

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT  
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)**

**1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE** (must comply with a Board of Revision of Taxes address)

Street address: **1910 Chestnut Street**

Postal code: **19103** Councilmanic District: **5**

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: **Boyd Theater**

Common Name: **Boyd Theater / SamEric**

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Building  Structure  Site  Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition:  excellent  good  fair  poor  ruins

Occupancy:  occupied  vacant  under construction  unknown

Current use: **Vacant**

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Please attach a plot plan and written description of the boundary. **(Attachment A and B)**

**6. DESCRIPTION**

Please attach a description of the historic resource. **(Attachment C)**

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

Please attach the Statement of Significance. **(Attachment D)**

Period of Significance (from year to year): from **1928** to **2002**

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: **Construction: 1928; Alteration 1953, 1955, 1971**

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: **Hoffman & Henon, Architects**

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: **Not known**

Original owner: **Alexander R. Boyd**

Other significant persons:

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Please attach a bibliography. **(Attachment E)**

**9. NOMINATOR**

Name with Title **John Andrew Gallery, Exec. Director** Email: **john@preservationalliance.com**

Organization: **Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia** Date: **May 28, 2008**

Street Address: **1616 Walnut Street, Suite 1620** Telephone: **215-546-1146 x 1**

City, State, and Postal Code: **Philadelphia PA 19103**

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: **28 May 2008**

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: **29 May 2008**

Date of Notice Issuance: **29 May 2008**

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: **Boyd Development LP**

Address: **c/o Clear Channel Entertainment**

**220 W. 42<sup>nd</sup> Street**

City: **New York** State: **NY** Postal Code: **10036**

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: **16 July 2008**

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: **8 August 2008**

Date of Final Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Designated  Rejected

**ATTACHMENT A: BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The site of the Boyd Theater is 31,368 square feet in area and is bounded as follows:

**Beginning** at the point in the easterly right of way line of 20<sup>th</sup> Street, said point being located North 11 degrees 20'00" East, a distance of 72 feet from the intersection of said line of 20<sup>th</sup> Street and the northerly right-of-way line of Sansom Street; thence:

1. Extending along the easterly side of 20<sup>th</sup> Street North 11 degrees 20'00" East, a distance of 25 feet to a point; thence,
2. Leaving said line of 20<sup>th</sup> Street and extending South 79 degrees 00'00" East, a distance of 85 feet to a point; thence,
3. North 11 degrees 20'00" East, a distance of 14 feet to a point; thence,
4. South 79 degrees 00'00" East, a distance of 47 feet to a point; thence,
5. North 11 degrees 00'00" East, a distance of 14 feet to a point; thence,
6. South 79 degrees 00'00" East, a distance of 132 feet to a point; thence,
7. North 11 degrees 20'00" East, a distance of 105 feet to a point in the southerly right-of-way line of Chestnut Street; thence,
8. Extending along said southerly right-of-way line of Chestnut Street South 79 degrees 00'00" East, a distance of 44 feet to a point; thence,
9. Leaving said line of Chestnut Street and extending south 11 degrees 20'00" West, a distance of 122 feet to a point; thence,
10. North 79 degrees 00'00" West, a distance of 22 feet to a point; thence,
11. South 11 degrees 20'00" West, a distance of 108 feet to a point in the northerly right-of-way line of Sansom Street, thence,
12. Extending along said northerly right-of-way line of Sansom Street North 79 degrees 00'00" West, a distance of 198 feet to a point; thence
13. Leaving said line of Sansom Street and extending North 11 degrees 20'00" East, a distance of 72 feet to a point; thence,
14. North 79 degrees 00'00" West, a distance of 88 feet to the first mentioned point and place of **Beginning**.

The above parcel description derives from the Deed of Consolidation, Instrument No. 51215039, dated July 7, 2005, which is recorded at the Department of Records of the City of Philadelphia. See also the following map in Attachment B.

**ATTACHMENT B: MAP OF SITE**

**ATTACHMENT C: DESCRIPTION OF THE HISTORIC RESOURCE.**

The Boyd Theater is an Art-Deco style limestone and brick movie theater constructed in 1928.<sup>1</sup> The theater is located mid-block at 1908-1910 Chestnut Street and is comprised of two rectangular volumes. The smaller volume, similar in scale to commercial buildings along Chestnut Street, is the public entrance to the building. It extends southward toward Sansom Street, where it connects with the larger volume. The larger volume contains the auditorium and related spaces and is bounded at the south by Sansom Street. This arrangement of building elements is sometimes referred to as an “L-shaped plan” and was one of several models of theater design typical of the 1920s.

