

# **Baltimore City Landmark Designation**

Commission For Historical And Architectural Preservation



The Kernan Entertainment Complex and Delphey Hotel  
Photo: MdHS

**Mayfair Theater  
506 North Howard Street**

**March 10, 2009**

## Mayfair Theater - 506 North Howard Street

The Mayfair (formerly Auditorium) Theater was constructed in 1903 as a part of the Kernan hotel and entertainment complex. This theater, the former Hotel Kernan (a Baltimore City Landmark), and now demolished Maryland Theater were connected through interior halls and underground passages. This complex was the largest entertainment grouping in Baltimore in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The most significant remaining portion of the structure is the elaborate stone and terra cotta façade facing Howard Street. The façade is a light stone Classical Revival style with a bay of three arches flanked piers of rusticated stone and variety of window shapes and trim styles. The roofline has a complicated cornice of pediments, scrolls, finials, carvings of floral panels, cartouches and lyres. A mansard roof tops off the façade with three ocular windows. The present entrance level façade, marquee and ticket booth date from the 1960's, the original entrance was a single wide arch with several stairs into the front of the building. The modern façade was added for the Baltimore premier of "Laurence of Arabia." The rear theater portion of the building was constructed of brick. Very little of the interior has survived, only the exterior brick walls remain due to a failure of the roof.

In 1902 James Kernan announced his plans to create the entertainment complex at the site on Franklin and Howard Streets. The above "Academy Hotel" had already been in existence for almost 50 years and was never part of Kernan's grand plan for the block. He had already owned the "Howard Theater," which stood on the current site of the Mayfair-Auditorium Theater. The "Howard Theater", which was actually a converted swimming school, was constructed in 1882 and considered out of date architecturally and needed a lot of work to be brought into current standards. A Baltimore Sun article from 1891 notes Kernan's plans to eventually remove this theater from the site and create his own show house.

After rehabbing the building for several more years of use, he demolished the old "Howard Theater" in 1902 and constructed the "Auditorium Theater." He retained the underground pool (which now operated as a Turkish bath) and constructed the "Beaux-Arts-Influenced-French Renaissance" style theater we see today.

The Mayfair Theater is one of a handful of surviving structures north of Franklin Street on Howard Street, now the 500 block. This block was once home to a large number of small businesses, restaurants, club houses and most importantly, theaters. Besides the Kernan complex, the block was also home to the Academy of Music, and later the Stanley Theater. Both stood consecutively on the lot next to the Mayfair. The large building north of the theater and hotels is the former Baltimore City College High School.

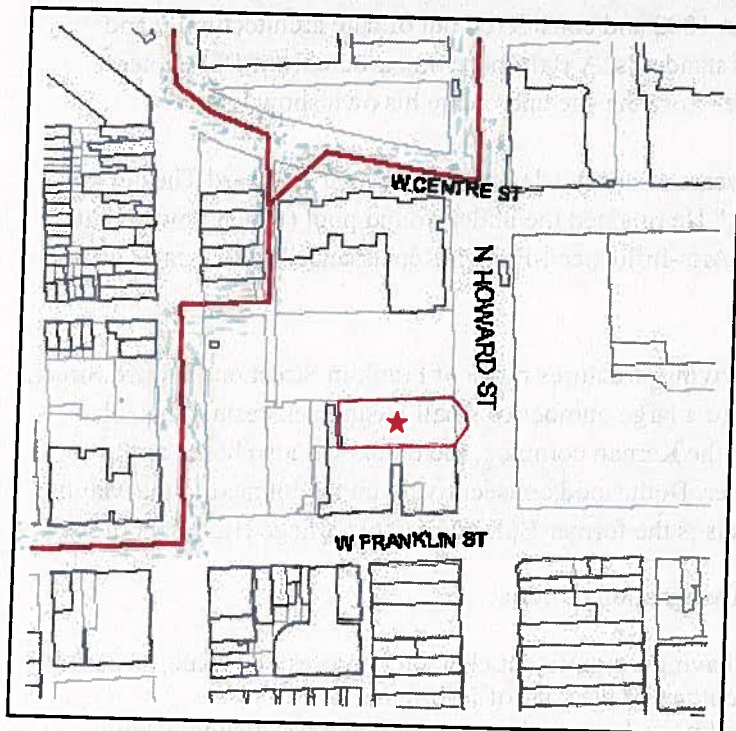
The Mayfair Theater meets CHAP Landmark Designation Criteria:

