

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 132

Historic Name: Alpha Public Buildings Historic Complex ✓

Common Name: same

Location: 404 Main Street, Village of Alpha, MI ✓

Date of Construction: 1914

Architect: unknown

Builder: unknown

Classification:

Category: district

Ownership: public -- Mastodon Township

101 James Road

Crystal Falls, MI 49920

Public Acquisition: N/A

Status: occupied, unoccupied

Accessible: yes: restricted

Present Use: government, vacant educational, industrial

Description:

Condition: good

Altered

Original site

The Alpha Public Buildings Complex, located in a visually prominent position in the center of the Village of Alpha, consists of the village's major civic structures -- the Village Hall, public school, and water tower -- located on a roughly parallelogram-shaped block. The complex, approximately four and one-half acres in size, is surrounded by natural features and land developed for divergent uses. To the north is open countryside and to the east is a small park, while to the west is a residential area and to the south is Alpha's central business district. The complex contains six governmental and educational structures: the Alpha Village Hall, the village water tower and a small shed, and the George F. Porter Public School with two accompanying garages.

The complex displays the physical characteristics of an unusually well planned mining town. It rests on a slight hill immediately north of the village circle, from which Alpha's residential streets radiate in spoke-like fashion to the east, south, and west. The central geographical position of the complex in the village thus reflects its importance as Alpha's center of civic affairs.

The three main civic structures within the complex were constructed in 1914, at the height of Alpha's period of growth, and all have later additions which are compatible with the original buildings. The village hall is a simple, rectangular, one-story, gable-roof, clapboard-clad structure, with a three-bay front porch, and a leaded wheel window in the gable end; a one-story, gable-roof rear addition that houses fire-fighting equipment copies the dimensions and clapboard siding of the front of the building. The steel water tank of the village water tower was installed in 1931 to replace the original, smaller wooden tank; however, the existing frame, clapboard-clad shaft, ten feet square and approximately forty-five feet high, still encloses the water stand pipe. A small gable-roof storage shed, also with clapboard siding, stands

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north of the water tower. The George F. Porter School, the largest building in the complex, is a two-story, hip-roof, rectangular, brick Classical Revival structure. Twin front entranceways, with sandstone porches featuring paired Tuscan columns and pressed tin ceilings, are vertically aligned with two, hip-roof, bracketed dormers and twin octagonal cupolas topped by tent roofs with flared eaves. (Other decorative elements include a large, bracketed wooden cornice and three sandstone belt courses.) A one-story, brick, east wing dating to 1920 houses five large classrooms and a conference room, while the brick west wing, added in 1929, contains a gymnasium. To the northeast of the school stands a brick, hip-roof, two-car garage and a four-bay, one-story, brick bus garage built circa 1930. All of the buildings in the Alpha Public Buildings Complex are in good condition; there are no intrusive structures in the complex.

Significance:

Period: 1900-

Areas of Significance: architecture, community planning, education, politics/government

National Register Selection Criteria: A, C

The Alpha Public Buildings Complex is significant for containing all of the civic buildings in the village of Alpha, erected simultaneously in 1914 at the height of Alpha's period of growth. The well-preserved structures in the complex, which typify early twentieth-century public buildings in the Upper Peninsula, are clustered together on a visually prominent block in the center of this exceptionally well-planned mining community; this is the only such civic center complex of its kind in Iron County.

The Alpha Public Buildings Complex began in 1914 when the Nevada Land Company, chief developer of the settlement of Alpha, donated an entire village block, ideally located just north of the village circle, to the recently incorporated Village of Alpha and Mastodon Township School District Number Two for the erection of civic structures, thereby further promoting the development of the community. Village taxes were levied for the installation of a water system and water tower by the Lane Bowler Company and for the construction of the village hall. While taxes were being levied for these municipal projects, George F. Porter of Chicago, a major shareholder of the Judson Mining Company, a Pickands-Mather Company subsidiary, donated funds for the large Classical Revival school which bears his name. These three main structures in the Alpha Public Buildings Complex were completed in 1914, at the peak of Alpha's period of growth.