Note: Photographs were taken in 2008. Some photographs were taken in 2002 and show architectural elements of the exterior which are now in the entranceway that has been blocked with plywood panels. However, inspection of this area in 2008 indicates that these details are present as depicted in the photographs.

**Chestnut Street Wing**

The two-story volume opening onto Chestnut Street has a flat roof and measures approximately 44 feet wide by 121 feet deep and has a 34-foot tall front elevation (Photo 1). The exterior walls are constructed of hollow terra-cotta block. The Chestnut Street façade is ornamented in the Art Deco style, which was commonly used for theater design in the United States from the late 1920s through the 1930s (Photo 2 and 3). The façade is faced with carved limestone decorated with low-relief ornamentation and features a decorative, shaped parapet capped with glazed terra cotta coping tile, which is visible in Photo 1. The façade is articulated with two low-relief pilasters capped by finials that break the parapet and frame the curved gable design of the central bay. The large central window at the second floor and the flanking two smaller side windows let light into the management offices. They were originally glazed with patterned, frosted and gilded glass. One of the original glass panels has survived (Photo 4); others have been replaced with clear glass or the glass is missing.

At the first floor, the exterior consists of an open, deeply recessed, outer vestibule. Two narrow glazed shop fronts flank the vestibule and wrap around onto the front façade. A central freestanding ticket booth stands at the head of the vestibule at the sidewalk line (Photos 5, 6, and 7). The outer vestibule’s terrazzo floor is original and features a geometric design of intersecting circles and triangles with a marble border (Photo 8). A marble border on the floor showing the placement of the original ticket booth is still partially visible. The windows of the flanking storefronts are glazed with large panes of plain glass alternating with narrow vertical panes of etched glass featuring stylized geometric and floral motifs (Photos 9 and 10). The windows sit on a continuous low base of red-brown and yellow marble and are protected by decorative bronze railings on thin Art Deco-style posts. (Photo 11) Glass doors span the rear of the open, outer vestibule, separating it from an interior vestibule beyond. The doors may date to 1955, when a building permit was issued for, among other things, replacing the wood entrance doors with glass doors.<sup>2</sup>

The original ticket booth was replaced in 1953 with one constructed of stainless steel and glass (Photos 6 and 7).<sup>3</sup> The new booth is in approximately the same location as the original, but has a slightly different geometry and is set back slightly farther from the sidewalk than the original. A large semi-circular marquee spans the front façade above the open, outer vestibule. A vertical arm of the marquee rises from it in front of the central window. The original vertical arm of the marquee, which was emblazoned with “BOYD” was removed in 1935. The remainder of the original marquee was replaced in 1955.<sup>4</sup> The marquee was updated again in 1971 and the 1980s. With the exception of the marquee and the ticket booth, the Chestnut Street façade is generally intact.

### **Auditorium Wing**

The exterior of the auditorium wing has little ornamentation (Photo 12). Its south façade, facing Sansom Street, is constructed of hollow terra cotta block clad in buff-colored brick laid in a six-course common bond pattern, while the other three facades are clad in a dark red brick laid in a six course common bond pattern. The corners are knit together by the brick quoins on the east and west facades (Photo 13). The south façade retains a number of wood-framed display cases (Photo 14). A small two-story cantilevered section located on the southwest corner of the stage house originally contained dressing rooms, but was later used as offices (Photo 15). The cantilevered section is fenestrated with double-hung windows, which appear original. (Photo 16) The stage house (the west elevation) has a 65 foot height, while the rest of the auditorium mass has a height of 56 feet.

The exterior of the auditorium wing displays various fire protection elements of the 1920s, including street-level fire exit doors and an extensive iron fire escape. (Photo 17) The auditorium wing is largely intact with the exception of the fire escape roofs, which have been removed, although the framework remains.

### **Adjacent Area**

The area west of the auditorium wing consists of a paved surface parking lot extending out to both Sansom Street (Photo 18) and 20<sup>th</sup> Street (Photo 19). See the map in Attachment B.

**ATTACHMENT D. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Boyd Theater meets the following Criteria for Designation as set forth in Section 14-2007(5) of the Philadelphia Code. The Boyd Theater:

- a. Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- b. Is associated with an event or importance in the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- d. Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style;
- e. Is the work of an architect whose work significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social or cultural development of the city;
- f. Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent significant innovation;
- h. Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic represents an established and familiar landmark; and,
- j. Exemplifies the cultural economic social or historical heritage of the community.

