

2011 GOVERNOR'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

Bayview Opera House



The restored façade of the Bayview Opera House.

Built in 1888 by South San Francisco Masonic Lodge No. 212 as a performance hall adjoining their lodge, the 300-seat South San Francisco Opera House (Bayview Opera House) was the first cultural building in the neighborhood and served for decades as the social hub of the Bayview Hunters Point district.

In 2004, with the support of Nancy Pelosi, the building received a Save America's Treasures grant for \$197,535 to restore the theatre's hardwood floors. The project was carried out by the building's owner, the SF Arts Commission, and the tenant organization, Bayview Opera House, Inc., who managed the project and was awarded the grant from NPS. The project is noteworthy for having restored the damaged proscenium and uncovered the original Douglas fir floor from 1888 (thought to have been replaced with plywood), but it also saw the building listed on the National Register and donation of a conservation easement to San Francisco Architectural Heritage (its 61st such easement). (Both were required by Save America's Treasures and required additional grant funding from the City of San Francisco's Historic Preservation Fund.)

The Bayview Opera House is a community cultural center in SF's most underserved neighborhood, challenged by high poverty, unemployment, truancy, health issues and violence. Centrally located along the main commercial corridor, it is well situated to become the main hub for cultural activities in Bayview Hunters Point. The brilliantly restored floor of the main auditorium transformed the 122-year old Italianate-Victorian building from a low-income, dilapidated facility to an elegant venue worthy of the pride of the community. Though there remains much to do—the balcony can't be used until it is brought up to seismic standards, grants are needed to landscape the next door parking lot, and a city plan to build an adjoining outdoor theatre is shelved—the Opera House hosted a 300-kid summer camp and now has 170 local children enrolled in after school and preschool programs.

Learn more about the history of the Bayview Opera House:

<https://www.bvoh.org/aboutUs/history/pdf/HistoryOfRuthWilliamsMemorialTheatre.pdf>