

Creating a history of the Arena Theater begins with a controversy. There is a question about the year the theater was built.

Some say it was 1927. That date is included on a Winter 1995 – 1996 edition of “The Renaissance Report”, a publication of the committee that rebuilt the theater in the mid-90s. Others say it opened in 1927, promptly burnt and re-opened in 1929. However, according to book, *The Early Days of Point Arena*, by Steve Oliff and Cheri Carlstedt, the Grand Hotel, site of the current theater, burned on July 25, 1927, from a massive fire that started in the hotel building and destroyed 25 buildings on both sides of Main Street.

If the theater was built on the site of the Grand Hotel, which was destroyed in the fire of 1927, it is unrealistic to think the theater was built on the same site that year and was consumed by a second 1927 fire and re-opened in 1929.

A 1990 document from the State Office of Historic Preservation in Sacramento designates the Point Arena Main Street as a Historic Commercial District and states that, “...the theater is a strong contributor to the historic district.” Significantly, it lists the construction date as 1928. It does not state a month of that year but if construction began in late 1928, it is conceivable that the theater could have been at least partially built in 1929 and opened in 1931 as described on page 97 of *The Early Days of Point Arena*, quoting the following from the January 10, 1931 Point Arena Record:

"Alfred Bishop and Len Kendall made a trip to Fort Bragg Tuesday and brought down a load of chairs for the new movie hall. Work on the new hall is almost complete and the machine (projector) will soon be installed. They hope to have it in working order in a couple of weeks."

The quote would indicate that the theatre opened early in 1931. Steve Oliff offers the following information: “*The Arena Theater was built after the disastrous fire of '27, so the basic building has been there since '31.*” Based on the construction date indicated on the document referred to above from the Historic Preservation office in Sacramento, it is highly possible that with starting construction in 1928, the theater could have been built over a two to three year period and opened in early 1931. An alternative view is that if construction began in early 1928 it wouldn't need to have taken three years to construct the theater. It may have opened for live performances as was common in the 1920s, then added movie screening in 1931. However, supporters of this theory could be confused with Scotts Opera House a vaudeville venue also destroyed by fire.

Until new information is found, this document will declare a construction range of 1928 through 1930 with an opening date January or February 1931.

The theater was built by M.J. Pellascio and remained under the control of his estate for

decades. His descendant, Jim Pellascio, managed the business for Pellascio, who held several properties on the west side of Main Street and last owned and operated a gas station north of the theater.

During the depression and later when television became common in most American households, theater attendance dropped and many deteriorating theaters were closed or turned over to new owners. Often churches bought and used them for religious services, but with broadcast television reception sketchy at best on the Redwood Coast, Point Arena's "movie house" as it was referred to locally, remained an important entertainment venue.

Inside the theater looked quite different from today. The lobby was once a dentist's office until about 1971. Prior to 1971 Bid Eastwood operated a Barbershop in the concessions area and for a short time around 1972; a used bookstore was there.

In 1978 Bill Golly became the projectionist for Pete Giannini who operated the Theater for the Pellascio Estate. In 1983 Raven Earlygrow, Rene Koch, Roxanne Madera, and Rebecca and Bill Golly took an 8-year lease on the building under the business name Fly-by-Night Productions. Records show a Consent to Use document in April 1984. They immediately closed the building and made extensive repairs including new seating, a new screen, and a new curtain, carpets and paint. Prior to that there were rats and bats and some say fleas in the theater.

Fly-By-Night re-opened in Mid-February of 1984 with a gala event and a screening of the film *Grey Fox*. They continued showing movies and producing live entertainment for the next several years. Their first live theatrical production presented Gunter Meisner in "A Report to the Academy" on April 28, 1984. The first of many Arena Light and Talent Shows was on September 8, 1984. To celebrate their first anniversary, Fly-By-Night had the first-ever film festival with 10 movies over a 3 day period. Earlier in the mid seventies, Raven and Bill had shown weekly 8mm art and foreign films across and up the street, upstairs at 275 Main St. the downstairs of which was then the Natural Foods Store.

