

Battery Building Recalls Days of the Intrepid Crew of the Tiger

By GEORGE HORNE

The old Romanesque Revival building at 45 Broadway is a long way from water nowadays, but it is the acknowledged site of the first construction of a ship by Europeans in this country.

Federal shipping agencies moved out of the 83-year-old building last week and settled in the new Federal Building at 26 Federal Plaza at the lower end of Foley Square.

They left behind a long and romantic association with the spot where Capt. Adriaen Block and his stranded crew of the Dutch ship Tiger set up temporary headquarters in 1613.

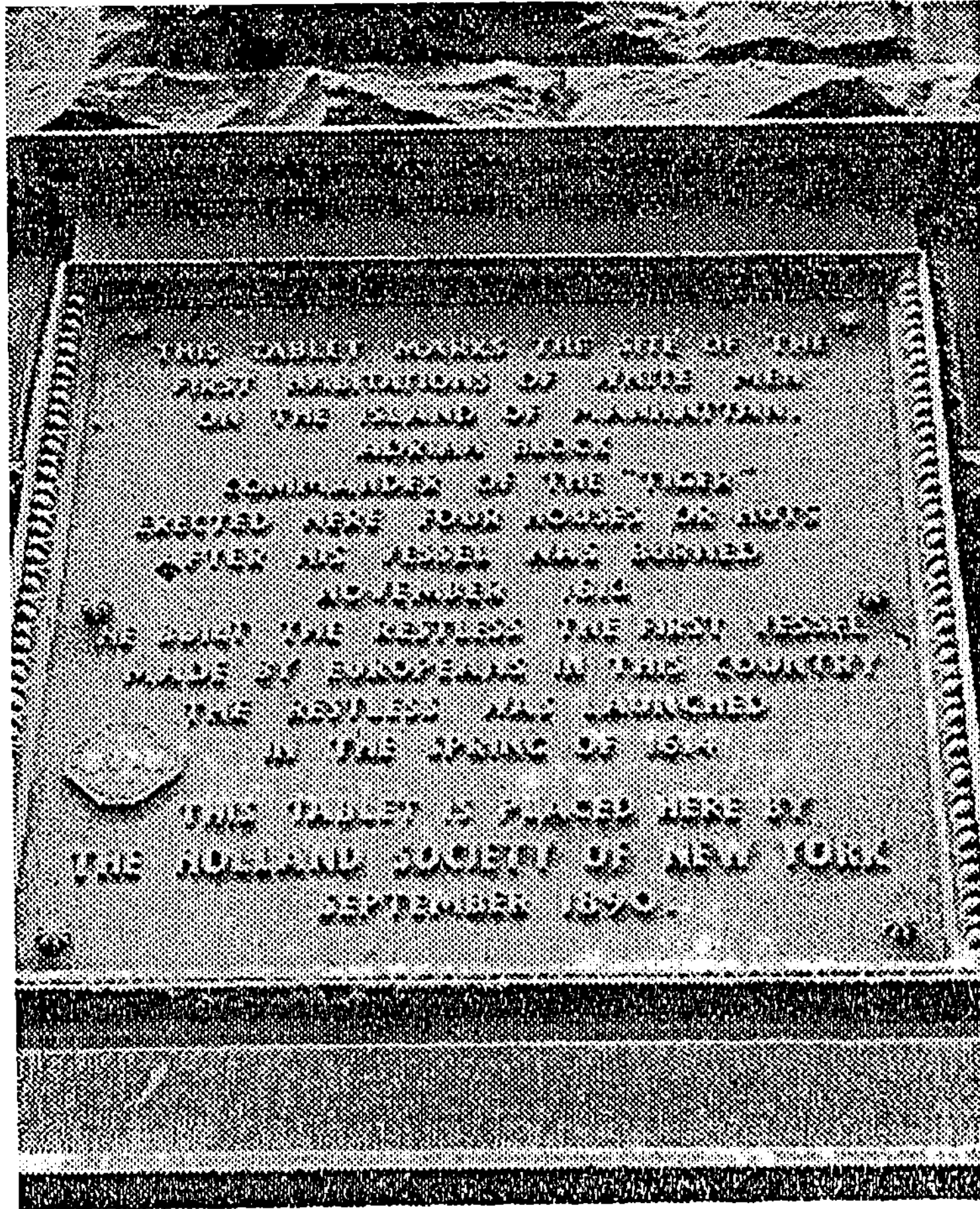
Its beauty somewhat lessened by window air-conditioners sticking out like warts on the facade, 45 Broadway is nevertheless one of the oldest and most colorful Federal office structures. And it will remain in use for many Federal agencies.

