

# A LOOK AT THE EMPRESS

One of the theatres to be visited during our ATOS Convention '83 is the Empress, in Vallejo, California. The theatre originally opened as a vaudeville house in 1911, using an or-



chestra for the vaudeville acts and a piano for silent films. In the 1940's it was redecorated in the "Fox West Coast" style, with gold leaf swirls around the proscenium and on the ceiling, accented with indirect lighting. Closed from 1965 to 1980, the house fell into extreme disrepair. The seats were removed and serious leaks developed in the roof.

William G. Elliott, NorCal ATOS member, theatre enthusiast and lifetime resident of Vallejo, purchased the theatre in 1980. He restored it inside and out at great cost, including

the installation of all new seats (about 400), and, for the first time in its history, a pipe organ!

The organ is a Wurlitzer Style D (Opus 952) to which a Marimba Harp has been added. It was originally installed in 1924 in the Gaiety Theatre in Santa Maria, California, but was in a home in Los Altos, California, when Bill Elliott purchased it. As there were no chambers in the Empress, they were constructed on the stage. Renovation and installation of the organ was done by Al and Gloria Comtois. □