Early in 1986 Raven and Bill realized that live shows were not always profitable and were soliciting donations from locals to keep the shows happening. As Fly-By-Night was a for-profit company, there was a reluctance by some to donate to such an entity. Thus, came the idea to form a non-profit that would do live presentations and Fly-By-Night would show films. In April 1986, they organized a 501(c)(3) local non-profit organization called the Arena Renaissance Company (ARC). The first Board of Directors listed Rebecca Golly, Julius Palocz and Raven. This arrangement allowed for the smooth daily operation for showing movies while allowing community

supporters to ensure the maintenance of the nearly 60-year-old community resource and subsidize, when necessary, live shows.

In January 1995, a major storm caused significant damage to the building. Leon Schneiderman, ARC board member, described it as, *“causing a separation of the stucco siding on the south wall adjacent to the backstage to separate from the wooden stud structure, which was bandaged in a non-code repair by the owners at the time.”* A month later, on February 14, 1995, the building was condemned and the whole structure immediately red tagged and force to close by the Mendocino County Building Department. This was a big loss to the community as it looked like the building was not salvageable. There were problems with earthquake safety and also wind safety—a big blow could have taken it down.

Leon continued, *“Once condemned, Fly-by-Night and ARC were without a venue. Up to this point there had been no talk of buying and restoring the theater- a task of huge proportions and commitment and not one that either party wanted on their plate. ARC and Fly met, talked, and ARC, as a non-profit able to raise tax-deductible donations was the obvious buyer.”*

“Fly-by-Night would have first crack as the entity who could rent the building for cinema use. Board member Deborah Fosdick (nee. Turner) and Shannon Hughes put up \$2500 to open an escrow after several months of haggling with the estate. Prior to the purchase feelers went out to test for community backing with regard to the feasibility of raising all the money and we plunged in.”

On March 1, 1995 The ARC Board of Directors voted unanimously to purchase the building. The purchase was completed with the closing of escrow on November 7, 1995, for the cost of \$130,000. Leon remembers the board members as: Deborah Turner, President; Leslie Tuche, Vice President; Leon Schneidermann, Treasurer; Shannon Hughes, Secretary; Josh Silverstein, Organizer. Also in November the board borrowed \$40,000 from the City of Point Arena. At that time the Pacific Real Estate office occupied what is now the lobby.

Board member Leslie Lindborg wrote a letter to the Independent Coastal Observer (ICO) stating, *“We can't let this theater die.”* She and partner, Peter Reimuller, held an initial organizational meeting at their home and a call was put out asking for help and ideas to bring the theater back to health. As is the nature of this dynamic community the letter generated a lot of interest and sometime after, a sign on the marquee proclaimed the announcement, *“This Theater Shall Rise Again.”*

There was some skepticism about whether money could be raised to rebuild the theater. But that was overcome and interest grew significantly from that point. ARC's plan to

raise needed funds was put into action. During the next two years, through a series of fundraisers the organization raised close to \$300,000 for a renovation. Additionally, they borrowed or financed \$130,000 to fund the purchase of the derelict building from the Pellascio Estate.

This dedicated community group developed a plan to raise funds needed to rebuild and reopen the theater to bring it back to life. The plan included much of the work to be completed by volunteers but a great deal of money was also needed for materials and some professional work. They developed a group structure of committees, a mission statement, and a timeline for money raising and exterior work needed.

Leon added, *“In January 1996, during the renovation, Fly-by-Night changed their name to Reel Cinema Point Arena (ed. commonly known as Arena Cinema). Bill Golly, Raven, and Patrick Plesa bought new projection sound gear and a screen for opening after restoration. Rent paid by Arena Cinema would pay the mortgage for ARC.”*

By spring of 1996, \$65,000 of the projected \$300,000 had been raised. The fundraising committee was receiving some professional help in the process of applying for grants and a few small ones were received. Fundraising events were planned including a kickoff festival in June and July. Construction was to start the first of June 1996 with target date of completion late spring of 1997. A special Sea Ranch committee was formed to join with ARC and two new board members were added, Nancy Owen from Sea Ranch and Shelly Gerstein from Gualala. While the reconstruction work was going on, live performances continued at Point Arena High School. (See Issue 2 of The Renaissance Report)

During the summer of 1996, Jim and Mary Alinder joined forces with ARC to help with the fundraising. On June 1 the six week fundraising festival began, with a series of events held at various places around Point Arena. (See Issue 3 of The Summer Report)

In September of 1997 Frank Hughes re-possessed the lots north of the Theater from Tony Gaussoin, who Hughes reportedly said had not “paid one dime”. At that time Patricia Schwindt Accounting occupied the upstairs office now known as the Yellow Room.

