

Alician Court Theatre

510 N. Harbor Boulevard

1924

Italianate

**Status: Local Landmark;
Listed on the National Register**



Constructed by prominent local businessman C. Stanley Chapman (the son of Fullerton's first mayor, Charles C. Chapman), this building was designed as a combination vaudeville/silent movie house flanked by a one-story retail wing and a two-story café. The original lines of this building are now obscured by the many later renovations and additions, including the subsequent construction of the building at the northeast corner of Harbor Boulevard and Chapman Avenue.

The brick and concrete building was designed by the notable theater architects, Meyer and Holler, Inc., an influential firm noted for its opulent commercial and theatrical structures, one being the Grumman Chinese Theater in Hollywood. Central to the design is the recessed entry courtyard, which provided the theatre with a dramatic approach of forced perspective as well as a space that could be exotically decorated to transpose people to another world. Various features of the Italian Renaissance-inspired design can be seen with relief decoration above the courtyard space.

Other significant features associated with this 900-seat theatre include the six painted canvas murals applied to the inside walls of the theatre (subsequently painted over) by Anthony B. Heinsbergen, the elaborate stage curtain and panels of artwork in the foyer and on the ceiling by well-known muralist John G. Beckman, and the "Fox Fullerton" roof top billboard sign, a landmark in its own right.

The facility was named Alician Court Theatre, in honor of Alice, C. S. Chapman's wife, but as ownership changed over the years so did the theatre's name. The movie house operated as the Fox Fullerton Theatre starting in 1930, until its closure in 1987.

The preservation and reuse of the theatre started in 2002, when over 20,000 people signed a petition requesting the city to take measures to save the building from demolition. Ultimately, with the city's Redevelopment Agency's help, ownership of the property was given to the Fullerton Historic Theatre Foundation, a non-profit organization, whose goal is to preserve and restore the building for a future use.

Since 2011, the Foundation has used volunteer help and donations, including \$2.3 million in grants from the California Cultural and Historical Endowment (CCHE), to complete a partial restoration of the building. However, much more still needs to be done; besides additional restoration work and an upgrade to the HVAC system, fire-life safety measures and new restrooms are required to allow the building to be occupied and used as a theatre once again.



Alician Court Theatre, 1926