

***Excerpt RE: Flower Boxes from Letter to HRMC, June 14, 2006***

Minor revision April 3, 2007

The Davis Historical Resources Management Commission

Re: The proposed alterations of the Davis Varsity Theatre exterior

**II. Re: Application for COA to convert Varsity flower boxes to benches**

The application for COA (ex post facto) to convert the Varsity Theatre flower boxes (planter boxes) into benches is framed in the Agenda for the hearing June 19, 2006 as a matter of approving “colors and materials”.

Under CEQA, a project that will impact a significant feature of a historic structure constitutes an environmental impact. So the proper questions are

- (1) whether the flower boxes are a *significant feature of the exterior*, and if they are,
- (2) whether the proposed alterations will *significantly impact* them.

These questions are usually answered by an Initial Study; the level or choice of treatment under the SIS Guidelines is usually established at this point (Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration or Reconstruction.) The HRMC has already agreed to and stipulated the need for a study and restoration plan of the Varsity in the previous COA. The purpose of such a plan would be to guide decisions about alterations and repairs. (This study or plan has not been completed; however, the repeat of this recommendation in the Staff Report is a step in the right direction.)

If it is determined that the proposed alteration will constitute a significant impact, then the question is (3) whether the impact can be *mitigated to insignificance* in conformity with the Secretary of Interior’s Standards (SIS) (Guidelines, Weeks & Grimmer, 1995); that is, preparation of an EIR under CEQA is not necessary because the *impact of the proposed alteration will be mitigated to insignificance* by performing the alteration in a manner that conforms to the Secretary of Interior’s Standards (SIS).

The first two Standards for both Preservation & Rehabilitation that are to be applied to determine possible mitigation to *insignificance* stipulate that:

A property will be *used as it was historically* or given a new use that **requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships**.

The **historic character** of a property will be retained and preserved. *The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.*  
(emphasis added).

If such level of mitigation is not possible, a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA), which is the equivalent of a categorical exemption under CEQA, cannot be issued for this flower box

conversion project. [Note that the City of Davis Historic Resources Ordinance Re: Alteration of Landmarks requires conformance with SIS for a COA.]

The first two points (1 & 2, above – significance & impact) have not been established, and should have been before anything else. There has been no Initial Study or equivalent for this current Varsity exterior project. However, my study of Sept. 2005 presented to HRMC (*Varsity Theater .. Design Commentary..*) identified the flower boxes (“planter boxes”) as a significant feature of the exterior; the report has been attached to Staff Reports for subsequent hearings on this project.

Since September, further research, including identification of the Varsity architect as William Bernard David and other theatres by him led me to undertake revision and expansion of my September report to establish that the Varsity is **not merely locally important** (for its architecture, role in Davis’ commercial area, and in the local movie business scene), but **regionally (Northern California) significant** because of the *architect* who designed it, the *style of architecture* (both in theater and commercial architecture in general), and the *history of the movie theater business*. (The architect also is significant in Woodland). The expanded revision (in progress) places the Theatre and its architect in regional as well as local **context**. This widened significance of the Varsity Theatre heightens the care with which it should be treated.

A more detailed documentation of the assertion that the flower boxes are significant feature, with brief references to the regional & local context of the architect and architectural style is attached (excerpted from the revised report), which I contend establishes that the flower boxes are a significant feature of the Varsity exterior and of the building’s place in both regional and local commercial architecture. (The documentation includes the EIR consultant historical study section of another similar Wm. David theater in San Mateo, in which that theater’s flower boxes were listed as significant features.)

As stated in the Standards above, the ***preferred “re-use” of a historic resource is for its original use***, for the obvious reason that continuing or resuming the original use will entail *the least amount of impact on the structure through alteration*. Hence alterations that are not required for accessibility or safety issues are highly questionable in the case of use for the original purpose.

Both the Varsity theatre and its incorporated former Cooper office space are being used under the current project ***for their original uses: as a single screen movie theater & retail store***.

Under SIS, alteration of significant materials and features under all four levels of treatment (Preservation, Rehabilitation, Renovation, Reconstruction) should be ***AVOIDED***.

Even ADA or safety alterations of significant features should be carefully done, and the SIS guidelines give preference to confining those to other than the principal façade whenever feasible. (The ticket booth was deemed to be such a required or necessary alteration.)

Moreover, the exterior of the Varsity has been subject to *cumulative impacts already on its significant features*, including loss or removal, most recently and severely in the 1990’s remodeling, raising the question of cumulative effect of additional alterations. This also suggests that the proper treatment under SIS of the exterior should tend to preservation and conservation,

coupled with restoration and even reconstruction, rather than additional alterations beyond those strictly necessary.

So the question before the Commission is not what I like, or the tenants or any of the Commissioners would like, or what anyone thinks is a great idea, or thinks is beautiful or desirable. It is a question of what the original designer and builders intended and produced, and what was and is representative that period of significance, and of the Varsity Theatre as a specific record of that style and historical period as conveyed by its significant features, finishes, materials & spaces.

***Turning the flower boxes into benches would make them unrecognizable for their original purpose as flower boxes***, which the planter boxes served (i.e. had plants growing in them) for the entire life of the Varsity until March of this year [i.e. 2006]. This ***negates their contribution to conveying the original design and period of the theatre itself*** and its place in the local and regional commercial architectural style, clearly a significant impact that cannot be mitigated by colors or materials used to make the alteration.

Moreover, it would amount to *adding benches*, an incompatible, unhistorical feature, since research found no theater or commercial retail building of the period had benches, while many had flower boxes.

The color schemes of historic buildings, and particularly movie theaters, are not an incidental or trivial aspect of the design. Painting the proposed benches white will only compound the unhistoric bland look of the building caused by painting the façade white during the 1992 remodeling.

**The conversion of the flower boxes into benches is unnecessary for the use of the building, will severely impact and impair a significant feature of the design, render the original purpose of the feature unrecognizable, add a feature incompatible and foreign to the style and period, and add to the impact of the last remodeling. The impact cannot be reduced to insignificance by the proposed mitigation. The COA should therefore not be approved and the flower boxes should be restored.**

[material Re: signage etc. omitted]

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## **Flower Boxes in Commercial Architecture of the 1950's & 60's: Background & Context of Varsity Theatre**

No theatre or commercial building facade of the Davis Varsity Theatre architect William B. Davis, or of the period or style the theater represents that I have been able to find, incorporated benches, while several featured flower boxes.

### **Context: Flower Boxes in Davis**

In Davis, flower boxes on commercial buildings as a style followed the construction of the Varsity Theatre in 1950 as a trend setter, along with the use of brick or stone veneer on store fronts and commercial buildings.

Davis experienced a surge of new commercial building starting in 1950, and the next major project after the Varsity, the Hartz Ford Motor showroom at 430 G Street also featured flower boxes under the show windows. The novelty of the flower boxes was remarked in the Enterprise coverage of the “modern amenities” of both the Varsity and the Hartz building; the paper even reported that the Varsity planters were to be maintained by the local Barlow family’s El Adobe Garden Shop.

Subsequently, most new commercial building of this period in Davis up through the 60’s (e.g. the Foster Freeze and adjacent Pharmacy, the new Post Office 611 2<sup>nd</sup> St., Winger’s Department Store F St.) used stone veneer in a thin horizontal style.

Many also featured flower boxes that are still maintained: the B & L Bike Store (610 3<sup>rd</sup> St. which also used the less common Roman brick of the same type as the Varsity rather than stone), the 500 block on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, and the two story office & retail building at 604 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. The new Aronson’s Star Pharmacy at the northwest corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> & D streets had show windows that extended down to the sidewalk, but a 1953 photo shows the owners participating in the trend by installing wooden flower boxes on the sidewalk at the base of the front show windows. (It may be noted that many of the boxes were, like the Varsity, on the building’s north side, and contained shrubs rather than flowers.)

For about a decade, these flower boxes provided the only “greenery” in the Davis commercial blocks of downtown, since the city did not plant street trees there at the time. (In fact, the owner of the old Varsity building, when applying to the city to remodel it for a store, asked to remove a couple of existing trees on the grounds that they were a nuisance and inappropriate for a commercial area; the old theater building was eventually demolished and the present one new one was built.)

Interestingly, the flower box theme continues in current Davis architecture; for example, the new building complex that replaced the 1950’s Harz Motors building has “flower boxes” (raised planting beds) under the large ground floor windows of both the office building at 5<sup>th</sup> & G and the retail section at 4<sup>th</sup> & G Streets. One restaurant on G Street

occupying a 1930's retail structure with large show windows has added flower boxes sitting on the sidewalk under the windows.

### **Varsity Theatre Design Background & Context**

The Varsity Theatre architect, William B. David (1905-1985), apprenticed in the 1930's with architect S. Charles Lee (1899-1990), who is credited with some 400 theatre projects, primarily in California, and is considered to be the pre-eminent Art Deco and Streamline Moderne period theatre architect in California, particularly in the latter style.

Lee approached architecture as a business, and following the 1948 Supreme Court decision that broke up the large motion picture studio monopolies and the subsequent decline and localization of ownership (with less money to spend on architecture, hence a trend to smaller, plainer theatres), Lee essentially retired from architecture and became a real estate developer until his death in 1990. The result was loss of much of his office's records as Lee saw no reason to keep them, making it impossible to determine David's exact tenure or work with Lee. (Photos and renderings hidden in an attic that did survive the Lee architecture office closure are housed in a special collection at UCLA.)

The Varsity designer, William B. David, similarly shifted from theatre architecture to other commercial developments such as shopping centers (e.g. the first autocentric shopping center in Woodland, 1957) at about the same time as Lee, and for the same reasons, and there is little record of David's office either, beyond a few renderings and photos in private hands and historical investigations undertaken in connection with theater restoration or demolition projects.

David was never licensed as an architect in California; he did apparently hold the now abolished certification of "registered building designer." Like many Streamline Moderne designers, he regarded commercial architecture as a form of industrial design, and named his San Francisco business accordingly: *William B. David Associates, Industrial Designers*. Throughout his life, it was David's custom because of his license status to have the plans for his projects signed by a registered engineer or architect employee of his office.

