

# Theater opened in August, 1948

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CAPITOLA — Many of you recall stealing your first kiss there. Or sneaking your first cigarette in the musty darkness, or for just a couple of dimes, casting your first longing glance at Vivien Leigh or Clark Gable.

Those memories will be all that remain after the lights go down for the last time at The Capitola Theater.

One week from today, the turquoise landmark, the local spot for cheap popcorn, 70-cent cokes and \$4 double features will close its doors forever. On the theater's final night, manager Audrey Jacobs, who has run the operation nearly single-handedly for four decades, will show the Three Musketeers.

The film, starring Gene Kelly, was one of the first ever shown at the theater, which opened Aug. 6, 1948. Because The Capitola — as it is known to locals — is famous for its double features, Jacobs said, the Three Musketeers will show twice on Thursday and tickets will be sold as usual.

"The time has come," Jacobs said about her decision to depart her long-held post at the helm, the box office and the candy counters of the theater.

The little woman with the big, white bun is a bit sad about the end of her reign as the first lady of film in Capitola. She said she would keep running the theater but times have changed.

"The day of this kind of theater no longer exists," Jacobs said, adding that independent theaters showing second-run films just can't compete with nine-film multiplexes.



Audrey Jacobs, who has been more or less a one-woman show at the Capitola Theater for four decades, will show 'The Three Musketeers' a week from tonight.

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So in December, Jacobs sold the theater to a San Jose-area couple who now plan a time-share hotel, retail center and performing-arts theater on the site. Project planner Dennis Norten said the developers have recently contributed \$10,000 to a traffic study the city has commissioned for Capitola Village. After they get the results they will submit plans and applications to the city. Norten believes that will happen in Decem-

ber.

But for the sake of her patrons, Jacobs decided she would lease the theater from the new owners and run it through the summer.

"The Capitola" started as a dream of Joseph Jacobs, Audrey's father, and Arthur Mayer, her uncle. The two decided to build a 500-seat, \$70,000 movie house to occupy them in their retirement years.

But the two never retired, and Jacobs, fresh out of college, was recruited to run the theater.

"I was just going to run it for a couple of years," she said with a chuckle. "It didn't work out that way."

"The Pirate" starring Judy Garland and Gene Kelly was the first film to grace The Capitola's silver screen, with admission a whopping 65 cents. In 1948, the brand-new theater had only two oth-

ers in the county to compete with: the Del Mar and the old Santa Cruz Theater. Shortly afterward, the Soquel, the Rio and the Skyview Drive-in arrived.

Jacobs will be the first to tell you that not too much has changed at The Capitola Theater since Garland and Kelly danced through "The Pirate." The color of the building is about the same, the rust-colored floor tiles that adorn the entrance haven't changed and certainly Jacobs still sits in the same ticket booth she has for decades.

Her customers appreciate that. They call it a "neighborhood place" where you could see people you knew and bring a sandwich inside without getting in trouble.

Longtime Capitola local Peter Hubback recalled going to The Capitola by himself at age 9 to see Paul Newman in the 1956 film "Somebody Up There Likes Me."

"We used to go every Sunday night," he said.

Jacobs, who said she has spent nearly every day except Sunday afternoons at the theater for the last 40 years, hasn't decided what she'll do after squaring away all the final paperwork.

"My whole life is so tied into the theater," Jacobs said. "I'm going to miss everything."

