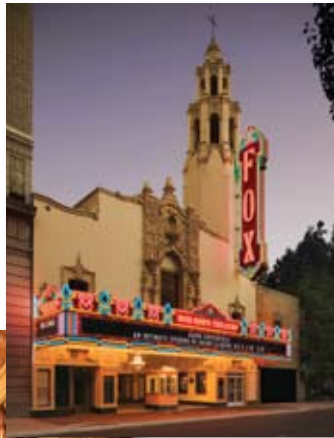




Durkan Plays the Supporting Role In the Restoration of

Bob Hope Theater



Hope has given hope to the revitalization of this city's downtown.

In fact, it is the Bob Hope Theater, a 50,000-square-foot former vaudeville house, that has led the way in Stockton's redevelopment and helped spawn growth of new area businesses, thanks to a recently completed \$8.5 million restoration of its own.

On the road to the architectural transformation of this 1930s landmark, one of 10 Southern California theaters originally designed by acclaimed architect Clifford Balch and his engineer partner Floyd Stanberry, there were some bumps and hurdles to overcome. But, the resulting 21st century 2,000-plus seat multi-purpose entertainment complex has earned a round of thunderous applause for the faithful preservation that has been achieved and the successful renewal to its earlier splendor.

Work on the interior of the theater was especially extensive according to Tom Bowe, a partner in Wenell Mattheis Bowe Architects (WMB), the local firm responsible for the project. Finding the appropriate trades people, resources and materials for the refurbishment was a major challenge. The team looked to local artists and specialized painters who painstakingly cleaned and restored the interior's decorative murals and the elaborate exterior marquee, as well as re-tiled the center rotunda mosaic.

Aside from the showpiece mosaic, more than half of the interior space required carpeting. Unwilling to compromise on the historical characteristics but needing to incorporate a high-performance product, the architects instinctively turned to Durkan, which has distinguished itself as the leading floor covering manufacturer in the hospitality category, uniquely excelling, as well, in historical reproductions. In fact, as part of The Mohawk Group family of contract carpet brands, Durkan also is a partner with The National Trust for Historic Preservation, America's leading nonprofit dedicated to saving the nation's diverse historic places, and plays an active role in The Mohawk Heritage initiative. As part of the initiative, individual brands of The Mohawk Group offer reproduction or custom-designed carpeting—print, tufted or woven constructions—developed for historic commercial properties such as theaters, hotels, state and federal buildings, university buildings and museums, which, in turn, generates revenue for the National Trust.

A fragment of the theater's original carpet was recovered from the basement, and the designers took this to Durkan's Design Studio to develop a distinct custom pattern that would be historically accurate but not compete with the elaborate details of the décor. It features medallion type icons embedded on a background of reddish browns and golds and intertwined with leaves.



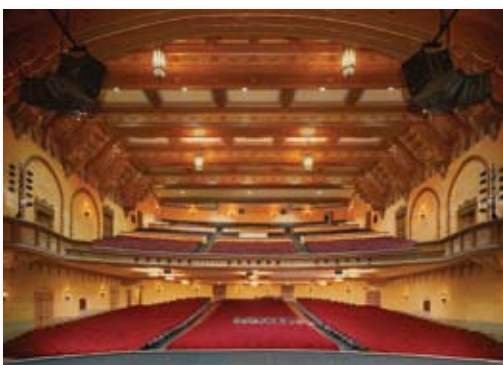
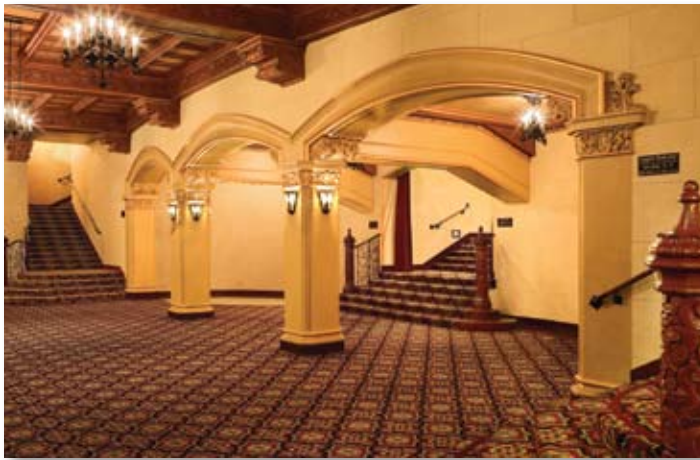
"It was amazing," Bowe commented. "The Durkan Design Studio captured every detail from the original pattern—complete with contrasts—in the first strike off."

The custom carpet can be found throughout the lobby and theater aisles, covering the curved staircase, in the mezzanine, foyer and entryway of each gallery. The Durkan team also created a variation of the central design for an accompanying border that was used in the theater's upper levels.

"In addition to fulfilling a basic floor need, the Durkan carpet has become a hallmark of the restoration," remarked Bowe. "We knew that only Durkan was capable of creating something as exceptional and functional for this project that will be in use for years to come."

The Bob Hope stands out in Stockton as symbolic bridge between past and present. The Spanish Colonial style that Balch and Stanberry created for the Fox California Theater, as it was known in its first incarnation, was elaborate, showy and typical of the period. It was the perfect setting for the headliners of the era, such as Al Jolson, the Marx Brothers and Duke Ellington. A \$40,000 Wurlitzer pipe organ was its crowning jewel. But the theater's history is not unlike its siblings' nationwide. With vaudeville's decline, the theaters either tried to reinvent themselves or were shuttered and abandoned. The Fox California found an afterlife with film, but the fare was second rate and by the 1970s it closed.

In 1979, the building was purchased by area residents Edward Merlo and Madeleine Lawton who blocked a proposal calling for it to be demolished and insured its longevity by listing it on the National Register of Historic Places. Over the next decade, the facility was used to host a series of rock and jazz concerts, but that, too, was shortlived. It was during this time that professed fans, Merlo and Lawton, transferred their ownership of the theater to the City of Stockton and sold it for a nominal fee. In the 1990s, the City of Stockton Redevelopment Agency was established to revitalize the downtown area and the Fox Theater was included among those buildings to be funded. Under the city's ownership, construction began on the theater in 2003 and was completed nearly two years later. The Redevelopment Agency funded the bulk of the project, with Congress, the State of California and private funds providing the remaining support.



The theater "officially" re-opened in September 2004, its stage the setting for live performances, such as touring Broadway productions, dance and concerts. It also rents out for films, private parties and events, with International Facilities Group overseeing the day-to-day operations. A nonprofit organization, Friends of the Fox, was formed to keep watch over the renewal and help contribute to other improvements. Its latest project is restoration of the Wurlitzer, which is estimated to be a \$200,000 endeavor. The building already has won acclaim, presented with an award from The California Preservation Foundation in 2005.

And, then, of course, there's the name. It's perfect in so many ways. It's a fitting tribute to a former vaudevillian and one of the country's most favorite entertainers. The name change came at the request of an area developer, a personal friend and former golfing partner of the late comedian, who asked the City Council to rename the facility in Hope's honor. It's powerfully suggestive and symbolic, inspiring great belief—hope—in the positive impact of change. And, it prompts a flood of memories—evoking the star's signature refrain plus Stockton's own historic-making moments on this site.

For more information about the Bob Hope Theater, visit www.bobhopetheater.com. For information about Durkan, visit www.durkan.com. For more information about the Mohawk Heritage Initiative and to browse hundreds of original pattern cards visit www.mohawkheritage.com.