Prior to leaving Lee's office c. 1937-39, David had served as construction supervisor for many Lee projects in northern California and probably designed some of the theatres sometimes credited to Lee on the basis of concept renderings or surviving record fragments, or because Lee was the licensed architect who signed plans originating in his office.

In some of these cases, David was recognized as the actual designer in local press coverage, and authorship was asserted by David himself and the theatre's owners. (Woodland's State Theatre is an example. In fact, David himself was a part owner of the Woodland State until his death in 1985, and it is similar to a known design of his, the

Eureka Theatre in Eureka CA). David is also recognized as the customary construction supervisor and architectural designer for the northern California theatre chain Redwood Theatres, although he also worked for other chains, such as Blumenthal, for whom he designed the Sacramento Tower Theatre.

Thus the loss of records has made it difficult to determine how many of Lee's projects were not built according to his concept or design, or which might have been designed by David while a member of Lee's firm. In some cases a theatre was built in the same location at a later date with William David's office as the designer of record. In other cases, current attribution of design has apparently been based on the similarity of a theatre to Lee's style, since Lee is very well known, and David less so until the last year or so.

These facts and circumstances have made it difficult in some instances to clearly establish which of the two designed certain theatres. However, about 15 northern California theatres and one in Oregon are reliably attributed to David, with 3 or 4 more probably his.

Certainly David's style was greatly influenced by Lee, and the late 1940's theatre works of both designers reflect influences of trends in the theatre business culminating in the breakup of the studio monopolies: drive-up or drive through ticket booths (which may have been the inspiration for the shift from centralized booths to asymmetric placement of the booth, and experiments in asymmetry in the whole façade, even when a drive through function was not present), as well as a trend away from elaborate thematic or "atmospheric" designs and toward abstract geometric sculptural masses and spaces, more restrained neon, signage and decoration, in a style verging on Modern. Including one or more retail shops into an integrated theatre building design was also common to provide additional revenue to the owners.

A number of Lee's theatres and commercial buildings of this late Art Moderne period incorporated flower boxes, as well as stone veneer with thin horizontal textures. Possibly the architect or the clients came to feel a need for a "natural" touch was needed to counter the stark, even "brutal" Modern trend of shapes and materials in the late Streamline style.

The trend to include flower boxes or interior or exterior planting beds is also characteristic of other aspects of California Modern commercial architecture; they are seen in many examples of office & industrial buildings, and especially the many new restaurants with large expanses of glass. (See Hess 2004).

Between 1945 and 1947, William David, whose involvement in the Hollywood / Motion Picture was not confined to architecture - took a break from theatre design and returned to Hollywood to become a producer of "B movies" (nine in all).

His designs after returning to architectural practice in 1948 recognizably advance toward a Modern style, becoming more asymmetrical, rectangular and sculptural. Decoration was sparse and abstract. Then shortly after returning to San Francisco and his architecture

practice, like Lee, David stopped theatre design work and went into shopping centers and similar developments.

The Davis Varsity (1949-50) seems to have been his last theater design, and the San Mateo Palm Theatre in the preceding year the next to last. Both are similarly asymmetrical, sculptural, restrained in decoration and neon, and David's most Modern in style. Both used masonry veneer (thin fieldstone for the Palm, Roman brick for the Varsity), and both featured flower boxes.

Both are unquestionably attributed to William B. David by documentation, and thus represent not only the late Moderne / Modern trend of regional theatre architecture, but are David's most mature and last works. The Palm Theater was demolished in July 2005 to make way for a residential project. It's significance was recognized in the historical study and EIR, and lack of mitigation for its loss required a finding of "overriding considerations" for the demolition to go forward. The consultants' evaluation of the building's significant features included the flower boxes. (A page from the EIR is attached.)

The demolition of the Palm Theatre heightens the value of the Davis Varsity as representative of this late regional theater style, a major transition in the movie theater business, and as William B. David's latest remaining and most advanced work; all warranting careful conservation and restoration of its significant features.

It should also be noted that the surviving renderings of both Lee and David show that in the exterior design of theater buildings, including those that incorporated retail shops integrated into the façade design as is the case with the Varsity, signage of the shops as well as the theater's main title or "logo" signage was part of the architect's design, including the Art Deco or Art Moderne typefaces used. Retail shops of this era similarly incorporated signature or logo signage of characteristic lettering styles. (The Arden clothing stores were an example).

The absence of benches in commercial architecture of the period (including restaurants) is particularly easy to account for in theaters: after the 1948 breakup of the theatre monopolies, the major source of income for theatre owners increasingly became the concession stand sales (escalating from 20% to 80%) rather than from the ticket sales.

While in the '30's and '40s movie goers were allowed to sit through multiple showings with a single ticket purchase and stay to enjoy other luxurious amenities of the "palace", after the anti-trust breakup, the objective became to get customers into the theater to purchase lots of treats and drinks, see the movie, and leave so the cycle could be repeated with new customers. Lingering about was discouraged. For the same reason, later theaters, especially small town and neighborhood ones, were designed with larger foyers inside to accommodate big concession stands that provided the lion's share of revenues, and smaller exterior lobby space, in some cases eliminating the latter entirely.

## California Movie Theaters, late 1940's-1950 S Charles Lee, Architect

Photos: S Charles Lee Papers  
UCLA Library Special Collections



Garmar Theatre, Montebello, California S. Charles Lee, Architect 1949-50 (demolished)  
Brickvener ticket booth & planter boxes; asymmetric design with port cochure; patterned terrazzo



La Tijera Theatre, Los Angeles, California 1948-49  
S. Charles Lee, Architect  
Thin stone veneer and planter boxes; asymmetric facade with drive-through ticket booth; title pylon and double sided signboard



Helix Theatre, La Mesa, California 1947-48  
S. Charles Lee, Architect  
Thin stone veneer planter boxes under poster cases; asymmetric ally placed ticket booth



California Commercial Buildings, late 1940's-1950 S Charles Lee, Architect



Concept Rendering for Theatre, Visalia, California S. Charles Lee, Architect (late 1940's)  
Stone veneer, planter box (left); asymmetric ticket booth placement; "double vision signboard"



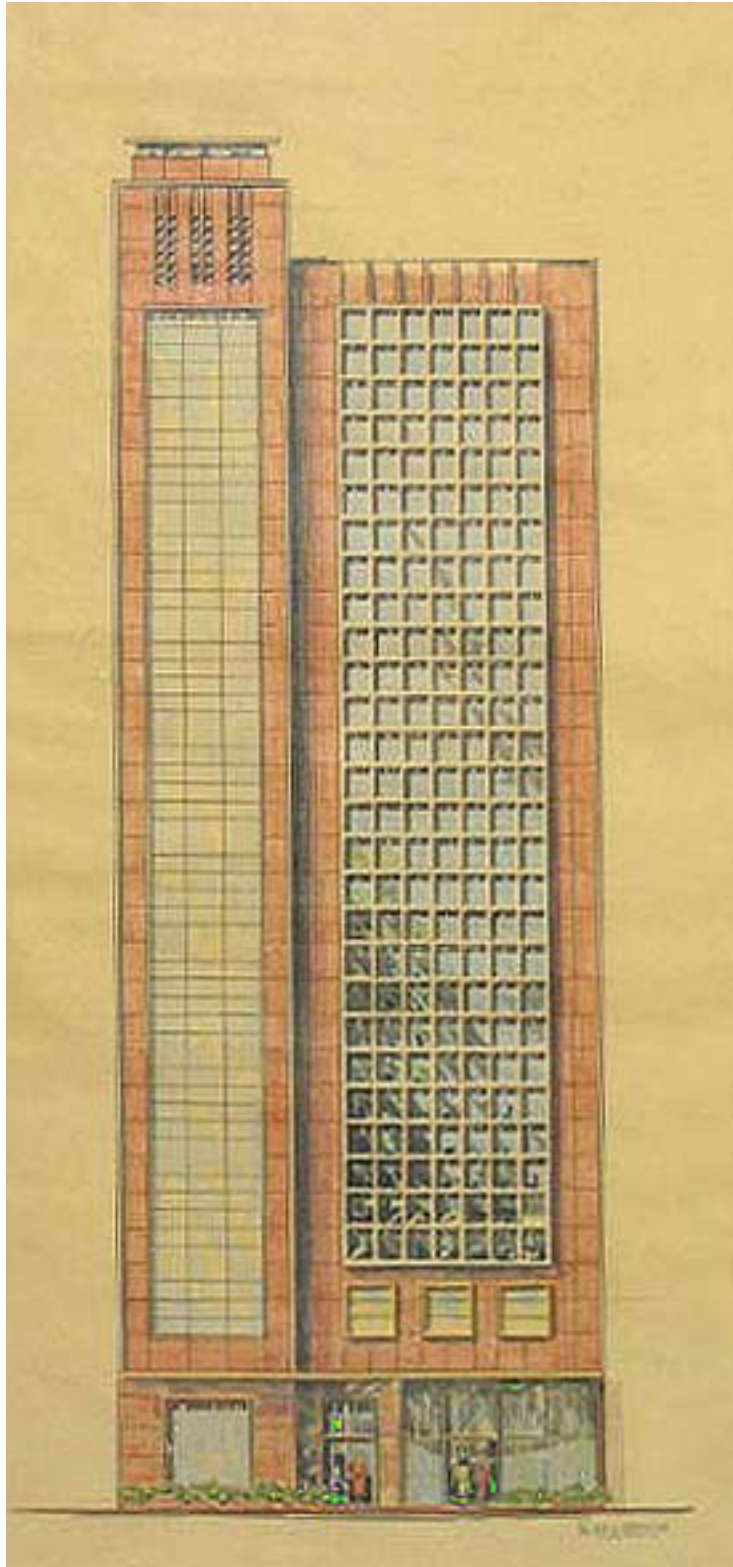
Arden Theatre, Lynwood California  
S. Charles Lee, Architect - 1942-47  
Thin stone veneer on ticket booth and facade,  
planter box under poster cases in port cochere



Rendering, Century Industrial Corporation Offices  
S. Charles Lee, Architect - 1950  
Planter boxes flanking the Entry

Concept Rendering of San Francisco Office Building  
William B. David, Architect

Photo of rendering courtesy David Repp



Note the flower boxes under the ground floor windows

Photos: Seth Gaines

Palm Theatre - San Mateo, California  
William. B. David, Architect  
1949 (demolished July 2005)



Note the similarities to the Davis Varsity Theatre: the asymmetric facade and ticket booth placement; use of thin horizontal stone veneer, **planter box of stone veneer** beside the ticket booth; tall title pylon and hanging signboard; transom windows over doors, simple sculptural shapes; restrained decoration and neon; "field of stars" canopy or 'marquee'; two color terrazzo floor.