Throughout this period of 1995-1997, the Point Arena City Council helped the financial situation of the theater through numerous means of support. Eric Dahlhoff described the City’s involvement as follows:

“When the ARC purchased and remodeled the building ('95-'97), they took out a mortgage. I think there were at least 2 loans - one from a private lender (ed. In October 1997 the Theater received a gap loan from Judith Carter in the amount of \$175,000) &

one from the City of P.A. Eventually they consolidated these loans with the City. They purchased the parking lot (ed. after the renovation in March of 2003); with another private loan and a substantial donation from the property's owner, Frank Hughes. At some point the City Council allowed ARC to put their payments on "hold" because of financial difficulties. (Several years I think.

When ARC sold the parking lot to the City they paid off some of the mortgage & re-negotiated the terms of the remaining mortgage. When ARC became ATA & purchased the cinema equipment, it took out a new loan from a private individual. (No way they could have gotten a bank loan!) Shortly after, the City allowed ATA to consolidate both loans, with new terms, including payments of principle-only for 5 years. (Total approx \$195K???)”

By midsummer, work went on for 6 days every week and included seismic upgrading, replacing the floors, walls and stucco, and ripping out the mold and rot. Trusses were reinforced and steel beams were added. The structure's capacity was expanded, the balcony was rebuilt, and a sheltering marquee added. New wiring and plumbing were needed to bring it up to earthquake standards and to bring the theater into the new century.

The real work was well underway and much was accomplished during the summer of 1996 thanks to the efforts of architect Richard Perkins, engineer Kurt Menning, foreman and general contractor Bill Fosdick, and building coordinator, Peter Reimuller. By mid-summer about 25% of the work had been completed. Digging the foundation, rebar forming and one pour for a quarter of the foundation had been completed. The structural upgrading of the roof was finished and 700 machine bolts had been put in place. Engineer Menning gave special credit to the tear up and cleanup crews calling them “unsung heroes.” All the organizational systems were in place. Donations of \$112,475 of the projected \$300,000 needed had already been raised. One person encouraged by the progress remarked, “The theatre is the soul of Point Arena.” (See issue 4 of The Report Fall 1996)

An attachment on issue 4 of The Report describes all the accomplishment of the first 8 months –it’s a long impressive list!

Peter Reimuller described his role during the restoration process. *“I was the coordinator between the architect, the engineer, the contractors, and the board. As part of that job I scheduled details for the electrical, the plumbing, the stucco, the roof and all the subcontractors. I did a lot of research into the historical basis of the building and worked with the architect to help make a lot of the decisions about what to put where.*

“I helped design the improvements to the stage that kept it dual purpose for movies and shows alike. Bill Golly installed the projection screen and sound system and his

business Fly by Night, now known as Reel Point Arena (RPA), bought all the equipment. I coordinated the volunteer labor and scheduled the phases of construction. Bill Fosdick was our contractor and on the scene for most of the rebuild.”

Leon described his work on the reconstruction: *“Actually there were three contractors, Bill Fosdick (was the original main paid contractor) in charge of the demolition to make it safe, Terry Joy, for a short period of time after Bill Fosdick left, was responsible for the reconstruction, and Randy Morris and Deborah Turner, now Morris, for overall design, color palette, ornate details, use of tin ceilings...I was a main man for all three of the paid contractors having had construction experience. I volunteered an average of four days a week and more as each phase came towards an end.*

“Also I was a board member and treasurer. I could do everything construction and many special tasks were completed by me, like installing tin ceilings, attachment of stucco relief parts, conceiving a way to pull big wire from front to back, install conduit for that-including getting in between lobby ceiling and second floor offices with 1.5 inch metal conduit under projection room floor. I did something everywhere.”