**Criteria a and j: Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; and exemplifies the cultural economic social or historical heritage of the community.**

The Boyd Theater has significant interest as part of the development and cultural characteristics of the city and exemplifies the cultural, economic, and social heritage of Philadelphia. It is the last remaining example of the major movie theaters that were once prominent in Center City and which were an important part of the economic, social, and cultural life of the City in the early to mid-twentieth century.

The Boyd Theater is classified as a contributing resource in the Center City West Commercial Historic District, which was listed on the National Register on January 7, 1988. The unifying nature of this district is its early twentieth-century commercial character. The scale of buildings is predominantly two to four stories, decreasing in height from the east section to west. The district contains a range of architectural styles, including significant representations of the Art Deco and Art Moderne styles of the 1920s and 1930s. The majority of tall office buildings in the district were constructed in the 1920s in various forms of the Art Deco style. However, despite the commanding presence of these towers, the overall architectural character of the district is marked by the two to four-story commercial structures. The Boyd Theater is similar in size and scale to this predominant character, is constructed of similar materials (brick and limestone), but also exemplifies the Art Deco style of the nearby tall office buildings.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, movies very quickly became the chief form of mass entertainment in the United States. Thousands of motion picture theaters were erected in the United States before the onset of the Great Depression. In Philadelphia

alone, approximately 430 movie theaters were built between 1900 and 1932. The Boyd Theater was built during a third wave of movie theater construction in Philadelphia. The first wave peaked in 1900, at the start of the movie industry, when 11 theaters were constructed in the city; the second in 1914, just before World War, when 24 theaters were constructed in the city; and the third in 1928, just before the Great Depression, when 14 theaters were constructed in the city.<sup>5</sup>

The emergence of the motion picture as a primary source of mass entertainment is best understood as an expression of numerous social, economic, technological, and other forces bearing on urban America during the first decades of the twentieth century. The second half of the nineteenth century in America was marked by massive immigration, industrialization, and urbanization. At the same time, corporations proliferated, encouraged by few governmental restrictions. These corporations established enormous numbers of urban factories that employed masses of laborers. The factories mass-produced a wide range of consumer goods, making myriad new products available to and affordable for middle and lower income consumers. While the factories were churning out unprecedented numbers of goods, the new field of advertising created demands for these consumer goods and standardized tastes among consumers. Likewise, a new form of retailing—the department store—sold myriad new, affordable products to newly-minted consumers. Immigration, industrialization, urbanization, and other phenomena led to increasing social stratification based on wealth and class. To encourage the new culture of consumerism, the advertising industry counseled consumers that they could share the lifestyle of the aristocracy by buying the right brands or the right products. Instead of providing expensive goods to the relatively small upper class, manufacturers and retailers found that through sheer volume the general public could partake of luxuries that approximated those that had formerly been available only to the rich. For example, during this period, the Pullman Company introduced the “palace car,” which featured carpeting, chandeliers, walnut woodwork and French plate mirrors at prices that were only 50 cents higher than standard sleeping cars. Chains of standardized skyscraper hotels were constructed not for the wealthy but instead for the mass market. These hotels were first made available by the Statler chain, which transformed luxury hotels into “people’s hotels” with rooms and services available for prices starting at \$1.50. Locally, the John Wanamaker Department Store sold mass produced consumer goods in a setting that can only be described as palatial.

The motion picture theater was part of the rise of this pervasive culture of mass consumerism that dramatically altered the way Americans worked, played, and conceived of themselves as individuals and their roles in a mass society. The motion picture theater was an expression of this new mass American society and its new economy based on mass consumption including mass entertainment.<sup>6</sup> Like the new department stores, movie theaters provided opulent settings where mass audiences could affordably partake in luxury and participate in the modern mass culture.

In Philadelphia, the first projected motion picture with flexible film was shown on December 25, 1895 at Keith’s Bijou, a variety theater at 8<sup>th</sup> and Race Streets.