The focus of the lobby is a concession stand backed by a decorative etched mirror. The north side of the lobby contains restrooms decorated with two-toned tile flooring. Original Art Moderne style backlit signs are located above the restrooms and exit doors in the lobby. The theater is accessed through pairs of quilted, padded leather doors on either side of the concession stand. The interior seating has a capacity of approximately 650. Although in poor condition, most of the original seating is extant except for several seats at the front of the theater. A concrete usher's wall is located at the rear of the theater. The interior walls of the theater are faced with stucco and decorated with Art Deco style murals.

Character-defining features of the Palm Theater, based on the historical evaluation prepared by ARG, are listed below.

Exterior Features

- "Palm" Sign (incl. Grid Feature)
- Angled Marquis
- Fieldstone Ashlar Masonry Facing and Flower Beds
- Poster Cases and Etched Glass
- Terrazzo Floor at Entrance

Interior Features

- Concession Stand
- Etched Glass behind Concession Stand
- Padded Doors
- Moderne-style Signs for Restrooms and Exits
- Tile Walls and Stall Dividers in Restrooms
- Tile Water Fountain
- Ushers' Wall
- Art Deco-style Murals
- Seating Configuration and Original Seats

**Regulatory Framework**

***California Register of Historical Resources***

Under CEQA, historic resources are evaluated using the California Register criteria. The California Register criteria are modeled after those of the National Register, except that the California Register focuses on resources that have contributed to the development of California. All resources listed in or formally determined eligible for the National Register are eligible for the California Register. Properties designated under municipal or county ordinances are also eligible for listing. An historical resource must meet one or more of the following criteria (as per the California Code of Regulations Title 14, Chapter 11.5, § 4850):

1. It is associated with the events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the U.S.; or
2. It is associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history; or
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values; or

**from: Historic Assessment, Palm Theatre, San Mateo  
April 2005 EIR for PA 01-146 Palm Residences  
1705 Palm Avenue, San Mateo CA  
(APN 035-217-010)**

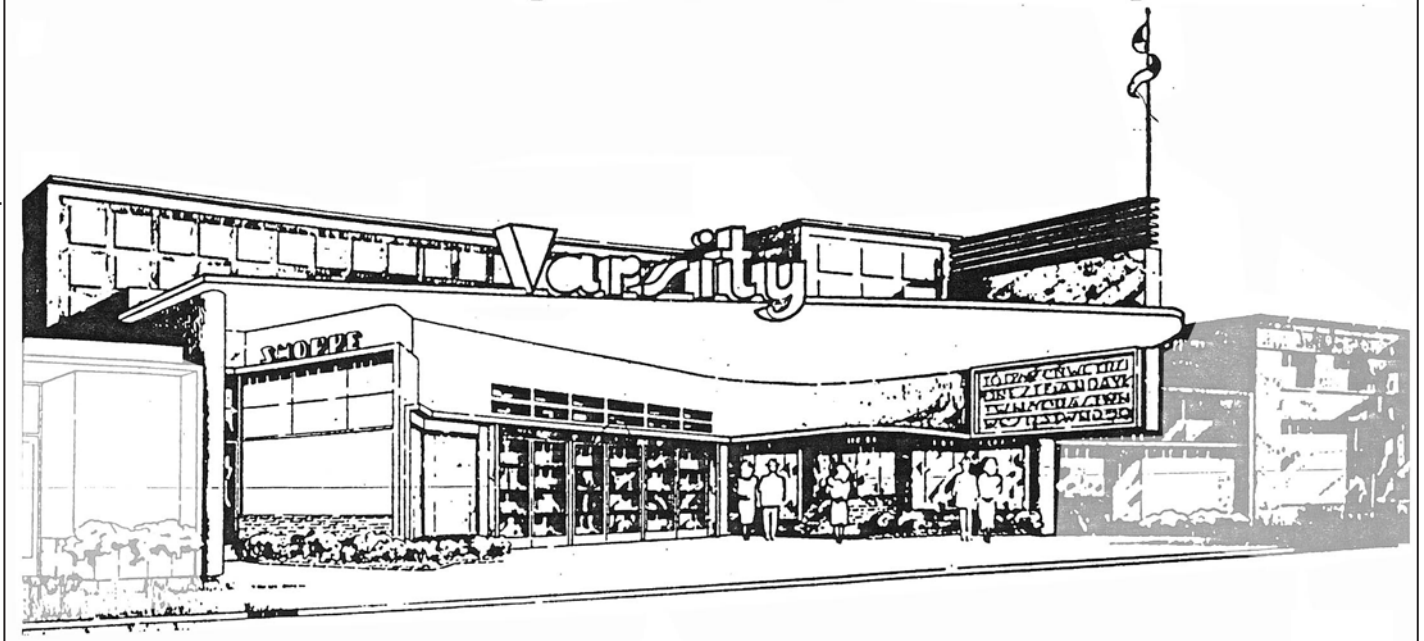
# Davis Commercial Architecture 1950's - Planter Boxes

Varsity, CALIFORNIA, FRIDAY JUNE 10, 1949

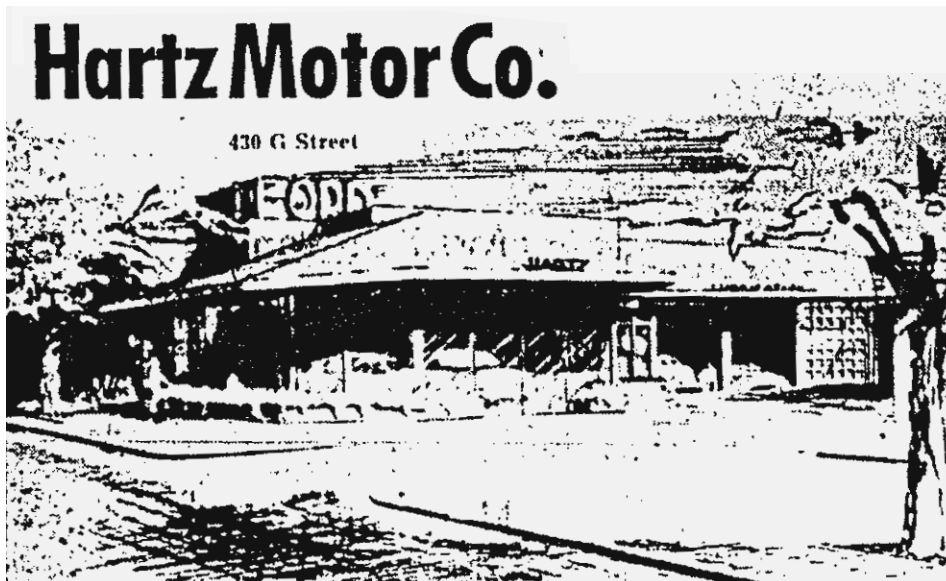
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## Architects Drawing of the New Varsity Theatre

Illustration: Davis Enterprise 1950



Original Varsity Theatre Rendering 1950 - William B. David, Architectural Designer  
Planter boxes under the poster cases, Cooper office window and adjacent theoretical future retail shops (the grey buildings; actually residences were still on both sides of the new Varsity Theatre in 1950)



Davis Enterprise Ad Aug. 1950




Hartz Motor Showroom  
430 G Street  
Lawrence Gentry, AIA  
1949-50  
Drawing from Grand Opening  
August 1950  
Described as typifying the latest  
in modern design, the new  
building was built of concrete  
block with redwood siding and  
planter boxes underneath all the  
huge showroom windows.  
(Demolished 1997 for  
redevelopment project)

# Davis Commercial Architecture 1950's - Planter Boxes

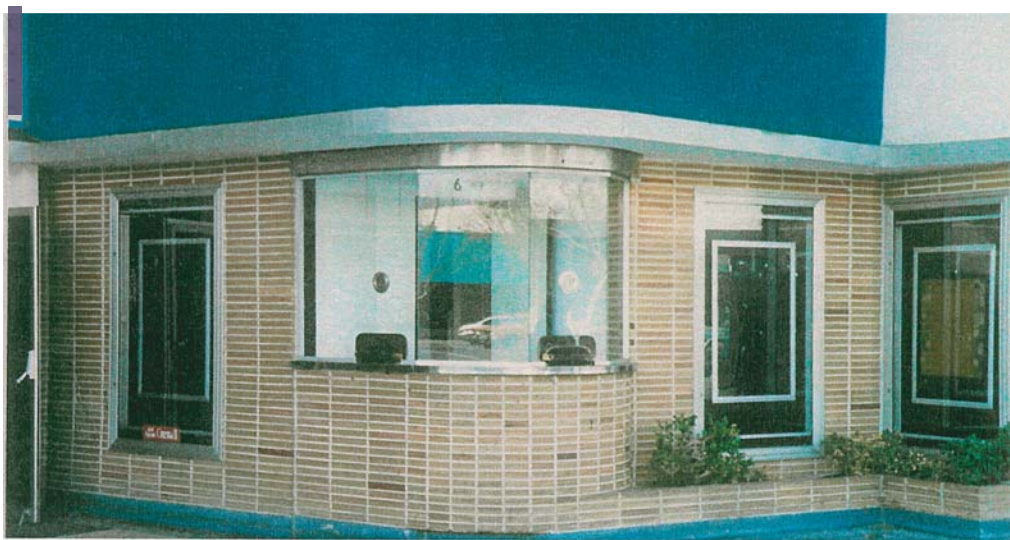


Photo: Eastman Collection UCD

Varsity Theatre   
William B. David,  
Architectural Designer  
1950

Planter boxes under the poster cases and the Cooper office window.