Peter described the balcony as, *”A major problem when it was discovered that it was supported almost entirely by two termite ridden and partially rotten posts. During musical performances, people often danced in the balcony and it would significantly bounce up and down. During the restoration we realized it was very, very close to collapsing. It was restored with sturdy posts and new beams.”*

Peter added some additional information by describing, *“When we were working on the theater the lot next door, now the parking lot, was not owned by the theater and the owner (Bill Hay) would not allow us cross it for construction. That's why there is no emergency exit door on that side. In the very beginning when we started demolishing the rotten parts of the theater we had to put some of the materials over the bank out behind the theater to a waiting truck down below. It was an unpopular decision by Bill Hay and he soon realized it and allowed us to walk on his lot when doing our stuccoing of that wall.”*

Most of this work was done by volunteers who donated their time, energy and skills. Workers were recruited by clever things such as developing a marquee sign that said, *“If I had a broom, I would bring it to the theater. Next cleanup crews on Saturdays 9 to 3:30.”* Locals and restaurants supplied lunches every workday to all the workers--sometimes 25 or more on any one day. S and B, the market in Manchester, gave a 25% discount on all our building materials for the renovation. Gualala Building Supply (GBS) also made some contributions.

The massive work included crews digging under the foundation taking out old sections 6 feet at a time where they could add rebar and pour cement. When doing this the crew found some interesting, but unlikely things. The remains of an old outhouse about 5 x 6 feet in size, was found right in the middle of the theater floor! In the outhouse area they found such treasures as clay beer bottles, wine bottles, and old buttons. There was even a large bottle that had held carbolic acid, often used at the time to sterilize, (or perhaps to dissolve a body opined Peter).

Plumbing, dry rot and termite damage was ripped out. All the walls were reinforced and the proscenium area was built-up with steel beams up the sides and across the top for support. Large wood beams were also added and the double plywood sheathing may have made the Arena stage the safest place in town to be in an earthquake. The first 2 rows of seats were taken out, and the 3rd and 4th rows were installed to be removable so the dance floor could be larger when desired. Much of the steel work was provided by local artist and blacksmith "Kentucky John" Mellanson.

Another \$212, 400 of the new projected cost of \$357,000 still needed to be raised. Funds were only half way to the goal, \$147,000, with \$150,000 still needed. But by then the working crews felt like they were "Closing in" and working on the final deadline of July 1996, "So that we can celebrate the completion of our labors and the significant date in our theatre's history, its 70th anniversary." This is an implied reference to the theatre being built in 1927 which does not appear to be true?

Much progress had been made but a call was out to "invest in the theatre." One source of funding was the solicitation for donors to become Life Time Members by donating \$5,000. As a benefit, they would receive life time movie passes.

In 1997 interior details were restored in an enhanced art deco spirit. Genuine cast iron upholstered antique seats were purchased from a warehouse in the bay area that had seats taken from old theaters all over California. They were installed after being completely restored to like new condition, refurbished with new powder coating paint, hardware, foam, fabric, wood armrests, and added foam for comfort. Space in front of each seat was increased a little. The result is a very comfortable seat and the new 177 seats were installed in curved arcs.

All 177 seats were "sold" for \$500 donations each, and a plaque on each with a name still exists.

At the end of the restoration a new red curtain was put up at the cost of \$7,000.

The projection room was remodeled and the state of the art film projection, a used Italian projector purchased by Reel Point Arena, was installed including a large horizontal spool and platter system for changing films seamlessly. One of the original

arc light projectors is now on display in the lobby. Soon after, a digital projector was installed on the front of the balcony, but it was underpowered and made for some dark DVDs and operas that were shown then. A new, brighter projector was installed after ARC purchased the cinema equipment.

A good heating system was worked in, along with exhaust fans in the bathrooms, projection room and concessions. The fine interior design of the newly rebuilt theater was designed by a local cabinet maker and designer, Randy Morris.

When it reopened in September 1997, theater goers found the marquee saying, “We’re back” and “Arena Theater Welcomes You.”