Interestingly, Keith's Bijou anticipated the eventual social acceptability of the motion picture as a form of popular entertainment. Commentators have noted that "before Keith's, a family man would not consider taking his wife or children to a variety theater, but the Bijou was different. It was advertised as the Drawing Room of Philadelphia-High Class, Refined Entertainment."<sup>7</sup>

After the turn of the century, movies quickly became the chief form of mass entertainment in Philadelphia and many theaters were erected. The Boyd Theater was built in 1928 on the site of the former Aldine Hotel.<sup>8</sup> Over two thousand people attended the Boyd's opening on Christmas Day 1928, including Mayor Harry A. Mackey.<sup>9</sup> Alexander R. Boyd, the owner of A.R. Boyd Enterprises, Inc., developed the theater and named it for himself. He was a former vice president of the Stanley Company of America.<sup>10</sup> The Stanley Company, one of the nation's largest movie palace chains, had been founded by Jules and Stanley Mastbaum in Philadelphia. In 1929, Boyd sold the theater to his former employer, the Stanley Company, which merged with Warner Brothers. Boyd, however, continued to operate the theater.<sup>11</sup> In 1934, the Stanley Company sold the theater to the Phoenix Theatrical Company; in 1937, Phoenix conveyed the theater back to Stanley.<sup>12</sup>

For decades, the Boyd was one of the most elegant theaters in Philadelphia's premiere shopping area, Chestnut Street, near Rittenhouse Square. In 1953, the Boyd was converted for Cinerama, a projection system that boasted a wider screen than CinemaScope. Cinerama utilized three projectors that were shown simultaneously on a wide, wrap-around screen to produce a three-dimensional effect.<sup>13</sup> The Boyd was the only theater in the Philadelphia region to be equipped for this new form of projection and people came from as far away as Lancaster, Harrisburg, and Allentown to see films such as "Cinerama Holiday" and "Mediterranean Holiday" in Cinerama.<sup>14</sup> For a brief period in 1971, pornographic movies were shown at the Boyd.<sup>15</sup> In autumn 1971, the Sameric Theaters chain purchased the movie house. After a \$200,000 renovation, the newly refurbished SamEric showed its first film, *Fiddler on the Roof*, in December 1971.<sup>16</sup> The Boyd Theater remained in operation as a movie theater until 2002.

This remarkable history demonstrates that it was an important component of the social and cultural life of the city. Indicating the Boyd's importance to movie-going Philadelphia, such movies as "Dinner at Eight," "Gone With the Wind" and "This Is Cinerama" held their Philadelphia premieres at the Boyd.

**Criterion b. Is associated with an event important in the history of the City and Commonwealth.**

The Boyd Theater is associated with an event important in the legal and historic preservation histories of the city and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

In 1987, the Philadelphia Historical Commission designated the Boyd Theater as historic and listed it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The owner of the theater appealed the designation. The landmark case, which became known as United Artists I, eventually was decided by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. In 1991, the

Court ruled that the designation amounted to an “unconstitutional taking without compensation.” It not only declared the designation to be invalid, but found the City’s historic preservation ordinance to be unconstitutional.<sup>17</sup> This landmark decision halted historic designation in Philadelphia for two years, appeared to be contradictory to earlier decisions by the United States Supreme Court, and threatened historic preservation laws throughout Pennsylvania.

The City of Philadelphia asked the State Supreme Court to reconsider and, in 1993 in a case that came to be known as *United Artists II*, the Court declared the designation of historic buildings was not unconstitutional and found the City’s preservation ordinance to be valid. However, the Court found the designation of the Boyd Theater to be invalid because the designation was predicated on the interior and interior designation was not expressly authorized in the City ordinance.<sup>18</sup>

*United Artists I* and *II* were landmark historic preservation legal cases that had a significant impact in Pennsylvania. The Court’s final decision affirmed the right of cities and municipalities to designate and protect historic resources. The case is often cited and is studied by all students of historic preservation.

**Criterion d. Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style.**

The Boyd Theatre is also significant for being one of the earliest motion picture palaces designed in the Art Deco style, or the “modern French style” as it was called at the time.<sup>19</sup>

The first public exhibitions of motion pictures took place in nickelodeons, storefront theaters, and traveling shows, where motion pictures were seen as technological curiosities and optical illusions. These venues presented entertainment that was popular with lower and middle classes. Historians have noted that early motion pictures were not considered entirely “respectable” by social critics and some members of the upper class. Audiences were often rowdy and the shows were often considered vulgar and unsophisticated.