The fact that Alpha continued to prosper until the 1930s (when the mines closed) is well illustrated by the several additions made to the civic buildings after 1914. In the 1920s the Porter School was expanded twice to meet increasing enrollment needs: a one-story east wing housing classrooms was added in 1920 and, in 1929, a gymnasium was added on the west end of the school building. A bus garage was erected northeast of the school circa 1930. The original wooden water tower tank was replaced with a larger steel tank in 1931, resulting in an interesting example of adaptive use of the existing tower shaft: the new tank rests on top of, with its steel supports standing outside of, the old wooden shaft.

With the closing of the mines, growth virtually halted in Alpha. The George F. Porter School, a victim of school consolidation, is no longer in use. However, the village has retained enough population so that its civic structures have been maintained through the years. Neither the various additions to these structures, nor the construction of outbuildings disrupt the historic character of the Alpha Public Buildings Complex as a fine collection of early twentieth-century municipal and educational buildings, the only such collection of this kind in Iron County.

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Geographical Data:

Acreage: Four and one-half acres

Quadrangle name: Fortune Lakes

Quadrangle scale: 1:24000

UTM Reference: 16 393410 5099920

Verbal boundary description and justification:

Entire block bounded by Fifth Street on north, East Center Street on southeast, Main Street on south, and Seventh Avenue on west. This is the entire tract on which the complex stands.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
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NOV 15 1983

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 1 of 8

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Ref #s

Name Iron County Multiple Resource Area
State MICHIGAN

Cover encl 12/22/83

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

- 83003660 1. Amasa Historic Business District
Entered in the National Register
Keeper for Melvyn Byers 12/22/83
Attest _____
- 83003659 2. Alpha Public Buildings Historic Complex (Dist.)
Entered in the National Register
Keeper for Melvyn Byers 12/22/83
Attest _____
- 83003667 3. Byers, Isaac W., House
Entered in the National Register
Keeper for Melvyn Byers 12/22/83
Attest _____
- 83003662 4. Beechwood Store
Entered in the National Register
Keeper for Melvyn Byers 12/22/83
Attest _____
- 83003665 5. Bowers, Joseph, House
Entered in the National Register
Keeper for Melvyn Byers 12/22/83
Attest _____
- 83003664 6. Bethany Lutheran Church
Substantive Review
Keeper Boyd Grosvenor - 12/22/83
Attest _____
- 50 7. Camp Gibbs Historic District
Substantive Review
Keeper Return R S
Attest _____
- 83003671 8. Central School
Substantive Review
Keeper Return R S
Attest _____
- 83003672 9. Caspian Mine Headframe
Entered in the National Register
Keeper for Melvyn Byers 12/22/83
Attest _____
- 83003671 10. Caspian Community Center
Entered in the National Register
Keeper for Melvyn Byers 12/22/83
Attest _____

REF # 83003659

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Alpha Public Buildings Historic Complex (Dist)
(Iron County MRA)
Iron County
MIC HIG A N

NOV 15 1983

Working No. _____
Fed. Reg. Date: 2-5-85
Date Due: 12/15/83 12/30/83
Action: ACCEPT 12/22/83
 RETURN _____
 REJECT _____
Federal Agency: _____

Entered in the
National Register

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review: sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____
Reviewer _____
Discipline _____
Date _____
_____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
_____ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category Ownership Status Present Use
Public Acquisition Accessible

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

Condition excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed unaltered altered original site moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph completeness clarity variations/integrity
- selection

8. Significance

Period _____ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- applicable criteria
- justification of areas checked
- relating significance to the resource
- context
- relationship of integrity to significance
- justification of exception
- other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national ____ state ____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

title _____ date _____

13. Other

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet

cr
 alter
 dates
 bound



Alpha Public Buildings Historic Complex
Alpha, Iron County, Michigan
George F. Porter School
401 Main Street
Photo: Steven Karpiak
Date: November, 1979
Neg.: Michigan History Division
View: Camera facing NW
Photo: #128 of 158



Alpha Public Buildings Complex
(George F. Porter Public School, 402 Main St)
Alpha, Iron County, Michigan
Photo: Steven Karpiak
Date: November 1979
Neg: Michigan History Division
View: Camera facing SW
Photo: #129 of 158