A Break for History

Before he led his staff on the trek northward to the 37th floor of the new office structure Capt. Thomas A. King, Atlantic Coast director of the Maritime Administration, held an afternoon coffee break in his mahogany-paneled office on the eighth floor and handed out a report on the site's historic significance.

"Where we stand was once the lower end of Manhattan Island, but the island has grown through landfill, and the waters of the bay are now way down at the Battery Seawall," Captain King said.

The material he distributed recalled how the crew of the Tiger, undaunted when their ship burned in the bay, put up four huts on the site and



The New York Times
A plaque placed on the building at 45 Broadway in 1890 by the Holland Society recalls building of ship on the site.

started construction of a ship to take them home.

Captain Block named his new 18-ton ship the Restless and before he returned to Holland he sailed her through what is now Long Island Sound, giving his name to today's Block Island, lying in the Atlantic off Montauk and the coast of Rhode Island, of which the island is a part.

A tablet placed on the

front of the building by the Holland Society of New York, in 1890 calls the site the first place inhabited by white men on the island. It also tells the story of the Tiger and the Restless.

The building was constructed by Spencer Aldrich in 1886 from plans of the architectural firm, Young and Cable. It was set between Morris Street and Exchange

Place, and running through from Broadway to Trinity Place, and it was a showplace in its time, with an unbroken view of the harbor and the East and Hudson Rivers, and a ninth-floor penthouse.

The entrance of Aldrich Court, as the building was known, led from Broadway into a lofty, marble-walled lobby, a part of the grandeur of which the builders were proud. A part of the showpiece character were the four hydraulic elevators. They are still in use, although no longer hydraulically powered.

Some Agencies to Stay

In 1906 Hamburg-American Line took over the building and remodeled it, installing costly mahogany paneling throughout the richly appointed offices. In the tiled floor of the lobby the line wrote its motto: "Die Welt Ist Mein Feld."

But war was brewing, and the world did not long remain its field. In 1917, the United States Government seized a number of German-flag liners in this port, including the first real superliner, the huge Leviathan.

The building at 45 Broadway was taken over also. It has since been the home of a succession of Federal shipping agencies, beginning with the old United States Shipping Board.

Other governmental agencies have also been quartered in the building and some will remain, such as divisional offices or bureaus of the Departments of Commerce, State, Labor, Defense, Health, Education and Welfare and Treasury.

A spokesman for the General Services Administration which holds and manages Government real estate, said

that the Federal Maritime Commission, an independent regulatory agency, would move out shortly, but that the others would remain.

One private outfit, the quasi-official American Merchant Marine Library Association, still holds on in the musty basement, packing and distributing boxes of books for merchant seamen. But it plans to move in the spring.

Guests at Captain King's farewell coffee party included two former Atlantic Coast directors, Capt. Granville Conway, president of Cosmopolitan Shipping Company, who headed the office from 1942 to 1945, and Capt. Hewlett R. Bishop, executive director of the National Cargo Bureau, Inc., who held the post up to 1964.

"You can consider this a sort of a wake," said Captain King.

"I can't," replied a young secretary. "We aren't drinking whisky."

Captain Is a First

The director asked for a show of hands on who first entered the building. Captain Conway was the earliest, and won a framed picture of the building where he slept many a night during the war years when the Maritime Commission and the War Shipping Administration were worrying about convoys and about such problems as sending ready-to-fly airplanes on tanker decks, for the Middle East.

Both former directors said they were, in a sense, relieved that the move was at last taking place. They had been urged by Federal Custodians frequently to get ready to move because a new Federal building was about to be built.