



Oroville State Theatre

Oroville, CA, USA



Project Information

Project category:
Commercial

Year of construction:
2020

Year of MAPEI involvement:
2020

Architect:
Timothy Pflueger

MAPEI coordinator:
Rob Dyer

Project owner:
Oroville State Theatre

MAPEI distributor:
Spec-West

General contractor:
Pullman Construction

Project manager:
Nancy Weston

Photographer:
Rob Dyer

Project size:
2,000 sq. ft. (186 m²)



Project Overview

One of California's more famed theaters, the Oroville State Theatre was built in 1928 utilizing pour-in-place construction. The building's facade had worn away in places over the years and corroding steel was being exposed. The theater's owner and contractor knew that they needed a solution that was not just a temporary measure, but also a permanent fix. The contractor had worked with MAPEI before and knew just who to call for a system solution.



Products Used

Elastocolor® Coat
(in custom color)

Elastocolor Primer WB

Mapefer™ 1K

Mapeflex™ EMC-1

Planitop® XS



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MAPEI helps historic theater return to limelight

The Oroville State Theatre in Oroville, California, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. And, if you were given to believe in ghosts, it would be easy to believe that this place is surely haunted — if not by one or two of the many actors and actresses who have graced her silver screens, then by the theater’s own dramatic past. After all, her steel bones were exposed for all to see, with rust stains bleeding down the ornate concrete facade.

Designed by famed California Art Deco architect Timothy Pflueger and built by T&D Jr. Enterprises on the tail end of the roaring ‘20s, the Oroville State Theatre sprang to life in a charmed time when movies reigned supreme and California fed the world — both figuratively and literally.

The area was rich in agriculture; in fact, it was the agricultural industry that supported Oroville through the early days of the Great Depression when nearby communities did not fare as well. That richness was reflected in the nearly-1,600-seat Oroville State Theatre, which even boasted a Wurlitzer pipe organ. Unfortunately, the economic downturn of the Great Depression hit the area all too soon.

The theater was sold to United Artists (UA); the company “modernized” the interior by adding a wall to divide the auditorium into two 600-seat spaces to show more films. UA also, unfortunately, allowed both the interior and the exterior to lose the grandeur of the theater’s golden-era

past. By the time UA sold the theater to the City of Oroville in 1983, it was a ghost of its former self.

It was not until 2014 that the Oroville City Council stepped in and voted to allow the State Theater Arts Guild (STAGE), a non-profit organization, to operate and manage the theater as an all-volunteer venue.

STAGE knew that the Oroville Stage Theatre deserved to be returned to the showplace of its glory days. Thus, the organization embarked on a community effort to restore the theater by beginning an initiative called “One Pipe at a Time” — so named to pay homage to the beloved Wurlitzer organ that was reinstalled and once again plays out over the auditorium on special occasions.

(Side note: The organ was in storage near the Oroville dam and was reinstalled after the dam’s spillway was repaired, thanks to another successful MAPEI intervention. See the “Oroville Dam” case study at <https://www.mapei.com/us/en-us/projects/project-detail/oroville-dam> for details on that project.)

To restore the theater’s exterior, STAGE contacted Pullman Construction — Pullman, in turn, reached out to MAPEI.

MAPEI on the job

“It was one of those calls you love to get,” said Rob Dyer, MAPEI’s Western Regional Sales Manager and the company’s representative on this



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project. “Not only was it an interesting project on a well-known building in the local area, but the GC knew our products and knew that we were the right fit to restore this important structure.”

A specification was not needed — MAPEI had the best system solution in hand. Dyer, along with MAPEI’s Northern California Concrete Restoration Specialist, Lemay Mitchell, produced and implemented a MAPEI system solution to repair and protect the theater. In theater terms, it is Mitchell who gets the “director’s credit” due to training the installers to ensure the proper placement of products — from the beginning to the end of the “production.”

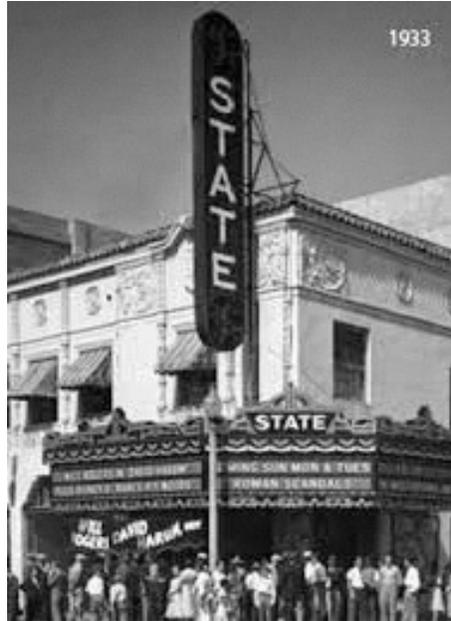
“A four-man crew handled this project,” Dyer explained. First, the exposed and corroded steel rebar was cleaned using a rotary hammer and the surrounding concrete was profiled to a minimum concrete surface profile (CSP) of #5 (medium-to-heavyshotblasting). Then, the rebar was coated with **Mapofer 1K** corrosion-inhibiting coating.

Cracks were sealed with **Mapeflex EMC-1** packing compound. **Planitop XS** repair mortar was then trowel-applied to the surface of the facade; the mortar filled in voids, repaired damage and helped to recreate decorative elements that had been lost to time and wear.

“We had sent a paint chip from the facade to our lab,” Dyer continued. “They matched the historic color exactly — creating a shade of **Elastocolor Coat** that is a perfect shade and tone twin to the Oroville State Theatre.”

Before **Elastocolor Coat** waterproof coating could be spray-applied, however, the crew had to first apply **Elastocolor Primer WB** to the substrate. Once the surface was primed, the theater was given a fresh coat of custom-colored **Elastocolor Coat**.

“In all, it was 2,000 square feet [186 m²] of vertical concrete restoration, corrosion-inhibitor application, concrete repair, crack repair, as well as the application of elastomeric coating,” Dyer said. “We started in June and we finished in August. This was a quick restoration.”



With her exterior restored to its former glory, the Oroville State Theatre now provides us with a glimpse of the past — and an invitation to step inside history. Who knows? Maybe she also offers the chance to walk among a few ghosts.

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