The whole process was a Herculean feat, an amazing accomplishment by a group of dedicated volunteers and completed faster and more efficiently than anyone had imagined. This was a group of local people who love their community and knew how to make magic happen. It still continues with volunteers maintaining and constantly upgrading the facility as theater and community needs dictate.

The work was done in keeping with its original art deco design by local artisans and many other skilled and dedicated volunteers throughout the community.

By 1999 the parking lot had come on the market and it became known that the city wanted it for a parking lot. Board President Deborah Fosdick (nee. Turner) opened negotiations with Frank Hughes for the purchase of the parking lot. Hughes and the board were unable to reach agreement until 2003 .The theater board bought it with borrowed money and held it until the city could figure out how to consummate the purchase. Owner, Frank Hughes, thought he had sold the lot to Tony Gaussoin and Bill Hay, but never received any payments and soon repossessed the lot. The lot sold for \$90,000, but Hughes was convinced to write off half the sale price as a donation and local businessman, Greg Jirak, gave the theater a gap loan for much of the rest of the purchase price.

Finishing Touches

The following is a partial list of details attended to following the major work being completed.

Outside the Theater

The kiosk ticket booth was designed and built by Jeff Gyving. He used the old one as a pattern, but improved its appearance. It was moved forward a couple of feet from its

original location. The booth was painted by Madeline Kibbe.

The old marquee was entirely replaced using both a new and old-style designed by Randy Morris and built by Richey Wassermann. Before, there was only a reader board flush on the front wall of the theater. Richey made the marquee boxes holding the lights and the plastic reader boards and also built the exterior poster boxes designed by Randy.

The copper trim decorating the outside doors, the inside ceilings of the lobbies and a few other places, is from a modern commercial supplier of old fashioned pressed tin and copper décor. Merita Wasserman added: "All copper for marquee and exterior boxes were formed and installed by Richey Wassermann and Peter Priato."

The architectural detail on the outside, anything that deviates from a flat vertical wall of stucco, is accomplished with architectural foam that is glued in place and covered with stucco. This goes for the beautiful interior crown molding too.

Decorative deco-style tiles on the outside facade were made by Lucinda Johnson with help from Barbara Pratt and Cindy Naoum. They also made the tiles inside both lobby bathrooms which were set by John Luna.

The Lobby

Decorative tiles on the lobby entrance ceiling were purchased as commercial tin stampings. The tin was painted by David Floyd, Andrea McFarland and several others.

Sconces in the lobby and along the top of the auditorium were crafted by Ed Hurley.

Two large poster boxes on the lobby wall, used for flyers of coming events, were made by Randy Morris, who did the interior design for the concept and color of moldings. Randy did the entire compliment of cabinets for many locations, including the concession room.

Four plaques on the lobby walls hold names of the four levels of financial donations for the 1997 restoration.

The old projector in the lobby is the original Simplex E-7 purchased in 1939. It was replaced in 1985 with a Simplex 35. The reels originally had to be changed frequently during the movie. In the old projector was a carbon arc lamp that generated the intense light. It often burned the film and you could see the burn on the screen when the film stopped. The original projection booth was clad in galvanized sheet metal because the old nitrate film would explode when it burned. It was the cause of many destroyed theaters. After safety film was invented it was no longer a problem.

Randy Morris did all the final fine design and finishing work in the concession and lobby areas with many volunteers installing and painting it.

The painting above the inside entrance to the theater announcing, "Arena Theatre" was painted in 1997 by Airika Lindsay, or Airika America, as she preferred to be called.

Inside the Theater

The shadow boxes on the side walls hold silhouettes of local scenes designed by Steve Oliff. The boxes surrounding the silhouettes were built by Randy Morris. Handmade lighting fixtures, including rosettes or starlight's above the shadow boxes, were installed and designed and by Ed Hurley. About his role, Steve said, "*I only did a limited amount of volunteer labor on the reconstruction, but along with Dustin Smith, we designed and cut out the silhouettes in the niches. I did 6, and Dustin did 4. We had to rush to finish before the grand opening. And the opening movie was "Contact," with Jodie Foster and Matthew McConaughey.*"

The rear short wall behind the seats, the bulging shape of the thrust of the stage, the stairs to the projection room, and a few other things were originally in the theater. They were just cleaned and restored.