In contrast to popular theaters, respectable vaudeville houses sought to cater to the upper middle class. By 1912, vaudeville operators began to show motion pictures to supplement their theatrical programs.<sup>20</sup> Architectural historians have noted that these vaudeville theaters relied on traditional, neo-classical architecture, popularized at Chicago’s Columbian Exposition in 1893, to increase respectability and legitimacy. Similarly, motion picture operators initially adopted neo-classical architectural styles for their theaters to legitimize the motion picture as a form of mass entertainment. These styles helped to make motion pictures acceptable to upper middle-class patrons as well as to working-class patrons, who were afforded the opportunity to “partake of the same luxuries as the rich.”<sup>21</sup>

The popularity of neo-classical styles for the motion picture palace endured throughout the 1920s, although motion picture theaters were designed in a wide variety of architectural styles including interpretations of Egyptian and Oriental themes. By the

end of the 1920s, however, Art Deco replaced other styles of theater architecture to become the standard for motion picture theater designs. Constructed in 1928, the Boyd Theater is one of the earliest examples of the Art Deco motion picture theater in the United States. In fact, some film historians wrongly cite the Pantages Theater in Hollywood, California, which was built in 1931, as the first Art Deco movie palace in the country.

Art Deco takes its name from the Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels that was held in Paris in 1925. The Exposition traveled throughout the United States in 1926 and was a popular alternative to the International Style, which was a concurrent but more intellectual, fine arts movement. The Art Deco style emphasizes design that deliberately rejected historic influences and expressed the new Machine Age. It is a style of ornamentation that was commonly applied to buildings, railroad cars, jewelry and furniture. Influenced by cubism as well as pre-Columbian and Egyptian art, Art Deco ornamentation featured zigzags, chevrons, and foliate low relief ornamentation. The exteriors of Art Deco buildings typically emphasize verticality and are commonly sheathed in smooth stone with low relief ornamentation with accents of metal, glass and terra cotta.

Historians have offered varying explanations for Art Deco's replacement of neo-classical styles as the first choice for motion picture palace design in the late 1920s and 1930s.<sup>22</sup> Some have stated that, by the 1930s, movie going had become socially acceptable and no longer needed an architectural defense. Others have stated that Art Deco was an optimistic style that became popular when more traditional styles became associated with the pre-depression boom that ended in economic failure. Yet other historians opine that Art Deco was especially suited for the motion picture theater because it emphasized social progress, the machine age and modern technological innovation, including motion picture technology. Equally plausible is the theory that motion picture theater designers adopted Art Deco at the height of that style's popularity generally.

The decision to use the Art Deco style at the Boyd reflected many of these reasons. The Boyd was the first theater designed for Alexander Boyd after he left the Stanley Company of America to become a theater developer of his own. It appears that he may have suggested the use of the Art Deco style himself, possibly to distinguish his new theater from those of his predecessor organization. He may also have selected the style to appeal to the affluent and fashionable population residing in the immediate area around Rittenhouse Square. Boyd architect Paul Henon described his own perspective on this decision in a 1928 article in *Motion Picture News*.

"The modernesque style is here to stay in theaters and theatrical arts. It sparkles with life and color. In France at the present they are doing great things in this style. Everyone speaks of this modern era and it devolves upon the motion picture theater to keep pace with the times by reflecting it in its architecture and decoration.

"Certainly this new idea offers the architect and the decorator a fresh and fertile field for the play of imagination. Likewise the modernistic style gives us another

avenue of approach to variety. This is most important because more and more is it becoming apparent that the success of a new theater is importantly connected with that theater's contrast, especially in its atmosphere, to the other theaters in its locality."

Promotional material of the time emphasizes that the Boyd was "modern in every note." One article refers to the Boyd as "A De Luxe Playhouse in the Modern French Style," and another was entitled "The Boyd, designed in the Modern Spirit: a Philadelphia theater inspired by this mechano-scientific age." The theater's modernity, which was reflected by the Art Deco style, was also reflected by the building's technological innovations, which were emphasized in press reports of the day. These included a description of its modern heating and cooling system, and the way in which the plan allowed for a long line of easy exits along Sansom Street. The Boyd Theater was "a gem of modernistic architecture, with every comfort and luxury having been taken into consideration."<sup>23</sup>

The Boyd shares many of the most important features of the Art Deco style and was constructed at the very outset of the style's popularity for motion picture theaters. The most important element of the exterior is the deeply recessed, open, outer vestibule formed between the two integrated shop fronts that open onto it. The recessed vestibule was popularized before the advent of the motion picture theater by vaudeville theaters. Historians have noted that the recessed entryway was especially suited to motion picture theater design as it provided ample space for a free standing ticket booth outside of the theater. Working class patrons could pay for their tickets outside and then forget their own economic circumstances as they entered the glamorous theater.

