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Paul and Lillian Mundt donated to Colonial Fox Theatre a set of marquee letters from the demolished DuPage Theatre in the Mundt's hometown of Lombard, Ill.

Colonial Fox welcomes new letters

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PITTSBURG —

The historic and beautiful DuPage Theatre of Lombard, Ill., was demolished May 14, 2007, despite the efforts of devoted friends to save it.

However, part of the theater will live on in Pittsburg as a result of a gift from the Friends of the DuPage Theatre, who have donated a set of marquee letters to the Colonial Fox Theatre.

Paul and Lillian Mundt, Lombard, presented the letters Monday to Vonnie Corsini, executive director of the Colonial Fox Theatre Foundation.

"I have relatives in Pittsburg and we come down about every other year to visit," Mundt said. "We had noticed the efforts to save the Colonial Fox, so we talked to Vonnie about the marquee letters."

"The first question Vonnie asked us was about the spacing, if it was the same between our letters and the Colonial Fox marquee letters," Mrs. Mundt said.

As it turned out, it was.

"The spacing is perfect," Corsini said. "It's very important that the notches on the letters are seven inches apart so they can be hung on the bars of the marquee."

That was back in September, 2010.

"The Mundts enjoyed one of our Second Sunday theater tours, and they probably noticed our makeshift letters," Corsini said. "That's when they suggested that we might be able to inherit the letters from the DuPage Theatre. It took several rounds of correspondence and a request letter to the Friends of the DuPage Theatre trustees."

The gift includes all 26 letters of the alphabet, plus numbers 2 through 9.

"The I and the O do double duty as a 1 and zero," Corsini explained. "We can use them all. I'm so excited to have enough Es. This winter we put 'Expect Excellence — a Great Community Deserves a Great Downtown' on the marquee and I didn't have enough Es. I had to use some Bs and put tape on them."

On other occasions, Corsini has fashioned a P from an R, and even resorted to using a \$ in place of an S. And the shortage was getting worse.

“Our old letters are also very brittle and when we drop them, especially in the winter, are very prone to breaking,” she said.

The DuPage, which opened on July 26, 1928, was decorated in a “Spanish Garden” motif.

“The ceiling had stars that twinkle,” Mrs. Mundt said. “The moon would rise at the start of each performance, reach its zenith, and set at the end of the performance.”

“They just don’t make theaters like this any more,” her husband said. “Modern theaters are just boxes with cushy seats. Right now there’s a whole generation who don’t know what a theater could be. We feel so bad that we lost our theater, and that makes us even more interested in seeing the Colonial Fox succeed.”

Corsini said that she and the Colonial Fox Foundation will remain true to the trust and intend to make the theater a spark in the revitalization of downtown Pittsburg. The DuPage letters will be a part of this effort.

“I find it interesting how if falls to the old theaters that remain to help maintain a wisp of memory from those that are lost,” Corsini said.

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