(Note also the placement of the single ticket booth speaker, & the windows over the doors.)



Varsity Theatre  
Original color scheme,  
red brick veneer &  
planter boxes;  
(double ticket booth  
speakers from 1970's  
'twinning remodel')

Photos: City of Davis 1992

# Davis Commercial Architecture 1950's-60s - Planter Boxes



Commercial Block  
512 -- 524 Second Street  
Unknown Architect/Designer,  
1950's-60's  
Yellow and Red  
FlagStone Veneer,  
Flower boxes under  
storefront showwindows



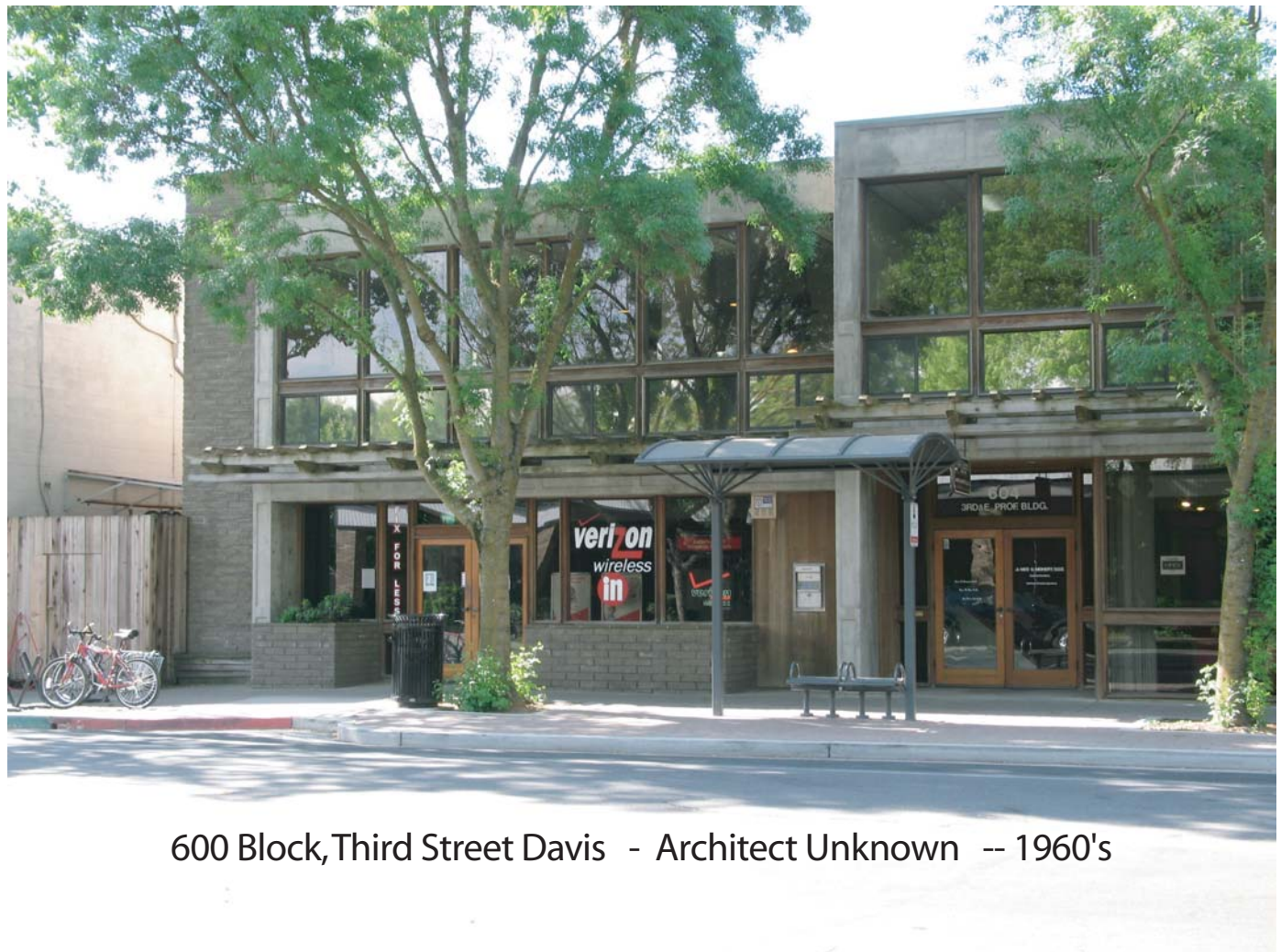
Photo:s Valerie Vann 2006

# Davis Commercial Architecture 1950's-60 -- Planter Boxes and Masonry Veneer

610 Third Street - Robert Crippen, AIA, Architect, Woodland - 1957



Yellow and Red Roman brick veneer (identical type used in Varsity Theatre)  
Flower boxes under store windows



Photos: Valerie Vann

600 Block, Third Street Davis - Architect Unknown -- 1960's



# **Varsity Theater**

## **616 Second Street, Davis, California**

**Valerie Vann**  
**September 2005**  
**DRAFT Rev. 7-4-2006**



Photo: 6-18-2006 Valerie Vann copyright 2006

## **Varsity Theater – Davis, California**

### **Varsity Theatre Designers & Builders**

The Varsity Theater design and construction followed the typical pattern of the era in being the product of a movie theater chain with the architectural design by a firm associated with the chain, supplemented by a structural engineer, a theatrical interior decorator, and a number of specialty contractors supplying roof truss systems, sound systems, etc.

#### **The Davis Theatre Company – Developer**

##### **Ownership**

The Varsity Theatre was built on what was essentially the backyard (“rose garden”) of the Luft family home, which occupied the east half of the block between F and E Streets facing on Second Street. (The west half was – and is – Dresbach-Hunt-Boyer Mansion property). The lot included the Luft home’s tank house, fruit trees and gardens. The Luft family, originally the town blacksmiths, became associated with movies in Davis as the operators and eventually the owners of the first Davis Varsity theater, located at the southeast corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> and F streets. That property was sold in 1946, the old theater was demolished in 1950, and the present retail building there erected by Mr. Quessenberry.

According to a sign erected on the lot in 1949 announcing the new theater project, and the architectural plans filed with the city, the theater was built for **The Davis Theater Company**. This was apparently a special purpose single theater company which may have been related to a larger company or chain such as the **West-Side Valley Theatre Company**, to which initial ownership is usually attributed, although no mention of them was made in the newspaper articles covering construction and grand opening. A similar single theater ownership pattern was followed by Redwood Theatres<sup>1</sup> in the case of other Northern California theaters in Marysville and San Mateo<sup>2</sup>, both designed by William B. David. The exact connection between the nominal owner Davis Theater Company and West-Side has not been determined.

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<sup>1</sup> Redwood Theatres Inc. and National Theater were owned by George M. Mann, who served as president. Redwood developed and operated a chain of theaters, mainly in Northern California and Oregon. A son, Richard Mann, is still in the theater business (he owns the State Theatre in Woodland, another Wm. B. David design), and has a number of photos and renderings from William B. David & Associates, the firm that was the “principal architect” of the Redwood company for many years (see William B. David, Architect, below). William B. David also served as construction manager and Vice President of Redwood Theatres. The Mann enterprises and the David design firm both had offices in the Warfield Theater Building at 988 Market Street, San Francisco in the 1950’s-80s period.

<sup>2</sup> In the former case it served as protection against a lawsuit when the plaintiff failed to sue the correct entity and the mistake was not discovered until the statute of limitation had run out.

In the Davis Enterprise coverage of the Varsity grand opening, the corporate officers of The Davis Theater Company included L. S. Hamm (Lisle S. Hamm, 1883-1966) and James Stephens, vice-president. A Mr. Walter G. Preddy was described in the newspaper coverage of the Grand Opening as a business associate of Hamm among those “responsible” for development of the theater and honored in the grand opening ceremony. Preddy owned and managed a San Francisco theater supply company (described in the 1930 census as “a motion picture business”), which was a subcontractor for the Varsity project. L.S. Hamm was an California attorney with a corporate practice who served at various times as corporate lawyer and secretary of the Redwood Theatres Inc. chain of San Francisco.

The West-Side Valley Theatre became the owner of the Varsity soon after construction (if not actually originally through the nominal “Davis Theatre Company” as a subsidiary or local management operation). West-Side Valley was an independent chain that developed and operated movie theatres in Newman and elsewhere in California. The death in 1980 of Roy Cooper, the original West-Side chain “executive”, resulted in sale of a number of the chain’s properties to independent operators or outright closure. The final owner, Phil Harris, is the grandson of the original West-Side owner, and worked in his family’s Davis theater as a projectionist while pursuing his law degree from the University of California at Davis in the 1970’s. He later purchased his late grandfather’s Westside Valley Theatres chain, with a partner, Doug Stephens. West-Side was sold in 1985 to form the Harris Theatre Group, which later became the Signature chain, then was sold in 2004 to Regal Entertainment, which currently owns multi-plexes in Davis.

While the grand opening coverage in the Davis Enterprise listed the contractors at length, as well as the interior designer (Santocono), it oddly did not name the theatre’s architectural designer, stating cryptically that it was “designed by the regular theater architect,” implying ownership by a chain rather than the local “Davis Theatre Company” named in the articles. As a result, for many years the architect or designer has been routinely listed as “unknown” in documents concerning the theatre, including the Historic Resource Surveys.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Apparently no one ever bothered to look at the 1949 plans for the theatre in the Davis Public Works files; the title block reads “William B. David & Associates, Industrial Design, San Francisco”.

## **G. Santocono - Interior Designer & Artist**

The interior design, particularly the murals of the Varsity Theatre, was done by Santocono of San Francisco, described in the Davis Enterprise coverage as “the well known theater decorators.” The theaters Santocono worked on in addition to the Davis Varsity included the Sacramento Alhambra, Tower, and Esquire, the Oakland Paramount, and the La Habra.

