

STATE THEATRE HISTORY

Grand Opening 1930

The new State Theatre opened to an overflow crowd on December 26, 1930, showing the film "Sunny" with Marilyn Miller. The theater featured an orchestra and balcony with 1,350 seats. It was equipped with the latest Western Electric sound and projection equipment.



Grand Reopening 1937

After several months of extensive alterations, including air conditioning, the theater celebrated a Grand Reopening featuring a new marquee and a vertical "State" sign.



The evolution of a community icon



1930

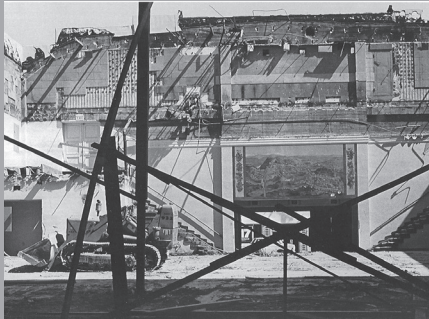


2020

Remodel

1974

The truss supporting the balcony cracked, closing the theater for years. During an extensive remodel, the balcony and marquee were removed.



Boutique Theater 1980s

The old theater was divided into two cinemas, the ceiling was lowered, new seats were installed, heating and A/C were updated. The rear of the auditorium was converted to a mall with offices on two levels.

Creation of APPAC 1990s

Founders Dorothy Viera and Esther Stanton solicited community backing to create a performing arts center in the historic State Theatre. The organization was granted non-profit status as the Auburn Placer Performing Arts Center (APPAC) in 2001. The name was changed to the Auburn State Theatre in 2019.

Purchase of Theater 2006

APPAC initiated an appraisal of the building, negotiated an agreement with the Lardner family, former owners of the property, and received a loan from a local investor group to purchase the theater.

THE MURAL

Model for the Mural: The lithograph below (ca. 1890) shows a birds-eye view of Auburn and the surrounding countryside. It was supplied by Feodor

Closs, a German immigrant who is considered the pioneer of the olive industry in Placer County. He owned a vast olive orchard in the area of Nevada Street and Mt. Vernon Road and operated an olive mill in the 1880s. A copy of the lithograph hangs in the foyer of the Auburn City Hall. The middle portion of the lithograph was used in creating the mural at the State Theatre. Before a 1970s remodel, the wall and mural were inside the theater.



Auburn artist designed artwork

From 1925 to 1934, Harry DeGroat ran a sign shop in Auburn. He was a friend of Tom Whittemore, the manager of the State Theatre during that time.

Whittemore used DeGroat to illustrate some of the upcoming films and to produce the mural for the theater.

Family members recall DeGroat painting the mural (which was inside the theater at the time), as well

as lying on his back painting the ceiling of the theater.

The photo shows De Groat at his sign shop in the 1930s.





IMAGES FROM THE PAST

TOP: Evon Basque works at the concession stand in the 1940s. LEFT: Jackie Cook served as usherette during the 1940s. BELOW: For 30 years the Auburn Lions Club provided free Christmas matinees for children 12 and under. Photo from 1950s.



Project Auburn 2008

Project Auburn, under the Auburn Rotary Club and local contractors, provided a new facade replicating the 1937 one. With the help of generous donations from the Auburn community, a new "State" tower and marquee were constructed.



Arts Venue Opening 2009

One of two small movie theaters, created from the original orchestra section, was made into a 130-seat performing arts venue and opened with a performance by the Mitgards.

Tear Down The Wall 2013

A new \$200,000 roof was installed and a fund-raising campaign "Tear Down The Wall And Bring Up The Arts" was launched. Once the wall was removed, a new HVAC system was installed. A large part of the original stage had to be reconstructed, and the space below the stage was reconfigured and rebuilt for use as a green room.



Memories



**Bob Riley
1930s**

"I worked 3 years at the theater during high school and college. My main job was changing the marquee letters using a tall ladder. The manager would

figure what to say. I had to figure out the spacing. On weekends were the featured shows with big name stars. During the week were the B movies."



**Doris Viera
1930s**

"During the Depression, Wednesday night was Bank Night with a drawing for \$50, enough to feed a family for a month at the time. Going to the movies

was our recreation during the Crash, I remember there were placards of coming attractions on either side of the entrance."



**Jackie Cook
1940s**

"The movies were not rated back then. They didn't have to be. I worked as an usherette and also at the candy counter during intermission. People could smoke

upstairs in the balcony. Saturday afternoon matinees were popular with the serials. I used to go to Honey's Fountain in the front of the theater after movies for coke and ice cream."



**Florence Ladeck
1940s**

"I worked during high school and after graduation as an usher inside the theater, behind the candy counter, and at the ticket booth. As an usher, my

main responsibility was to escort patrons to their seats, keep the little ones quiet, check tickets for the loges, and remind youngsters to remove their feet from the seat in front of them."



**Earl Frye
1950s**

"I worked at the theater during high school, as ticket taker, usher, and marquee sign changer. I remember tickets being six cents as a kid. Then, prices went up by pennies

each year until tickets hit 20 cents. I also changed the posters for upcoming movies in the display cases."



**Jenny Jansen
1950s**

"I was a cashier in the ticket booth out front. A quick change artist tricked me out of \$20 once. The manager offered not to charge me, but I insisted and

paid it back over time. Back then for 25 cents you could get a theater ticket, drink, and popcorn."

AUBURN



THEATRE

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**Marilyn Williams
1950s**

"I ushered patrons to their seats inside the darkened theater using a flashlight. I got paid 65 cents an hour and made 13 dollars a week. I was so excited to

get that first paycheck that I rushed out and bought a record player. Popcorn was 10 cents a bag and candy bars cost a nickel. We used a dressing room located downstairs in back behind the stage to change into our uniforms."

Did You Know?

• The lobby originally featured six large display windows for upcoming movies.

• Three sets of double doors entered from the outside into the lobby (doors were under where the mural is today).

• The current sloped lobby floor was part of the theater's original orchestra section which extended from the stage to the middle of today's Marquee Room.

• The stairways adjacent to the Marquee Room and Box Office, which lead to the second floor, once served as the stairs to the theater's balcony.

• The current red velvet seats came from Grauman's Chinese Theater in Los Angeles in 2014.

• The theater's piano, donated by Barbara Machado is a Steinway Grand made in Hamburg Germany.