Classic Art Deco elements of the facade and exterior of the Boyd include a curled gable, vertical pylons, low relief ornamentation and materials such as etched and gilded glass above the marquee some of which remain. As one newspaper reported, the "Chestnut street front will be made brilliant at night with twenty floodlights of various and constantly changing colors."<sup>24</sup> The storefronts were faced with etched glass and protected by ornamental railings, which also remain. Some of the exterior elements were altered after 1950. The original ticket booth and marquee have been replaced, as have the doors leading into the theater.

In addition to its reflection of the Art Deco approach to ornamentation, the Boyd also reflects Philadelphia's vernacular brick style of architecture. In contrast to earlier theater designs, contained all elements within a simple rectilinear plan enveloped by a classical façade, the Boyd's complex plan exhibits a direct and unornamented expression of building elements along Sansom Street. The simple masses of the auditorium and stage area are easily visible, and the cantilevered office area is easily distinguishable by its small windows. The lack of ornamentation and simple expression of functional elements along Sansom Street is typical of Philadelphia's vernacular, brick architecture. The large volume of the auditorium with its many exit doors and fire escapes frankly expresses the spaces and functions within.

**Criterion e. Is the work of an architect whose work significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social or cultural development of the city.**

The Boyd Theater is an important example of the work of the architecture firm Hoffman & Henon, the premiere motion picture theater designers of Philadelphia.

The Hoffman & Henon Company was in existence for only the nine years, from 1921 to 1930. During that period, Hoffman & Henon designed nearly 100 theaters, more theaters than any other firm in the Philadelphia area. William Hoffman, the older of the two partners, designed at least seventeen theaters and several department stores before joining in partnership with Paul Henon Jr. The son of a contractor, Henon was first listed as a draughtsman in 1904 and joined forces with Towland Boyle to produce a number of church designs before his association with Hoffman. After the firm of Hoffman & Henon was formed, the pair received commissions from the Stanley Company of America and smaller theater developers to build scores of theaters throughout Philadelphia and its suburbs, as well as several important theaters in Baltimore, Atlantic City, and Pittsburgh.

Hoffman & Henon were renowned for the lavish architectural detail of their theaters. Most of Hoffman & Henon's theaters exemplify the Classical Revival style including their most famous theaters in Philadelphia: the Erlanger at 21<sup>st</sup> and Market Streets, the Earle at 11<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets, the Stanley at 19<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets and the enormous Mastbaum at 20<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets (all demolished). The Boyd is the only Art Deco theater designed by Hoffman & Henon and, after the demolition of dozens of their theaters, it stands as the finest example of their work to survive in Philadelphia.

**Criterion f. Contains elements of design that are a significant innovation.**

The plan of the Boyd Theatre was an innovative design for theaters in an urban setting. At its completion, the Boyd was considered "Philadelphia's latest and most modernistic example of cinema house construction."<sup>25</sup> It was celebrated for technical innovations including its "convenience of audience ingress and egress."<sup>26</sup> Motion picture theaters in Philadelphia were influenced by their locations and the ability to assemble land in prominent locations. The influences of location generally resulted in three forms of theater design. Prominent and very large theaters, capable of affording land on Market Street or in other prominent locations, were typically designed as a simple, contained rectilinear block often located at the corner of the block. The Fox, Earle and Mastbaum theaters are examples of that pattern. All the elements of the theater were unified in a simple exterior volume that was then essentially enveloped in a Neo-classical façade. A second pattern—often referred to as the "shot gun" plan— was found in earlier theaters along Chestnut Street. Rather than try to afford sufficient frontage to build a large and wide building, a narrow street frontage was used for shops and lobby entrance leading to a long and narrow theater stretching from Chestnut Street north or south to the next intermediary street or alley. The Karlton Theater (now the Prince Theater), 1921, and the Arcadia Theater (of which Alexander Boyd was the developer), 1915, in the 1500 block of Chestnut Street were examples of this approach.

