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Painters Restoring Memorial Hall Proscenium Arch

ORANGE, Calif., Jan. 11, 2010 --Painters are at work inside Chapman University's historic Memorial Hall this week, restoring the 950-seat auditorium's ornate proscenium arch to its former glory. When the building opened in 1921 as the auditorium for Orange High School, which was then located on the site, the arch framing the stage was detailed with multi-colored paints highlighting the details of the rosette-and-acanthus-leaf reliefs. Over the years since, the original multi-colors were covered up with layers of single-color paints, obscuring the details.

Chapman College (which later became Chapman University) purchased the old Orange High School campus in 1954 and moved to the site from its previous location in Los Angeles.

The current re-painting project, being carried out while Chapman is in the midst of its January interterm break between semesters, is meant to return the proscenium arch colors as closely as possible to what they were originally intended to be. The colors are based on hues that are consistent with the period in which the building was constructed, said Kris Eric Olsen, vice president of campus planning and operations. The restoration work has the painters detailing the acanthus leaves in beige and dark brown and the rosettes in red, against a white background - a typical 1920s-era decorative scheme.

Listed in the National Registry for Historical Buildings, the three-story, 35,195-square-foot building, fronted by four classical Doric columns, houses the offices of the president, chancellor, executive vice presidents and the Chapman Auditorium. The understated elegance of the building has made it an attractive location for scenes in such popular movies such as *Crimson Tide*, *Accepted*, *Rocky and Bullwinkle* and *That Thing You Do*. Memorial Hall's Chapman Auditorium is currently Chapman University's largest stage (the university is raising funds for a new performing arts center), hosting Chapman's annual American Celebration stage show, as well as official university functions and performances by the university choirs, orchestra, wind symphony and opera. Many famous speakers have lectured to Chapman audiences from its stage, including Eleanor Roosevelt in 1959, Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1961, poet Carl Sandburg (also in 1961), and, in more recent years, such luminaries as poet Maya Angelou, author Salman Rushdie and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel (who will return to speak at Chapman on April 25).

The painting restoration work inside Memorial Hall is scheduled to be completed sometime next week.