

History of the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium

By City of Santa Cruz

The construction of the Civic Auditorium can be traced to a civic improvement campaign that was initiated in Santa Cruz during the mid-1930s by the then Mayor, C.D. Hinkle. Construction on the Auditorium wasn't completed until the early months of 1940, but the need for such a building had been prevalent for many years. The Auditorium was built as part of an improvement campaign that also included the building of a new City Hall and a Fire Station in the late 1930s.

The over-all cost of constructing the Auditorium was slightly over \$200,000. Of this amount, the Public Works Administration allotted \$121,295.

Two men who played a key role in getting the Auditorium built were Mayor Hinkle and State Senator, Mr. H.R. Judah. Both of these men worked endlessly for the passage of a bond issue that would appropriate the funds needed to construct the Auditorium. The bond issue was passed on September 20, 1938 by a three to one margin and less than two years later, the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium became a reality.

The Auditorium was built in such a manner that it became one of the more effective multi-purpose facilities in central and northern California. Permanent seating for almost 1200 spectators was provided in a stadium-like effect around the main floor. Additional moveable seats could also be set up on the main floor.

The Auditorium stage was built at dimensions that would provide an abundance of room for any kind of dramatic productions.

The first Manager of the Civic Auditorium was the previously mentioned H.R. Judah. Being the first Auditorium Manager meant the Mr. Judah would have to face an endless array of initial event scheduling problems and these problems were solved only because of Mr. Judah's endless dedication to his job.

Throughout the years, the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium has been the home for such events as the Miss California Beauty Pageant and for concerts of the Santa Cruz Civic Symphony. The Auditorium has been used by the local schools for their basketball games. Numerous service groups have held their State Conventions in the Civic Auditorium at one time or another. The Auditorium has also been the hope of the Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce.

One of the more pleasing additions to the Auditorium took place in late 1963, when the electronic Carillon was installed in the Parks and Recreation Department office in the Civic Auditorium. The Carillon was donated to the City by Mr. and Mrs. Harold C. Timberlake of Las Vegas as a memorial to Mr. and Mrs. Smith N. Tiffany, long time Santa Cruz residents.

The Carillon can be played by a keyboard inside the Auditorium or by a tape which electronically operates the Carillon. The music is amplified and beamed out over the downtown area by loudspeakers atop the Auditorium. The music is played each day at noon and at five in the afternoon. Mrs. Sylvia McDonough, Santa Cruz organist, plays the Carillon and she also spends endless hours editing musical scores that are later played on the Carillon.

In the last few years, numerous improvements have been made in and around the Civic Auditorium. There has been a vast number of improvements in the equipment used for stage productions. Seating in the auditorium has been refurbished. In fact, the materials used in the refurbishing the seating are identical to those used in each seat at the world famous Astrodome.

The current Manager of the Civic Auditorium is Mr. J. Newell Maddock. The Auditorium is only one of Mr. Maddock's many responsibilities, for he is responsible for every public building in Santa Cruz. This includes such facilities as the new City Hall annex and the new Public Library.

Presently, the Civic Auditorium has events scheduled on one hundred days a year, but this doesn't include numerous days where rehearsals and practices are scheduled. It can readily be seen that the demand for current Auditorium use is high.

One proposal that might affect the future of the Auditorium is the current plan to construct a Convention Center in Santa Cruz. The presence of a Convention Center in Santa Cruz might cause an even greater demand for the use of indoor arena type facilities. This demand will also probably cause an even greater use of Civic Auditorium facilities. The building has given such vital services throughout the years that it will probably continue to be one of the most valuable facilities for the people of Santa Cruz in future years.

Sources

- *Text from: "The History of the Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Department". City of Santa Cruz, 1968, pp.15-16.*

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