The plan for the Boyd incorporates elements of both of these previous models into a new form particularly well adapted to both its urban location and its desire to present patrons with a high degree of amenity. The plan is referred to as an “L-shaped theater.” The foyer and lobby areas are contained within a narrow building volume reflecting the influence of expensive street frontage along Chestnut Street. These lead back to the large volume of the theater space located at the rear of the site and along Sansom Street. This plan allowed the theater to minimize the cost of Chestnut Street frontage and at the same time to achieve a wide auditorium plan that provided viewer amenities competitive with the wide auditoriums of theaters located on Market Street. Whether this plan of the Boyd directly influenced other theater designs is difficult to determine. However, the Midway Theater at Kensington and Allegheny Avenues, designed by Magaziner, Eberhard & Harris in 1929, exhibits the same L-shaped plan and is also in the Art Deco style. The foyer and lobbies are contained within a narrow volume with limited street frontage and lead to a wide theater auditorium, which is positioned in the same manner as at the Boyd.

**Criterion h. Owing to its singular physical characteristic represents an established and familiar landmark.**

The Boyd Theater, by virtue of its Art Deco façade including the recessed lobby, is a familiar landmark on Chestnut Street. The Boyd was designed to take full advantage of its Chestnut Street address. The theater presents its principal façade to Chestnut Street, which is further enlivened with shop fronts, the ticket booth, recessed vestibule for easy ingress and egress, lighted marquee, and elaborate façade and fenestration. The recessed, open, outer vestibule of the Boyd Theater is a unique feature along Chestnut Street and in Center City in general. In contrast to the continuous building line that is prevalent, the Boyd Theater presents both a visual and functional break in the pattern. The set back, coupled with the freestanding ticket booth, is an immediate indication that the building is a movie theater as these features represent a traditional form still associated with early movie theaters.

**Conclusion**

Satisfying seven of the ten Criteria of Designation, the Boyd Theater is clearly eligible for listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic places.

## Attachment E: Bibliography

### American Theater Historical Society Archives

- Building Permit 580, February 2, 1928, Demolish buildings and clear site  
Building Permit 3739, May 1, 1928, Build 2300-seat theater  
Building Permit 3383, August 6, 1936, Erect 10' x 25' sign along west wall of theater  
Building Permit 2926, June 17, 1940, Build foundation for cooling tower (tower under separate permit)  
Building Permit Application 6814-B, April 23, 1948, Alter interior, install new seats  
Building Permit 6024, July 27, 1953, Construct three projection booths for Cinerama  
Building Permit Application 67790-B, August 12, 1948, Alter building  
Building Permit 6513, August 28, 1953, Install exhaust ventilation fan on roof  
Building Permit 6733, September 9, 1953, Install auxiliary tank below present fire suppression tank  
Building Permit 7353, October 1, 1953, Install duct to new ticket booth  
Building Permit Application 77933-B, Install air conditioning in dress shop  
Building Permit 6092, August 8, 1955, Alter marquee, replace wood entrance doors at main entrance and vestibule doors to glass doors, cover frames with stainless steel, replaster exterior lobby and vestibule ceiling, installing new metal lightcore around ceiling of inner lobby  
Building Permit 2053, March 14, 1962, Construct new projection booths  
Building Permit 6136, August 14, 1962, Install extension to exhaust systems to serve new projection booth

### Deeds

- "Alexander Boyd Dies at 85; Built Midcity Movie Houses," unknown newspaper, August 30, 1962, Urban Archives Clipping Collection.
- "Boyd Becomes the SamEric," unknown newspaper, December 5, 1971, Urban Archives Clipping Collection.
- "Boyd Theater Has Been Bought by SamEric Chain," unknown newspaper, September 30, 1971, Urban Archives Clipping Collection.
- "Boyd Theatre," *Evening Bulletin*, May 27, 1937.
- "Boyd Theatre Opens With a Fine Program," *Evening Bulletin*, December 26, 1928.
- "Boyd Theatre Sale Leads Realty Week," *Evening Bulletin*, February 9, 1929.
- "Boyd Theatre Sold," *Evening Bulletin*, February 5, 1929.
- "Boyd to Become SamEric Theater," unknown newspaper, October 27, 1971, Urban Archives Clipping Collection.

“Center City Loses Another First Run Theater,” unknown newspaper, May 25, 1971, Urban Archives Clipping Collection.

Charlotte Herzog, “The Movie Palace and the Theatrical Sources of its Architectural Style,” *Cinema Journal* 20, No. 2 (Spring 1981).

“Cinerama Show Anniversary at Boyd, Friday,” *Evening Bulletin*, February 13, 1965.

“Film Travelogue Returns to Area,” unknown newspaper, September 22, 1965, Urban Archives Clipping Collection.

