

Paper Mache for 8-8-25 by Guest Columnist, Cameron Kersting

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Since the 1950s, the tall marquee of the Sutter Movie Theater has been an iconic part of the skyline of Plumas Street in Yuba City. Over the long run of its business, the movie house was redesigned several times, beginning as a 916-seat, single-screen theater, with the layout of the building eventually evolving to accommodate three separate auditoriums. The Sutter Movie Theater closed in 2006, but a group of dedicated community members created the Sutter Performing Arts Association, an organization committed to restoring the theater and turning it into a state-of-the-art performing arts venue for the community. By 2021, Phase I of restoration was nearly complete, and the project and SPAA became adopted by Yuba Sutter Arts & Culture, the official arts agency for the region.

The renamed Sutter Theater Center for the Arts includes the Clark Family Theater—a black box used for various events, including live performances by local bands and theater companies—and the Art Box Gallery—an art gallery hosting frequent events highlighting local artists across mediums. The final phase in restoration involves converting the remaining movie auditorium into a large, traditional, proscenium-style theater space.

This building has a rich history that has updated seamlessly into the modern era; the building standing today is the same as the one that opened in 1950. The previously exterior ticket booth has become part of the new, extended lobby space. The recognizable insets on the building's Church Street side now serve as giant canvases for five beautiful murals by local artists. The original projection booth for the rear theater has been converted to a multi-use area, repurposed depending on the needs of the current events held in other areas of the building.

The Sutter Theater Center for the Arts is a thriving part of the Yuba-Sutter community, and its growing, evolving nature has been part of the project since its construction. Though it has changed much in 75 years, elements of the past still exist, showcasing the longstanding dedication to the arts and media in the area. Organizations such as Yuba Sutter Arts & Culture continue to provide community members with opportunities to explore and interact with local art through facilities like the Sutter Theater, sparking thoughtful discussion about art and passing on the legacy of the unique cultures of the area.

Growing up in Yuba City involved in theatre and the arts, the Sutter Theater Center for the Arts is extremely important to me for many reasons. Above all, its renovation has proven that there are people in this community who are as dedicated as I am to sharing the arts with everyone, of all ages. Yuba Sutter Arts & Culture has many programs that specifically cater to children and young adults. My experience with Center Stage Productions (YSAC's youth theater program) has given me a place to meet new people and create beautiful and powerful productions through collaboration and communication. Initiatives such as this one are vital to continue supporting the next generation in our community, not just the aspiring artists; performing and visual arts are so important to all people, from every background, as they allow for expression, interpretation, and understanding of new ideas. What was once the Sutter Movie Theater has developed into an artistic oasis, a legacy that will not soon be forgotten. I cannot wait to see this building evolve in the future, to reach a wider audience, tell more stories, and continue supporting the culture and community of Yuba City.

Cameron's essay was the winner in this year's Crowhurst Memorial Scholarship program. He is a 2025 graduate of Yuba City High School and has appeared in many local productions over the past ten years. Carmeron can be seen this weekend as Harold Hill in the final performances of Center Stage Productions' "The Music Man" at the Sutter Theater Center for the Arts. Come out and support this remarkably talented young performer and the other wonderful cast members. Information and tickets available at Yubasutterarts.org.