

# Los Angeles Historic Theatre Foundation

## ALL ABOUT State Theatre



**Architects:** Charles Peter Weeks and William Day, of architectural firm Weeks & Day, in a Spanish Renaissance style. Their other theatres include:

- Stanford Theatre in Palo Alto
- California Theatre in San Jose
- Fox Oakland Theatre in Oakland
- Fox Theatre – now Copley Symphony Hall – in San Diego

The original building cost was \$1.5M (1921 money).

**Opening Night:** 12 November 1921, as “Loew’s State”. The State was Loew’s flagship west coast movie theatre.

### Notable Features

- The State opened with a movie screen measuring 44½ft by 24ft, reported as being twice the size of any other screen in the city.
- At the time of opening the Projection Booth was said to be the largest in the world, equipped with both a toilet and a shower/bath boasting hot water.
- The theatre originally housed a \$50,000 Möller organ, although it was replaced with a Wurlitzer organ in 1925.

### Success of the State

- For many years the State was Broadway’s most profitable theatre, largely due to its location at 7<sup>th</sup> and Broadway, the busiest intersection in LA during the 1920s and the center of the downtown shopping district.
- The theatre was built as part of the 12-story United Building, itself costing \$2.5M to construct (1921 money), and which remains Los Angeles’, if not Southern California’s, largest brick-clad building.
- The theatre has had a succession of marquees, starting with simple bronze canopies in 1921, succeeded by 2-line marquees allowing for interchangeable lettering, and finally the neon marquee which you see today on Broadway, which dates to 1949.

### Auditorium Decoration

- The auditorium was originally quite dark, certainly darker than it appears now.
- Flat panels around the proscenium were originally dark green, like those still existing in the ceiling.
- There have been many different curtain styles over the years.
- The chandelier is not original but was added sometime in the 1930s to early 1960s timeframe.
- The auditorium originally sat an audience of 2,450, which makes it the largest theatre on Broadway by audience capacity.

### **Vaudeville at The State**

- Originally vaudeville acts at the State were managed in-house, then in 1925 they were turned-over to Fanchon & Marco, the leading producer of vaudeville entertainment...“The standard by which stage shows are judged” (*Variety*, 1929)
- Elaborate prologue shows, called “Ideas”, were staged prior to movie screenings and often related to the movie being shown – sometimes as a complementary opposite, for instance a movie set in the depths of winter might be preceded by an “Idea” set in the heights of summer.
- Fanchon & Marco used the State to rehearse much of their new material, and it would debut either here at the State or further up Broadway at the Metropolitan Theatre (now demolished), before heading out to tour the West Coast Theatres circuit, if not touring nationally.
- In 1931 the Fanchon & Marco acts were so popular, the State cashed-in on it by putting up a banner advert on the marquee proclaiming the State as the “Birthplace of Fanchon & Marco Stage Ideas”.

### **Main Lobby**

- All tilework is original from the theatre’s opening in 1921.
- Originally there was a second entrance on 7<sup>th</sup> St however it was closed in 1936.
- There was a candy counter originally located in the entrance lobby.
- The upper lobby was originally carpeted, and laid out with potted fan palms, sofas, and plush chairs.

### **Ticket Lobby**

- Note the “flying saucer” light fixture hanging from the central ceiling of the ticket lobby.
- The box office booth has elaborate trim around its top.
- There are notable stenciling features in the ceiling.