTY LANDMARKS

Napa County Landmarks

P.O. Box 267

Napa, CA 94559-0267

707-231-8261

napacountylandmarks.org

info@napacountylandmarks.org

April 1932: Working drawings for new \$140,000 post office and federal building in Napa within three weeks of completion and forwarded to Washington for final approval. (page 8 missing from online record). Construction of building could be delayed by President Hoover's economy plan. Similar appropriations for Vallejo, Martinez, Petaluma, and four other cities in California.

July 22, 1932: Plans for the building approved by the Treasury Department in Washington. It was a "Reinforced concrete class A type," referring to a building that would be placed on a major street and finished to a higher level, with marble, ornamental bronze, etc.

January 1933: Construction starts. A 35-ton steam shovel was brought in from Vallejo by Southern Pacific rail after completion of the new post office there under the supervision of W.T. Knapp at Ariss and Knapp.

October 29: Grand opening of \$140,000 building. A "huge speakers' platform" was constructed for the event. Nathan F. Coombs principal speaker, former Mayor Charles E. Tower master of ceremonies. Postmaster James Gillies opened the building for public tours. (For context, the "Marin Tower" of the Golden Gate Bridge was being constructed at this time. Thomas Maxwell of Napa County served as a Director.)

Original Materials:

- St. Genevieve Golden Vein Marble wainscot with marble borders and base (lobby)
- Terrazzo floor "of artistic design" (lobby)
- Woodwork in quartered oak, walnut and maple (lobby)
- Five "very beautiful" lighting fixtures (lobby)
- Maple block floor over concrete (work room and mail handling space)
- Cast-iron frame, doors, and entablature above doors
- Bronze letters, 16 inches high (exterior)
- All exterior brick Roman Face, smooth texture, buff, American bond
- Architectural terra cotta in buff color, smooth texture. Match brick for color and texture. May have originated from Gladding, McBean & Co, in Lincoln, CA. gladdingmcbean.com/our-history Reed & Corlett did use Gladding, McBean terra cotta for the Financial Center Building in Oakland (1929)
- California granite uniformly light colored (exterior stairs)
- Cast iron lamps, Standard Type V3, furnished by US Government (exterior)

Original Description:

- One story and basement fireproof structure of brick, terra cotta, trim, granite base and steps, reinforced concrete construction to the first-floor level, steel frame, and concrete roof. Entirely fireproof. Exterior walls carry their own weight only.
- Building approximately 121 feet long and 67 feet wide, set back about 13 feet from Second Street; 40 feet of rear yard for mail trucks, rural carrier's cars
- 1500-square foot lobby

*Celebrating 50 Years of Historic Preservation, Public Education, and Advocacy
Founded 1974*



NAPA COUNTY LANDMARKS

Napa County Landmarks

P.O. Box 267

Napa, CA 94559-0267

707-231-8261

napacountylandmarks.org

info@napacountylandmarks.org

- 3600-square foot mail distribution and handling room illuminated by large windows on the four sides of the building and six skylights.
- Basement accommodations for the inspector, boiler and fuel rooms, storage rooms and janitor for the post office. Concrete waterproof floor 12 inches thick.
- Other federal offices included 1200 square feet for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 500 square feet for the U.S. Civil Service Commission, and 150 square feet for the Internal Revenue Department

About the Architects:

Reed and Corlett was a partnership between prominent architects [William G. Corlett](#) and [Walter Reed](#). The team is known for designing such buildings as [Chabot Elementary School](#) (1926), the Modern [Safeway Stores](#) Office & Warehouse Building on International Boulevard (1927), the [Financial Center Building](#) (1928), the 18-story tower constructed for the [Oakland Bank of Savings](#) (1922) and the [Asian Resource Center](#) (formerly the Hebron Electrical Co.) on Harrison Street (1922). (Oakland) The firm received \$5760 compensation for the design.

William Greenfield "Will G." Corlett (1887-1954) Corlett was born in Napa, the son of William Henry Corlett, a prominent local architect. He practiced in Oakland after graduating from the University of California Berkeley.

W.H. Corlett (1856-1937) designed the Alexandria Hotel and Annex, the Migliavacca House, the Noyes Mansion, the St. Helena Carnegie Library, and the Napa County Courthouse Plaza, all in Napa. He worked as supervising architect on the Napa Post Office Project.

Walter Dickson Reed (1878-1933). Born in Alameda, graduated from MIT in architecture.

The firm received \$5760 compensation for the design.

(*St. Helena Star*, Jan. 8, 1932)