The Santoconos were a family of Italian artists with a heritage of fresco or “ceiling painting” in Italy. The San Francisco firm was headed by Matteo Santocono (1885-1947), who immigrated in 1906. Matteo originally styled himself as a painter in oils (a *View of Oakland Harbor* was recently listed at a San Francisco gallery specializing in minor California artists); however he initially supported his family by working as a box maker or box designer at Aaron Fleishhacker's Crown Paper Co. in San Francisco.

**Gastono (aka Gus or Gale) Santocono** (1909-1980), the Santocono responsible for the Varsity Theatre interior and murals, was Matteo’s son by his first wife Josephina Antonuccio (a native of Italy, who died before Gastono was 10 years old). By 1930 he was employed as a decorator with his father’s company of theater decorators, and continued in the trade after his father’s death in 1947.

The Varsity murals, painted in an agricultural color scheme<sup>4</sup>, were<sup>5</sup> particularly interesting and unique. While they were in the typical Art Deco style used earlier for murals in fantasy, pseudo historically themed, or “atmospheric” movie palaces, the Varsity’s represented both mythical (flanking the proscenium) and realistic scenes (along the walls). The mural theme was a realistic, Davis / UC Davis specific and appropriate depiction of agricultural life, with related allegorical figures. The latter were a “Father of Waters” pouring out irrigation water, and a bountiful “Mother Earth” with a basket of agricultural produce.

The rest included three historical scenes, starting with a “Syrian” plowman with oxen from ancient times, a 19<sup>th</sup> century plowman with horses, and an early 20<sup>th</sup> century farm couple (the woman in a long dress), with an early Fordson type steel wheel tractor in the background. The fourth scene is the most unusual: it depicts a modern, contemporary scene with farmer and hoe in the background, but the main figure is a *scientist in lab coat holding up a test tube*, probably a “first” for a movie theatre mural theme in depicting real modern life.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Enterprise Grand Opening article described the “strikingly original & symbolic” color scheme as “fruity reds, foliage greens, and mustard yellows.” (The greens of the murals have photographed as a near gray dark green in the only known color photos; they were taken before the 1992 remodeling.)

<sup>5</sup> The proscenium murals were destroyed during the 1978 “twinning” (making two auditoriums out of the original one) remodeling; the rest during the 1992 remodeling as a single auditorium performance venue. Only one black & white photo showing part of the proscenium allegorical figures (and a murky line cut in a 1950’s ad of the west figure) exist .

<sup>6</sup> The subject of a mural said to have adorned the curved west wall of the foyer is unknown; there is no known photo or description of it.

## **L.H. & B. L Nishkian – Structural Engineering Firm**

Leon H. Nishkian (1882-1947; Cal CE license #24), an immigrant (1888) from Turkish Armenia, founded the San Francisco Nishkian firm of structural engineers in 1919. His son **Byron L. Nishkian** (1916-1987) held Cal CE license #6574. Both L.H. and B.L. Nishkian were graduates of the College of Engineering at UC Berkeley, and were responsible for numerous well known engineering “landmarks” in the Bay Area and throughout California, including the Warfield Theatre building where the office of William B. David & Associates was located, as well as a number of other theaters in California. Engineering theatres was something of a firm specialty.



**Byron L. Nishkian**, (left) who worked on the San Francisco Bay Bridge as a young man, was the active head of the firm -- still known as L.H. & B.L. Nishkian -- at the time of the design of the Varsity Theatre (1949) and signed the structural drawings of the reinforced concrete building.

The grandson, Levon Hall Nishkian (b. 1948; Cal PE # 28549) continued the structural engineering business, and is currently president of Nishkian Menniger-Dean-Monks, 1200 Folsom Street, San Francisco.

An endowed chair of structural engineering at the University of California, Berkeley honors his parents (The Byron L. and Elvira E. Nishkian Professor of Structural Engineering).

The firm’s more recent projects include the Food & Agricultural Building at U.C. Davis, and many designs, seismic retrofits and historic rehabilitations in the Bay Area (e.g. Pacific Union Club, San Francisco; University of San Francisco), in Silicone Valley, the U.C. campuses, and throughout the western states.

## The Contractors

The contractors for the Varsity were mostly Sacramento firms: Lawrence Construction Company was the General Contractor. Sacramento subcontractors included Yancey Company (John-Mansville Insulation)<sup>7</sup>, and Manuel Joseph (Electrical Equipment, in business for decades later).

Other specialties by Sacramento firms were:

J. C. Becker (North Sacramento), plumbing; California Mfg. Co., millwork; J. T. Mc Dermott, tile and terrazzo; Sacramento Plastering Co., lath & plaster; D. Reader, asphalt tile.

From the Bay Area: Aladdin Heating of Oakland, the *state of the art* heating and air conditioning systems; San Jose Steel Co., steel work, and W. Preddy, theatre supplies (also listed as a someone involved in the development of the theatre).

A major construction project such as the Varsity was apparently out of the league of most strictly local firms; only three participated: Woodland Plumbing supplied sheet metal (which forms the curved cornice above the entry doors and ticket booth, for example); the local Davis family Barlow's El Adobe Garden Shop stocked the flower (planter) boxes and was engaged to maintain them; and Pacific Coast Aggregates, Inc., with Davis operations at 6<sup>th</sup> and G Streets proudly advertised that they supplied "Ready-mix Concrete used on this job."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The destruction of the theatre murals during the 1992 remodeling is said to have been related to hazardous materials abatement, specifically asbestos, which was used in theatres in curtains, wall coverings, sound insulation, etc. because of the high concern about fire.

<sup>8</sup> Pacific Coast actually occupied most of the 600 G block next to the railroad (where the G Street mini-mall and Food Co-op are now located), operating their sand, gravel and cement business with its tall loading tower, eight hours a day into the 1960's, until displaced by the first Safeway and mini-mall, when they moved out north of town. They were the last of the heavy industrial operations in the old town area, and the neighbors were glad to see the trucks, noise and dust go.

## **William B. David & Associates, Industrial Design, San Francisco (Architectural Design)**

**William Bernard David** (see biography below) was the founder and principal of the firm, which provided architectural design services at various times in the period 1940's - 1950 in association with the west coast motion picture theatre companies Redwood Theatres, Blumenfeld and probably West-Side Valley Theatre Company, as well as other theater operations in the Bay Area. The firm's offices were located until circa 1985 in the Warfield Theater office building at 988 Market Street in San Francisco, where Redwood Theatres also was headquartered. David's architectural office staff included A. J. Horstmann, and a draftsman named G.W. Larson, who seems to have been the in-house artist who customarily did the company's architectural renderings.

**Anthony J. Horstmann** (1890-1954), who was sixty years old when he signed the Varsity Theatre drawings as "Architect," died only four years later. In the 1920's Horstmann had a private architectural practice in Fresno when William David's family also lived there and David's father was engaged in the real estate business. The young William David perhaps met Horstmann (who was 15 years older than David) at that time in connection with his father's business.

Like William David, A. J. Horstmann was apparently not a registered architect, but possibly licensed in California as a "Registered Building Designer", a type of license abolished around 1986<sup>9</sup>. As a young man in San Francisco, Horstmann had worked as an architectural draftsman in the office of John H. Powers, a prominent architect who collaborated with the legendary Bernard Maybeck on the spectacular 1926 "Arabian Nights" Packard Automobile showrooms on Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco.<sup>10</sup> As noted, William David himself did not have a professional license for many years, leading to the practice being titled "Industrial Designers"<sup>11</sup> and to the usual procedure of having someone with an architectural or engineering license in the firm or an associated company sign the drawings, although the actual design of all the firm's work was always attributed to and claimed by William David himself.

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<sup>9</sup> See Wm. David biography, below. The architects registration board of California Department of Consumer Affairs, unlike the boards for engineers and lawyers, doesn't publish registration information for deceased persons or for the abolished "building designer" registration. William David, however, testified as an expert witness in 1976 as a "register building designer".

<sup>10</sup> Early auto showroom design was sometimes similar to that of atmospheric movie palaces.

<sup>11</sup> The "industrial design" name may also have been intended to signify the modern, *au courant* style of the firm's work: many of the notable practitioners of the Streamline Moderne Style regarded their work as industrial design regardless of whether it was applied to buildings, locomotives, radio cabinets or what have you.

## **William Bernard David (1905-1985) – Architectural Designer**



**William Bernard David** was born December 15, 1905 in Brockton, Massachusetts. His father, Paul M. David (c. 1881-1958?), as a young man worked in a shoe factory as a “vamper”, and was a member of a household of relatives all similarly employed in shoe manufacturing in Brockton, including Paul’s brother Zachary. All were immigrants from Armenia in Turkey (Ottoman Empire) in the 1890’s. Wm. David’s mother Mary also worked in a shoe factory as a “laster” before her marriage to Paul David. Mary Alice Leal (1880-1951) was the eldest of the seven surviving American native born children of Portuguese immigrants.

The Paul David family lived at 587 North Main Street in Brockton in 1910; Paul’s brother Zachary and a niece (both born in Armenia) also lived in the household. The family had two sons, William and Paul Jr. (b. 1907). The father continued to work as a shoe vamper.

At sometime between 1910 and 1920, the family moved to 3772 Iowa Avenue in Fresno, California, home to a large Armenian population, where the father became engaged in some way in the real estate business. Interestingly, Anthony J. Horstmann (1890-1954), the Wm. B. David & Associates employee who signed the Varsity Theatre plans as “Architect”, was also living in Fresno in 1910. One might speculate whether the fifteen year old William David first came in contact with the 30-year old architect Horstmann – and the architecture profession – in Fresno; perhaps William’s father knew Horstmann through the real estate business.

The Paul David family subsequently moved to the Pasadena area. The father, Paul David, Sr. had become the proprietor of a grocery store by 1930, and Paul Jr., was still living at the family home at 5907 York Blvd. (Los Angeles), clerking in a hardware store.

According to some sources, William David aspired early to “to be an architect, a builder of edifices of beauty and utility”, and to have worked his way through college and graduated in 1929 from USC<sup>12</sup> or UCLA.<sup>13</sup> Apparently this may have been so much Hollywood-style biographical embroidery consistent with David’s flamboyant and many faceted lifelong

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<sup>12</sup> Source apparently David himself, in a movie business style public relations piece for the opening of the new Noyo Theatre he designed, in Willits, CA 1940. The article, written when David was about 35 years old, did not mention his tenure with S. Charles Lee.