1. dates from a particular period having a significant character, interest, or value, as part of the development, heritage, or culture of the City of Baltimore; or
4. is significant of the architectural period in which it was built and has distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, method of construction, or engineering, or is the notable work of a master builder, designer, engineer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or

## Aerial Photo and Site Plan



The Mayfair Theater is one of a handful of surviving structures north of Franklin Street on Howard Street, now the 500 block. The collapsed roof can be seen from this image.



The 500 Block of North Howard Street, the Mayfair Theatre is marked with the star.

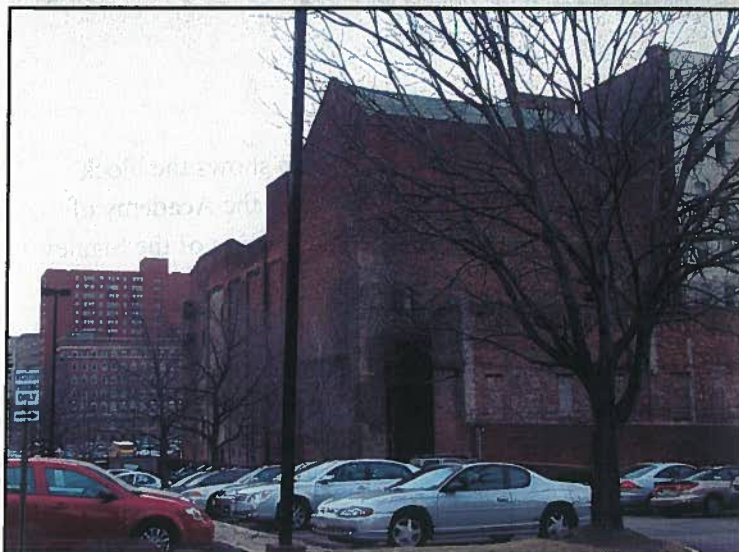
## Current Conditions



A current view of the Mayfair from Park Avenue, the Kernan Hotel can be seen to the rear of the theater. The collapsed roof can be seen from this view.



The current condition of the front façade, the central entrance to the theater, and side entrance to the baths has been covered by this 1960's façade and marquee.



The rear of the theater from Eutaw Street, and the parking lot where structures no longer stand.

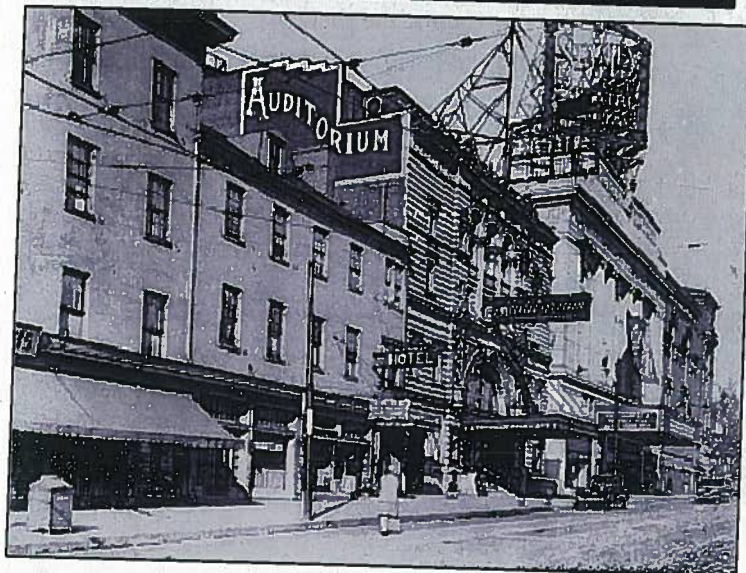
## Historic Photos



The former occupant of the site, the Howard Theater.



This undated photo shows the 500 block of Howard Street completely built out.



This post-1927 photo shows the block after the demolition of the Academy of Music and the construction of the Stanley Theater in its place.