Additional improvements including the bar in the balcony and offices upstairs were added. There are many lighting and electrical systems and four electric meters for the originally planned 4 tenants. The four intended tenants included the Reel Point Arena in the main auditorium, the theater organization's stage area, and two offices upstairs in the front that had been intended to be rented out. One office was rented to Reel Point Arena and the other, briefly, to a local businessperson, but was soon converted to a meeting room for the board.

Following is a quote from Peter Reimuller: "*Fly by Night built 3 big sound carts which were like towers on rollers back stage. In the old days all the sound in a theater was projected from right behind the screen. A lot of the sound was lost getting through the screen to the audience. The carts were each about 3 feet square and 10 feet high. They were a pain in the butt when you wanted to lift the screen and use the stage. They had to be rolled to the rear of the back stage area. So Eric Dahlhoff engineered the new speaker system and he and Leslie Dahlhoff donated them and Eric and Mitch McFarland installed them near the ceiling.*

They are now above the screen and nobody is the wiser. During a movie you can't tell where the sound comes from. The sound system is THX (Lucas Film) certifiable, but it costs money to get the certification so we have never bothered. The Dolby sound system has adjustable amplification but rarely needs adjusting or calibration. It was donated by

the Dolby Company. The donation was arranged by Alan Levine.

There are surround speakers along the walls and under the balcony to round out the system. Later four giant sub-woofers in the front of the stage area were installed with the help of Tim Brooks—they can be cranked up to feel like an earthquake in there.”

There are a wiring systems for the stage lights, the sound system, and burglar and fire alarm systems. Also wiring for communications during shows and video transmission wiring.

There are original footlights on the front of the stage, covered over and waiting to be rebuilt someday if they are ever to be used again.

Heating systems in the main area of the theater were upgraded and completely relocated with new ducting. Later, fans were installed to bring the heat down from the ceiling.

Curtain warmers, warm colored lights which illuminate the main curtain, were installed by Bill Golly. The red lights made a shape which looks like a giant red heart on the red curtain.

Behind the proscenium arch, small narrow balconies on each side of the stage allow for adjusting lights for individual show needs, and for storage.

A scrim curtain was later added backstage for back light muting when needed. It's a drop curtain that appears either opaque or transparent depending on the lighting from front or behind.

There are two small backstage dressing rooms and a bathroom.

A large rolling freight door opens to the rear outside allowing for loading and unloading sets or band equipment to the back stage.

Roof covering was renewed in 1997 and the stage “house” (the tall space way above the stage) was increased in height to be able to “fly” sets in the future if pulleys and ropes were installed for them.”

“Ears” for stage lights were installed for stage lighting in the auditorium side walls, one set up front and one set toward the rear.

Above the stage is the Green Room and bathroom. The Green Room and the entire extension to the theater below it was added by a large group of volunteers headed up by, Crowdog Productions, owned by Raven. This was done after Fly-by-Night took a lease

in the mid-80s.

Memories from Leon: *“Originally, Fly by Night was Raven, Bill, Rene and Roxanne. After the condemnation and beginning the new order, Fly by Night became Real People and was then comprised of Raven, Bill, and Patrick Plesa. My involvement with Real People came later. Around 1999, Raven was setting off to San Miguel Allende with wife Lucinda Johnson-- ex of writer Dennis Johnson, and he felt another person was need to keep Real running. I had been a film buff all my life and with friends in the business in LA could feel out what was worth showing.*

“Raven approached me and I went to the board for approval to be part of both organizations. That was approved and even sought as communication between the two groups was poor re scheduling and other aspects. I no longer voted on any issue re the cinema business called Arena Cinema. Mindy and I took over concessions from Sigrid Hillscan who was pregnant and had been running concessions since 1984. At this time Mindy and I worked snack bar and eventually took over layout of the monthly flyer and calendar, which was discontinued later when a website was developed. I also helped select films and became president of ARC when Deborah moved away—we swapped jobs as president and treasurer. Leslie and Peter traveled more. Merita went to school in San Rafael and Mindy, not a board member, and I did almost every show aside from cinema business for almost two years.