<sup>13</sup> According to David’s family following his death. (David Wilkinson, emails with author 2005) At any rate, if he did matriculate at one or the other institution, it would not have been in architecture at UCLA; the school of architecture was founded in 1966.



involvement in “Hollywood” and “The Movies”, since records at both universities failed to confirm either attendance or graduation in the period 1924-1932.

In 1930, William and “Burnee” David, recently married, were living at 1704 N. Kingsley, Hollywood, in a bungalow court. William’s occupation was described in the 1930 census as “promoter, building & loan.” The middle class neighborhood included building contractors and other trades, plus an actress, a secretary to a movie company, and other film related occupations. The movie business atmosphere was pervasive in the area, and David became associated with it in a number of different ways throughout his life.

The sources for the next 10-15 years of David’s career are contradictory as to specific years, but indicate that soon after 1930 he became employed as an artist, set designer or architectural designer in the movie business. He reportedly started out in the art or set design department of Hearst’s MGM studios, and worked at some time on the interior of Hearst’s San Simeon<sup>14</sup> residence (an engagement plausibly related to set design), before moving to the architectural firm of the prominent theatre architect S. Charles Lee around 1933 or 1934. (All of these occupations are arguably related to set design in that they created make-believe environments for the movie business.)

### **William B. David and Theatre Architect S. Charles Lee**

William B. David apprenticed in the 1930’s with architect S. Charles Lee (1899-1990), who is credited with some 400 theatre projects, primarily in California, and is considered to have been the pre-eminent Art Deco and Streamline Moderne period theatre architect in California, particularly in the latter style.

Lee approached architecture as a business, and following the 1948 Supreme Court decision that broke up the large motion picture studio monopolies and the subsequent decline and localization of ownership (with less money to spend on architecture, hence a trend to smaller, plainer theatres), Lee essentially retired from architecture and became a real estate developer (business & industrial parks) until his death in 1990. The result was loss of much of his office records as Lee saw no reason to keep them, making it impossible to determine David’s exact tenure or work with Lee.<sup>15</sup>

The Varsity designer, William B. David, similarly shifted from theatre architecture to other commercial developments such as shopping centers (e.g. the first autocentric shopping center in Woodland, 1957) at about the same time as Lee, and for the same reasons, and there is little record of David’s office either, beyond a few renderings and photos in private hands and one or

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<sup>14</sup> The source for the claim that David worked in some capacity on the (interior?) design of Hearst’s San Simeon Castle is Mrs. Viola David (1914-2001), David’s wife at the time of his death, as told in interviews with David Wilkinson.

<sup>15</sup> Photos and renderings hidden in an attic that did survive the Lee architecture office closure are housed in a special collection at UCLA: *The S. Charles Lee Papers*, UCLA Special Collections & digital online library. Lee also endowed a chair at the UCLA Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning .

two historical investigations undertaken in connection with theater restoration or demolition projects.

David was never licensed as an architect in California; he did apparently hold the now abolished certification of “registered building designer.”<sup>16</sup> Like many Streamline Moderne designers, he regarded commercial architecture as a form of industrial design, and named his San Francisco business accordingly: *William B. David Associates, Industrial Designers*. Throughout his life, it was David’s custom because of his license status to have the plans for his projects signed by a registered engineer or architect employee of his office.

Prior to leaving Lee’s office c. 1937-39, David had served as construction supervisor for many Lee projects in northern California and probably designed some of the theatres sometimes credited to Lee on the basis of concept renderings or surviving record fragments, or because Lee was the licensed architect who signed plans originating in his office.

In some of these cases, David was recognized as the actual designer in local press coverage, and authorship was asserted by David himself and the theatre’s owners. (Woodland’s State Theatre is an example. In fact, David himself was a part owner of the Woodland State until his death in 1985, and it is similar to a known design of his, the Eureka Theatre in Eureka CA). David is also recognized as the customary construction supervisor and architectural designer for the northern California theatre chain Redwood Theatres, although he also worked for other chains, such as Blumenthal, for whom he designed the Sacramento Tower Theatre.

Thus the loss of records has made it difficult to determine how many of Lee’s projects were not built according to his concept or design, or which might have been designed by David while a member of Lee’s firm. In some cases a theatre was built in the same location at a later date with William David’s office as the designer of record. In other cases, current attribution of design has apparently been based on the similarity of a theatre to Lee’s style, since Lee is very well known, and David less so until the last year or so.

These facts and circumstances have made it difficult in some instances to clearly establish which of the two designed certain theatres. However, about 15 northern California theatres and one in Oregon are reliably attributed to David, with three or four more probably his.<sup>17</sup>

Certainly David’s style was greatly influenced by Lee, and the late 1940’s theatre works of both designers reflect influences of trends in the theatre business culminating in the breakup of the studio monopolies: drive-up or drive through ticket booths (which may have been the inspiration for the shift from centralized booths to asymmetric placement of the booth, and experiments in asymmetry in the whole façade, even when a drive through function was not present), as well as a trend away from elaborate thematic or “atmospheric” designs and toward abstract geometric sculptural masses and spaces, more restrained neon, signage and decoration, in a style verging on Modern. Including one or more retail shops into an integrated theatre building design was also common to provide additional revenue to the owners.

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<sup>16</sup> In 1876 was an expert witness in a legal proceeding in Modesto, as a “registered building designer”.

<sup>17</sup> See List Below

The trend to local ownership also coincided with a shift from ticket sales to concession stand sales as the main source of revenue, escalating from 20% to 80%. While in the '30's and '40s movie goers were allowed to sit through multiple showings with a single ticket purchase and stay to enjoy other luxurious amenities of the "palace", after the anti-trust breakup, the objective became to get customers into the theater to purchase lots of treats and drinks, see the movie, and leave so the cycle could be repeated with new customers. Lingering about was discouraged. For the same reason, later theaters, especially small town and neighborhood ones, were designed with larger foyers inside to accommodate big concession stands that provided the lion's share of revenues, and smaller exterior lobby space, in some cases eliminating the latter entirely.

### **The William B. David & Associates San Francisco Firm**

David left Lee's office about mid-1936, moved to San Francisco, and became associated with George Mann's northern California, San Francisco based theater chain Redwood Theaters. David had worked on Lee projects for George Mann as construction manager, and became Redwood's construction supervisor and customary architect for the chains new theaters after leaving Lee's office. He also became a Vice President of Redwood Theaters at some point, and is said to have designed a residence for Mann in San Francisco circa 1940. Both Redwood and David maintained offices in the Warfield Theatre office building in San Francisco.

David's association with George Mann's Redwood chain, and with Mann's son Richard<sup>18</sup> after George's death, continued intermittently for the rest of his life. David also associated with other theater chains, including the Blumenfelds, for whom he designed the iconic *Tower Theatre* on Broadway in Sacramento.

Between 1945 and 1947, William David, whose involvement in the Hollywood / Motion Picture scene was not confined to architecture - took a break from theatre design and returned to Hollywood to become a producer of "B movies" (nine in all, he also produced at least one stage play in San Francisco in 1944).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Richard Mann is still the owner of the Woodland State Theatre that David designed.

<sup>19</sup> January 1944: "a modern version of Lady Chatterly's Lover, based on D. H. Lawrence's famous novel, a three-act comedy-drama" at the Geary Theater in San Francisco, starring actress Barbara (Marion) Pepper & her husband Craig Reynolds; produced by David & Jack Linder.

William B. David, Producer - filmography (primarily Golden Gate Pictures)

*Wildfire* (1945) aka *Wildfire: The Story of a Horse* (UK)

*Northwest Trail* (1945)

*My Dog Shep* (1946) starring "Flame the Wonder Dog"

*North of the Border* (1946)

*Neath Canadian Skies* (1946)

*Flight to Nowhere* (1946)

*Death Valley* (1946)

*God's Country* (1946) Cast: Buster Keaton, Robert Lowery, Helen Gilbert...

*Scared to Death* (1947) Star: Bela Lugosi (Something of a cult classic among "B" film buffs)

His designs after returning to architectural practice in 1948 recognizably advanced toward a Modern style, becoming more asymmetrical, rectangular and sculptural. Decoration was sparse and abstract.<sup>20</sup> *The Davis Varsity Theater* (1949-50) seems to have been his last theater design, and the *San Mateo Palm Theatre* in the preceding year the next to last. Both are similarly asymmetrical, sculptural, restrained in decoration and neon, and David's most Modern in style. Both used masonry veneer (thin fieldstone for the Palm, Roman brick for the Varsity), and both featured flower boxes.

Both are unquestionably attributed to William B. David by documentation, and thus represent not only the late Moderne / Modern trend of regional theatre architecture, but are David's most mature and last works. The Palm Theater was demolished in July 2005 to make way for a residential project. It's significance was recognized in the historical study and EIR, and lack of mitigation for its loss required a finding of "overriding considerations" for the demolition to go forward. The consultants' evaluation of the building's significant features included the flower boxes.

The Davis Varsity in particular reflected a number of the post-monopoly trends, some of which seemed to puzzle the Davis Enterprise reporter who wrote the Grand Opening articles, who seemed to be struggling to find the elegance and luxuries of the early movie palaces in the new more business-like, even austere decorated Varsity, where the movies themselves were expected to provide all the fantasy, rather than the theater. The new theatre's primary luxuries were in the customer comfort amenities (sound system, air conditioning, reclining loge seats, carpet, drinking fountain, telephone booth, ladies powder room, and a well-stocked concession stand.)

Then shortly after designing the Palm and Varsity, like Lee, David stopped theatre design work and went into shopping centers and similar developments, a number of them with Blumenfelds, including the first really autocentric shopping center on Main Street in Woodland, CA, which featured a parking lot, and was anchored by a J.C. Penney Department Store (1957). He said to have owned and operated a small theater chain in the Bay Area or Peninsula.