VILLAGE HALL

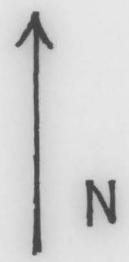
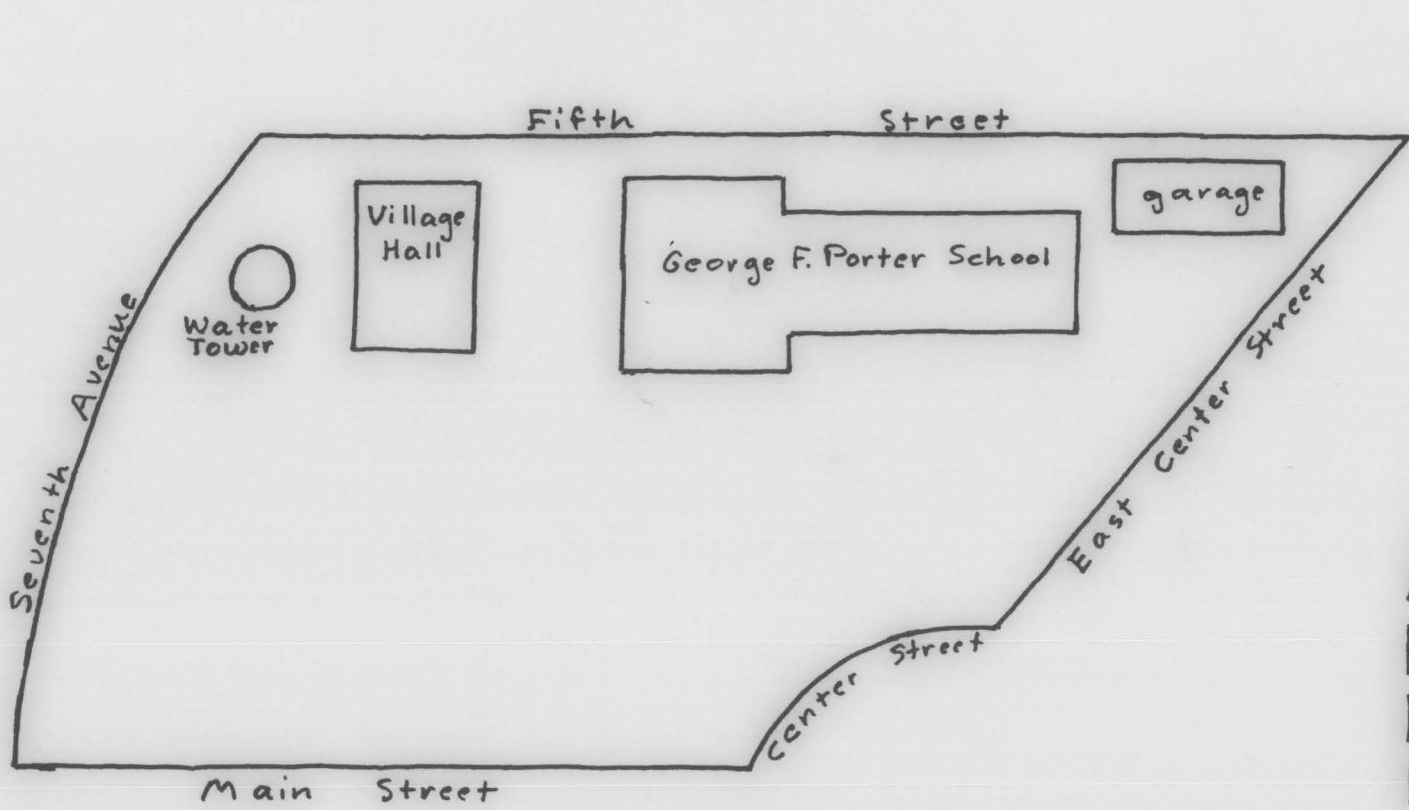
Alpha Public Buildings Complex (Alpha Village
Hall, 404 Main Street)
Alpha, Iron County, Michigan

Photo: Steven Karpiak
Date: November, 1979
Neg.: Michigan History Division
View: Camera facing NW
Photo ~~#83 of 124~~ 130 of 158



Alpha Public Buildings Complex
(Alpha Village Water Tower, 404 Main Street)
Alpha, Iron County, Michigan

Photo: Steven Karpiak
Date: November, 1979
Neg.: Michigan History Division
View: Camera facing NW
Photo #~~85~~ of 124 **131 of 158**



ALPHA PUBLIC BUILDINGS HISTORIC COMPLEX

ALPHA
IRON CO.
MI

All buildings are
contributing

Please refer to the map in the
Multiple Property Cover Sheet
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000326