“Many years later, maybe 2010, there was a grant (maybe from the Mendocino Community Foundation). There was much talk at board meetings—this was now the new AT board which I came back to –not as a board member, but to help book films, which in the process of various board transitions had become disarrayed. Much talk about the Green Room included my suggestion that an interior stair be included. Discussions of the choices in this mini remodel was never ending and the grant was about to run out. I called Jeff and asked if he would help me and then told the board we would do the design of what is there now, which addressed most of the needs but left room for the possible indoor stairway in the planning if it could ever come to be.”

Spearheaded by Lena Bullamore, the Green Room was refurbished and furnished with green leather chairs and a decorative wall mirror. The work occurred in several stages. It was started in 1997 and finished in 2012. Mitch McFarland helped clean out junk in the room before Jeff Gyving and Leon Schneiderman contributed the labor. Bob Schwein, who made numerous upgrades to the building while on the board, contributed the finishing touches near the end of the project, including plumbing hot water to the bathroom.

There is a small storage area behind a side wall of the Green Room

Work after the 1997 restoration:

Around 2006, Jeff Gyving built the sound board cabinet on balcony right. It is attached to the balcony right wall, near the front of the balcony. It opens and lays down flat to present the sound board when it is wanted, and during movies it is out of the way.

In or around 2005 - 2007, the space above the lobby in what is now called the Yellow Room came into use as a meeting room.

By late 2006, Reel Cinema was looking for a buyer for their business. ARC was approached to purchase the business, but was not interested in the assumption of the business. In August 2006, Arena Cinema ceased operating the movie business. After a good deal of negotiation, it was agreed that ARC would purchase the equipment for \$75,000, but not the name, and Reel Cinema was unincorporated. Negotiations with Arena Cinema dragged on through all of the second half of 2006 with the deal finally concluded in January 2007.

During the transition period Steve Oliff briefly operated the movie business followed by board member Tim Brooks.

In December 2006, the board hired David Steffen as General Manager to run theater operations.

On February 15, 2007, the Arena Renaissance Company applied for and was granted a change of name by the Secretary of State to Arena Theater Association (ATA), which more clearly reflects the organization and its function.

From Eric Dahlhoff: *"The 1st Digital Projector was installed after ARC (aka ATA) purchased the cinema equipment from Golly/Earlygrow et al. The Eiki projector allowed the Film Club to happen, showing DVDs.*

Also at this time, the four 18" sub-woofers were installed under the stage, by Tim Brooks & myself (Eric) for live shows. Sometime within the first year of ATA running cinema, I convinced the board to let me replace the 3 behind-the-screen speakers with a new system that would be used for live shows and cinema. I donated \$5000 towards this, and ATA paid for the rest. (The total cost was about \$14,000) I designed the system so that it could be easily used for cinema /DVD's/ music/Live Shows. Mitch McFarland and Brad Nierman installed the speakers above the stage (a mighty complicated task!!) I installed everything else. The subs were integrated into the system & now used for cinema as well. Also added a new mixing board & a rack of equipment for live shows, mounted in slick cabinets built by Jeff Gyving."

In 2009, ATA negotiated a loan of \$155,000 from the City of Point Arena. The city agreed to let the organization pay interest only until 2016 at which time the theater would need to start paying interest plus principal. That meant that the monthly payments would go from \$419 to about \$850. This was really more than the theater could afford at that time.

In 2015, Lena Bullamore created a "Have A Seat" campaign whereby the theater seats were available for patrons to have their names on a plaque attached to the arm of the seat of their choice in exchange for a \$1,000 donation. Plaques were attached by Jeff Gyving on the arm, while the original donor's name remained underneath the seat. Each donor was also recognized every movie night on the big screen. People were very generous and within a few months the mortgage was paid down by \$50,000. The enthusiasm for paying down the mortgage continued and by July 8, 2020 the entire mortgage had been paid off. As donations of \$1,000 continued to come in, these donations are put toward the solar system installation referred to as the Go Green Campaign.