Something of a flamboyant character all his life, he was reputed to be an avid race car driver, he also was past president of the Sports Car Owners of America, and was the original owner of a 1963 gold metallic Ferrari sports car.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> A number of Lee's theatres and commercial buildings of the late 1940's-50's incorporated stone veneer with thin horizontal textures, some with foundation planting or flower boxes. David's last 2 or 3 theaters did also, as did quite a few commercial buildings of the 1950's and 60's. Possibly the architects or the clients came to feel a need for a "natural" touch was needed to counter the stark, even "brutal" Modern trend of shapes and materials in the late Moderne style.

<sup>21</sup> Ferrari 400 Superamerica Coupe Aerodinamico, LHD s/n 4679SA, Sep. 8, 1963  
"Covered headlights, Oro chiaro/cream" (gold metallic color)  
The car was apparently sold by David in 1970. Subsequently it was offered in 1988 for \$245,000, and sold by Bonhams Gstaad Auction 2001 for 520,000 SFr.

According to David's obituary, he was a member of the Association of Industrial Building Designers, and a member of the Motion Picture Pioneers of America. Among his other associations with the entertainment world, he served as chief barker and director of the Variety Club's annual benefit show for the Blind Babies Foundation (the charity recruited motion picture entertainers such as Jack Benny, Jimmy Durante in its fund drives.)

William B. David died at age 80 in San Francisco on June 16, 1985, and is buried at Hills of Eternity Cemetery in Colma. He had three daughters, and was survived by his wife, Viola Goldstein David (1914-2001), daughter of San Francisco jewelry store owners.

### **William B. David Theater & Commercial Architecture**

1937	Arcata, Arcata	G. Mann/Redwood, 475 seats
1937	Cerrito, El Cerrito	Nymph murals 640 seats
1937?-1940?	Lark, Larkspur	Triplets with Noyo & Park
1938	Eureka, Eureka	Mann/Redwood 1200 seats, balcony, garden theme murals
1938	Fortuna, Fortuna	Redwood Ceilings, with cherubs and nymphs
1938 Nov 11	Tower, Sacramento	Blumenfeld Murals Santocono
<1939 April	Tower, Marysville	Redwood
1939	Esquire, Klamath Falls	(AKA/Ragland current name)
<1940	Butte, Gridley	
<1940	Porter, Woodland	(remodel)
<1940	State, Woodland	Colonial theme interior, murals
1940 May 3	Noyo, Willits	
1940 Mar 14	Esquire, Sacramento	Blumenfeld. Interior Santocono
1940s-late	Ukiah, Ukiah	
1941	Park, Lafayette	

(Hiatus as movie producer 1945-47)

1949	Palm, San Mateo	Mixed theme interior: Cubist murals, Etched glass mirror of dwarfs making candy; exterior etched glass with palm trees on poster cases; flower box
1949 July	Varsity, Davis	Plans
1950 Jun 09	Varsity, Davis	Opened. Agricultural murals Santocono. Unthemed exterior, Roman brick, asymmetrical, terrazzo
1957	Woodland Shopping Center.	Blumenfeld developer, WBD part owner

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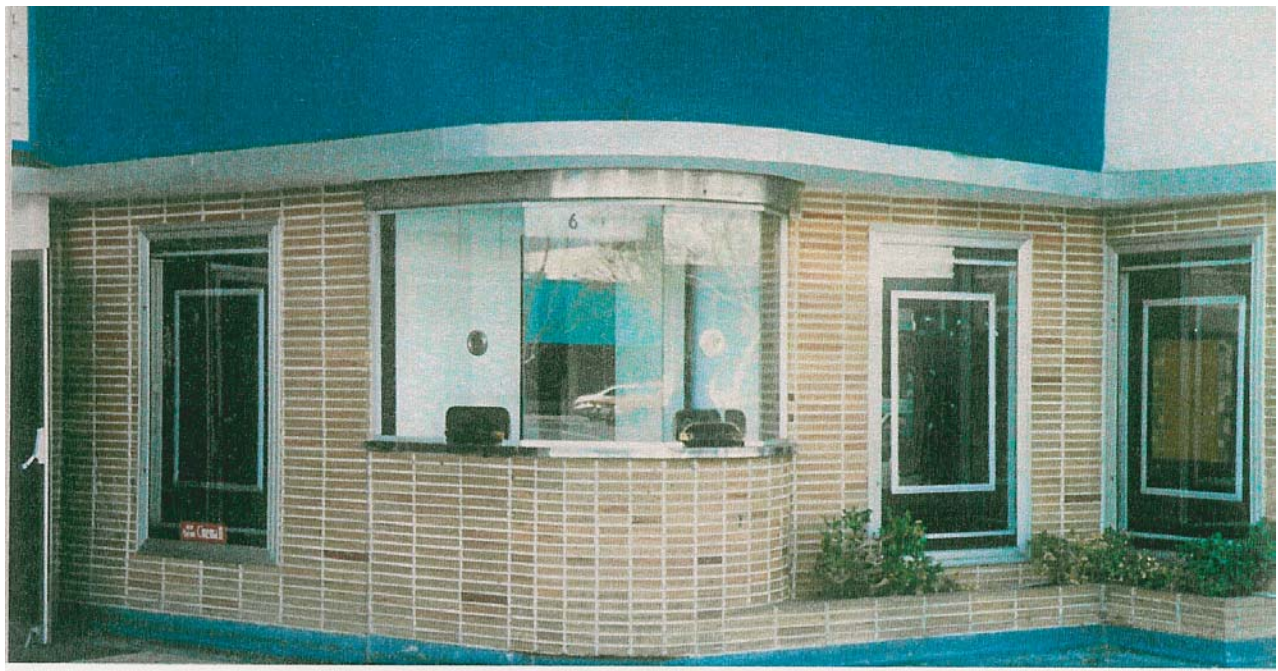
41. Creighton, Liam, *The Varsity Story*. Film (DVD); Interviews with various Davis personalities connected with the theatre. Davis, CA 2006. Emails with author, 2005.
42. *The Davis Enterprise*, Davis, CA  
 "Work to Start At Once on New Theater" June 10, 1949  
 "Ground Broken for Townhouse Apts.", "New Foster Freeze Industry", Dec. 23, 1949  
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 "New Varsity Theatre to Open Doors This Evening at Six O'clock"; Jun. 9, 1950, p.1;  
 "Section Two: Featuring the New Varsity Theatre and History of the Theatre in Davis.  
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- Building news) June 23, 1950  
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 “New Postoffice Building” (Quessenberry Drug building); “Davis’ First Professional Building.” Oct. 20 1950  
 “Old Varsity Theatre Being Torn Down.” Jan. 5, 1951  
 “Our View: Downtown theater: Don’t pass it up” Sep 9, 1990, p. A-8  
 “See what Varsity’s hiding” Nov. 26, 1990, p. A-3  
 “Varsity’s costs go up before curtain goes up” Jul. 5, 1992 p. A-1  
 Cover Story, Weekend Magazine, Pre-1975 black & white photo of auditorium showing part of murals at sides of screen. Oct. 8, 1992. (Only known photo of east mural figure.)  
 “Remodeled Varsity Theater” “\$100,000 face lift”, Feb. 10, 1976  
 “Varsity Theatre” Sept. 21, 1992  
 “Entertainment: Moving into 1994 – the Varsity makes its mark.” Dec. 15, 1993, p. A-11
43. *El Rodeo- USC Yearbook*, Associated Students of University of Southern California. Los Angeles, 1929
  44. *The Sacramento Bee*, “Theater renovation produces thrills, chills.” Nov. 14, 1991, Neighbors Section, p. 1, Sacramento, CA
  45. *The Sacramento Union*, “Davis Art Deco: Young interior designer wins national award for theater restoration.” Jul. 10, 1993, p. D1, Sacramento, CA
  46. *UCLA Yearbook*, University of California at Los Angeles (“The Southern Campus” of UC). Los Angeles, 1929, 1930, 1931
  47. *The Willits News*, “William David Architect of New Noyo Theater Here,” “\$50,000 Noyo Theater opens here tomorrow.” Friday, May 3, 1940, p. 8, Willits, CA