Irvin R. Glazer, *Philadelphia Theaters, A-Z* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

Irvin R. Glazer, *Philadelphia Theaters: A Pictorial Architectural History* (Philadelphia and New York: The Athenaeum of Philadelphia and Dover Publications, 1994).

“Mayor Dedicates New Boyd Theatre,” *Inquirer*, December 25, 1928.

Mary Hanlon, “Some Enchanted Evenings: American Picture Palaces,” American Studies Program, University of Virginia, January 1998.

“New Boyd Theatre Sold to Warners,” *Inquirer*, February 5, 1929.

“New Boyd Theatre to Open Christmas,” *Inquirer*, December 16, 1928, p.6.

*Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide* 43, n. 2 (January 11, 1928): 21.

Sandra Tatman and Roger Moss, *The Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1985).

Edward H. Causey, “By Their Deeds, A Summary of the Many Fine Theaters Erected by the Hoffman & Henon Company,” *The Exhibitor* (December 1937).

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<sup>1</sup> Building Permit 3739, 1928.

<sup>2</sup> Building Permit 6092, 1955.

<sup>3</sup> No building permit for the ticket booth has been discovered. However, Building Permit 7353, 1953 authorizes the installation of duct work for the “new ticket booth.”

<sup>4</sup> Building Permit 6092, 1955.

<sup>5</sup> Data compiled by Aliya Turner from Irvin R. Glazer, *Philadelphia Theatres, A-Z* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> Mary Hanlon, “Some Enchanted Evenings: American Picture Palaces,” American Studies Program, University of Virginia, January, 1998, Section 2, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Glazer, *Philadelphia Theaters, A-Z*, 19.

- <sup>8</sup> Building Permit 3739 was issued on May 8, 1928 for a 2300-seat, \$750,000 theater. The demolition permit for the Aldine Theater (B.P. 580) was issued on February 8, 1928. The *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* (v. 43, n. 2, p. 21) announced the plans for the theater on January 11, 1928.
- <sup>9</sup> "New Boyd Theatre to Open Christmas," *Inquirer*, December 16, 1928, p.6; "Mayor Dedicates New Boyd Theatre," *Inquirer*, December 25, 1928; "Boyd Theatre Opens With a Fine Program," *Evening Bulletin*, December 26, 1928.
- <sup>10</sup> "Alexander Boyd Dies at 85; Built Midcity Movie Houses," unknown newspaper, August 30, 1962.
- <sup>11</sup> "Boyd Theatre Sold," *Evening Bulletin*, February 5, 1929; "New Boyd Theatre Sold to Warners," *Inquirer*, February 5, 1929; "Boyd Theatre Sale Leads Realty Week," *Evening Bulletin*, February 9, 1929.
- <sup>12</sup> "Boyd Theatre," *Evening Bulletin*, May 27, 1937.
- <sup>13</sup> Building Permit 6024, 1953.
- <sup>14</sup> "Cinerama Show Anniversary at Boyd, Friday," *Evening Bulletin*, February 13, 1965; "Film Travelogue Returns to Area," unknown newspaper, September 22, 1965.
- <sup>15</sup> "Center City Loses Another First Run Theater," unknown newspaper, May 25, 1971; "Boyd to Become SamEric Theater," unknown newspaper, October 27, 1971.
- <sup>16</sup> "Boyd Theater Has Been Bought by SamEric Chain," unknown newspaper, September 30, 1971; "Boyd Becomes the SamEric," unknown newspaper, December 5, 1971.
- <sup>17</sup> *United Artists Theater Circuit, Inc. vs. City of Philadelphia*, 528 Pa. 12, 595 A.2d 6 (1991).
- <sup>18</sup> *United Artists Theater Circuit, Inc. vs. City of Philadelphia*, 535 Pa. 370, 635 A.2d 612 (1993).
- <sup>19</sup> "Boyd Theatre Opens With a Fine Program," *Evening Bulletin*, December 26, 1928.
- <sup>20</sup> Hanlon, "Some Enchanted Evening," 1.
- <sup>21</sup> Hanlon, "Some Enchanted Evening," 5.
- <sup>22</sup> Hanlon, "Some Enchanted Evening," 1-2.
- <sup>23</sup> "New Boyd Theatre to Open Christmas," *Inquirer*, December 16, 1928, p.6.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- <sup>25</sup> "Mayor Dedicates New Boyd Theatre," *Inquirer*, December 25, 1928.
- <sup>26</sup> "New Boyd Theatre to Open Christmas," *Inquirer*, December 16, 1928, p.6.