A new screen was installed on April 8, 2009. It was donated by the Soroptimists, and hung by Bob Schwein. The counterweighted screen and frame rises when the full stage is needed for events. It is without perforations and made the picture a little brighter.

In 2011, major changes to the by-laws gave theater members voting rights. Board members would henceforth be elected by the membership instead of new board members being approved only by the sitting board. Directors would be elected to three year terms with 3 of the 9 board members elected each year.

In 2012 a new digital projector was needed to show films as hard copies of major films would no longer be distributed. In April of that year, a group formed to raise the \$82,000 needed to buy the projector. The committee included: Tim Balambao, Jon David Jones (Texas Jon), John Hooper, Bob Schwein, Dagmar Moseley, Phil Marrinan and Barbara Pratt. They called the fund raiser "Go Digital or Go Dark," and by September of that year the group had raised \$86,000.

Bob Schwein researched all the available projectors on the market that would meet the configuration of our theater's criteria. This is how Bob described the process. *"The size of our screen, the throw distance to our screen, the down-angle and location of the existing lens port, electrical requirements, projector size and weight, existing structural capacity of the existing pedestal weight and projector ventilation system. There were considerations for whether we wanted to spend extra money for three dimension capabilities and whether to select a 2,000 or a 4,000 pixel wide lamp source for \$20,000*

to \$30,000 additional.”

Bob Schwein and Tim Balambao visited several installations and had many conversations with suppliers while selecting the best projector to fill our needs. They decided on a Barco 2K projector, which has the capabilities to add three dimension at a later time. At the time there was a big push to go 3D by the industry, though it has not become the predicted rage. These factors were put into a matrix and presented to the Board for evaluation.

To get the 500 pound behemoth into the theater projection booth, they coordinated delivery by a freight truck, loaded it onto a dolly and temporarily wheeled it into the lobby. A platform and a series of ramps were designed and built to provide access from the top of the stairway to the booth. A highly coordinated lift day was planned and started at 6:00 AM. Nelson Crane volunteered their equipment to make the lift and set the projector on the temporary platform.

It was then rolled on the dolly up the ramps by four volunteers and into the booth. The four strong guys then lifted it into position on its pedestal. Electricians and a technician from Barco were standing by to make the electrical connections do the start-up and calibrations. There were lots of “oohs and aaas” when the projector was fired up – what a difference. No more film splicing, shipping film reels at great cost, etc. The whole installation took three days of down time before the first digital film was shown on the silver screen. Though the committee had estimated that the theater would have to close for a minimum of five days.

Eric Dahlhoff wrote, “About 2 years ago (ed. 2014), because I was worried about the possibility of fire caused by the on-stage incandescent lights, I, offered to pay for 1/2 the cost to replace with LED lights & a new controller. (\$2400 total) Dave Jordan & Rufus & Mitch helped design & install.”

In the summer of 2016 the Board of Directors accepted a low interest \$75,000 loan from some members to install solar panels on the roof of the theater. This expense included installing new 40-year roofing material prior to placing the panels. As \$1,000 donations from the Have-A-Seat campaign continue to come they are put toward repaying the solar loan, a project referred to as the Go Green campaign.

Also in 2016, Jake Stillman installed a new digital sound system.

There have been many other maintenance needs since the initial restoration.

In the men’s room off the lobby, the repairs and wall paint needed after the area was vandalized with graffiti was completed by Bob Schwein. Bob also built and installed a

period wall mirror in the men's room.

In February, 2019 the hand-operated rigging for lifting and lowering the movie screen had become quite a burden. Mitch McFarland sourced and installed, with the assistance of Tim McMurtry and Rick White, a motorized winch to perform the tasks.

In 2019 Board President Mitch McFarland applied for a permanent on-site theater liquor license. It was granted February 12, 2020.

Theater sound man Chris Campbell donated all fees from his sound tech work at live shows for 2018 and 2019 to a "front fills" fund to improve sound quality at concerts. Chris, Jake Stillman and Eric Dahloff installed the equipment in August 2020.

The history of the Arena Theater will continue to be written as the theater evolves and continues to serve the coastal community.