# The Original Varsity Brickwork and Probable Color Scheme

Reconstructed transom windows over entry doors

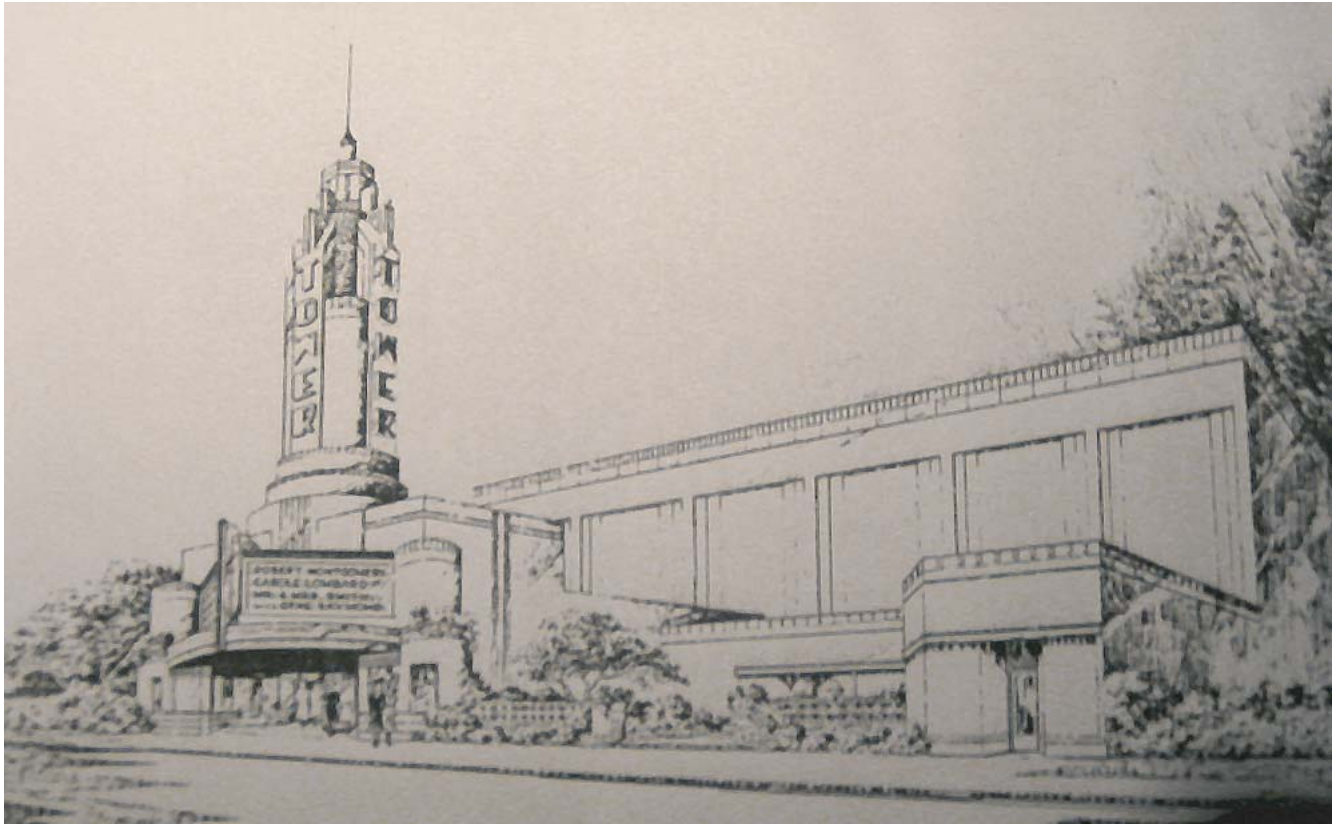


Photos: City of Davis 1992

Scanned from photo copies. Dual ticket booth speakers from 1978 twinning remodel

# William B. David Architectural Projects

Rendering Photo: David Repp



Tower Theatre, Klamath Falls, Oregon

David Repp Photo Collection, Date Unknown

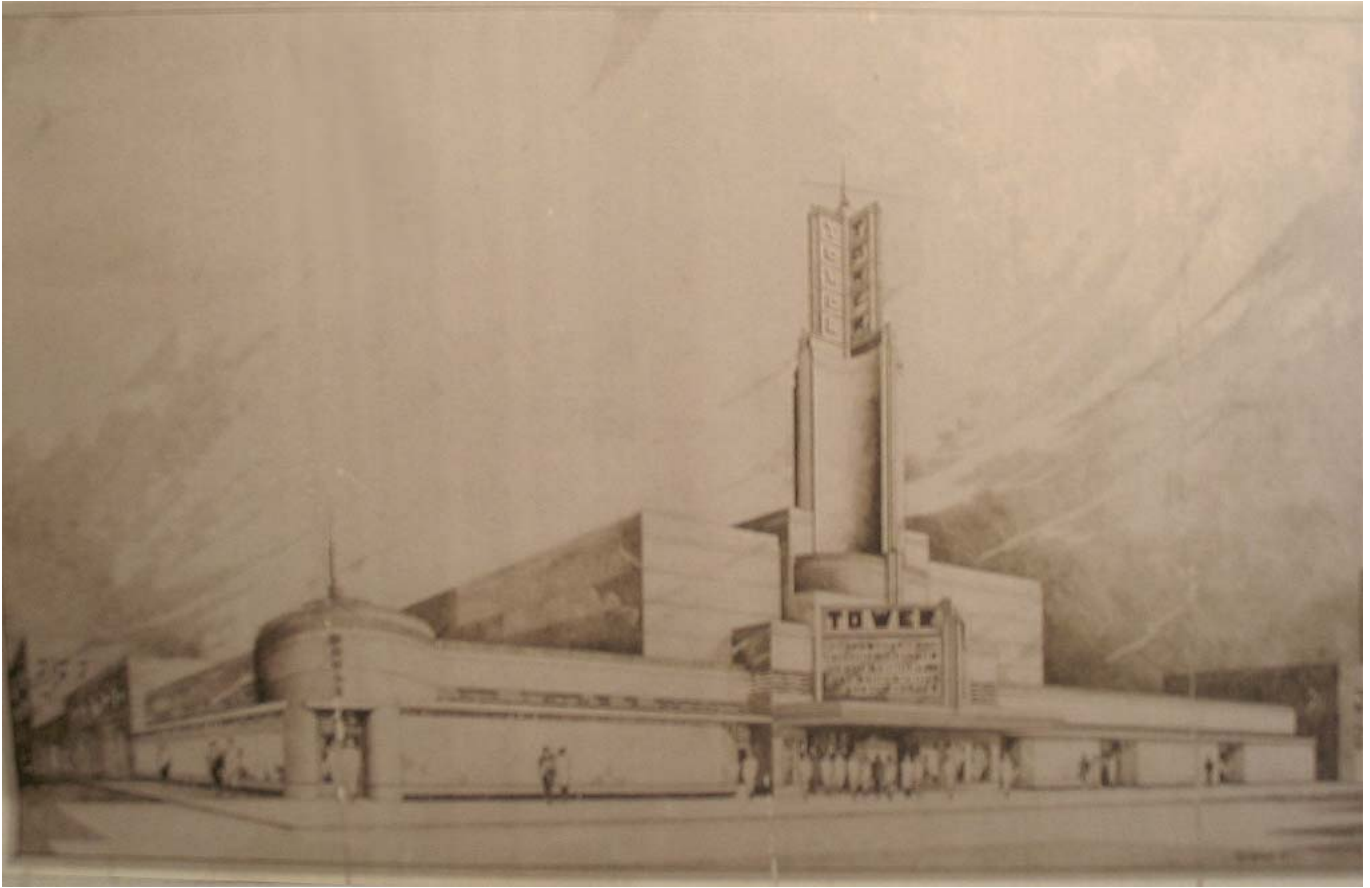


Note the garden court and landscaping in the rendering; the court became an early form of "mini-mall."



# William B. David Architectural Projects

Rendering Photo: David Repp



David Repp Photo Collection, Date Unknown

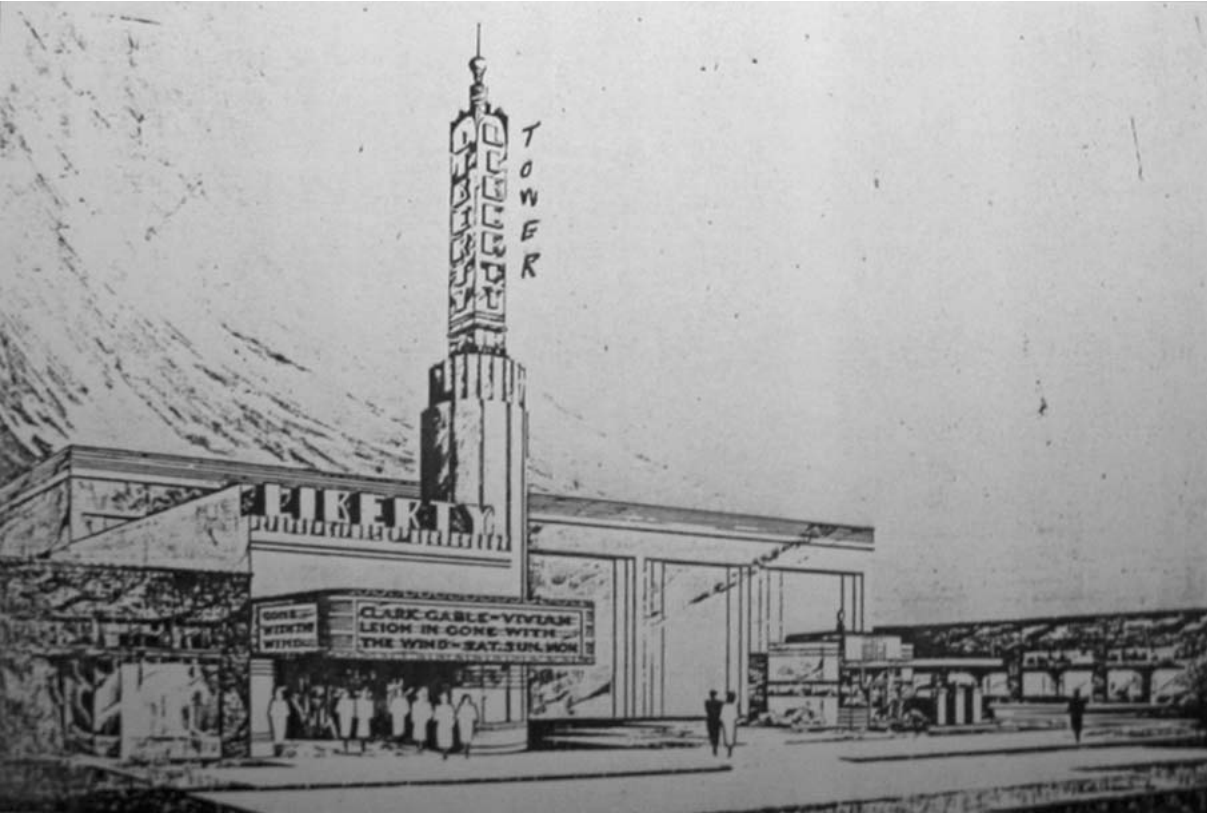


Esquire Theater  
Klamath Falls  
Oregon  
1939

Called the "Tower" in the rendering, the theater was built as the "Esquire." The shops at the right were scaled back, and the round corner detail altered.

## William B. David Architectural Projects

Rendering Photo: David Repp



Tower Theatre, Marysville California - late 1930's

Photo: UCD Eastman Collection



One of David's earlier asymmetric designs; either the name of the theater was changed or the rendering was re-cycled from a different project. Built substantially as shown. A drive-in restaurant was built at some point in the openspace just to the right of the tower (see photo). The small building at the right is a gas station, with plantings around the outside.

# William B. David Architectural Projects

Rendering Photo: David Repp



Photo: Save the Tower, Sacramento



Tower Theatre  
Sacramento  
1938

Blumenfeld Theatre Co.  
Murals by Santocono

The auditorium has  
been triplexed.