

PATTERSON THEATER

3136 Eastern Avenue

Landmark Designation Report

Baltimore City Commission For Historical And
Architectural Preservation

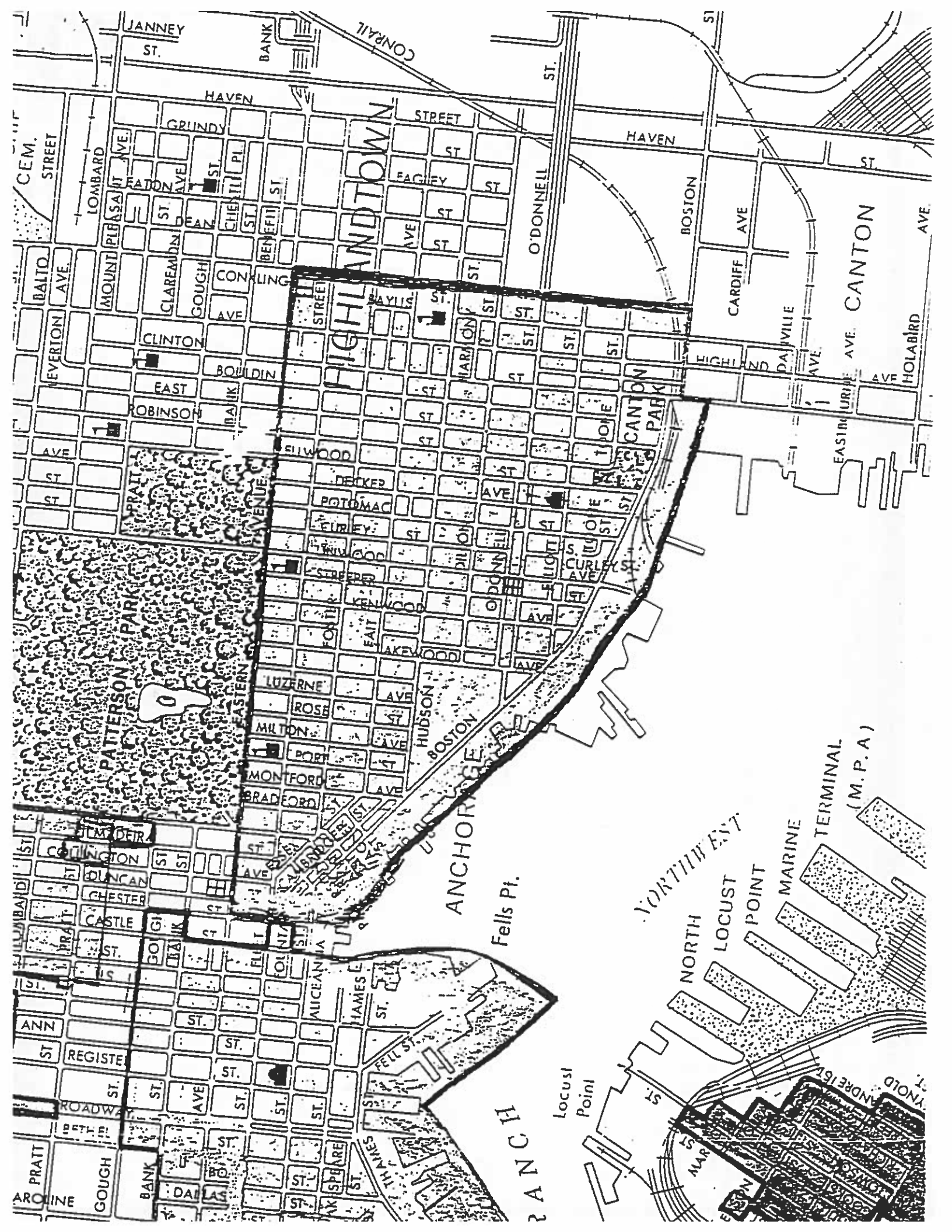
September 14, 1999



Staff Recommendation

The Patterson Park Theater

The Commission approves the landmark designation of the Patterson Park Theater because it meets criteria one of our standards as it 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. The Theater represents the significance of cinema entertainment to the working class in Canton and Highlandtown. In addition, it is an important social landmark for Baltimore and is a significant marker of the intricate social network in East Baltimore. In addition, the Patterson is the only theater left in Baltimore with an Art Deco vertical many-light light bulb. In fact, it is one of a handful left in the United States.



Landmark Designation Report
Patterson Theater 3136 Eastern Avenue
September 14, 1999 Commission Hearing
For the Baltimore City Commission for Historical
And Architectural Preservation

The Patterson Theater meets criteria one of the Commission's Standards for Designation:

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.

The building meets Criteria one as representing the significance of cinema entertainment in Canton and Highland throughout the 20th Century. In addition, it represents the many complexities of a working class social network. In its simple design, the building fits into the neighborhood and became an "haven of retreat from the toils of daily life. In addition, the Patterson is the only theater left to retain a vertical many light-bulb sign. It is this sign along with the Marquee that has become an architectural icon for the neighborhood and the city. The sign alone is worth saving.

History:

The Patterson was open in 1910, most likely by B. Baumbach. In 1918 it was sold to Harry Reddish. Between 1920 and 1929 it was known as the New Patterson and also had a dance hall. In 1930 the current structure was built by E. Eyring and Sons and designed in a severe Colonial revival façade and faintly oriental style interior by John J. Zink. The interior featured a red, orange and gold paint scheme, matching colored draperies and crystal chandeliers for lighting. The current building began operations on September 26, 1930 and was managed and operated by the Grand Theater Company (which also operated the Grand Theater on Conkling Street), an affiliate of Durkee Enterprises. The Patterson like most movie houses built in the 1920s and 1930s, were built by a sophisticate syndicate of Durkee Enterprises and a talented Architect and builder team John Zink and E. Eyring and Sons.

(From *Exit*).

Architect John Zink was born in Baltimore on June 1 1886, and died in August 1952. He spent most of his life in the Baltimore Washington area where he designed more than 30 movie houses. He received his early training at the Maryland Institute. After that, he worked with the firm of Wyatt and Nolting. For a few years prior to WWI he studied theater architecture with Thomas Lamb in New York. He attended the Columbia School of Architecture in the evening.

After he returned to Baltimore, around 1918, he was associated with Ewald G. Blanke and later with W.O. Sparklin. At a time when many theater architects were going wild over atmospheric designs, Zink kept his work very plain. Most of his theaters were classical, colonial and later, Moderne. He was more interested in the technical aspects of a theater building –good sight lines and acoustics—than in fancy frills.

On this rather simple structure, the most prominent feature, unique in Baltimore are the Marquee and the Art Deco sign. It is the only Vertical movie sign left in Baltimore that is lighted by a plethora of bulbs. In fact, it is a rare artifact throughout the country. This sign and marquee were the identifying features of the building. The building sits on the Northwest corner of Eastern Avenue and East Street. The front façade, which faces Eastern Avenue, and East Street and the side façade are tied together by the corner Marquee and sign. The main façade has is five bays wide with three bays protruding from the front façade. Here, the three bays are marked by three doors with ornamented concrete transoms. Tying, the façade together is a bare minimum sheet metal cornice and a solid brick parapet above. The Façade on East Street is a solid blank wall with an impressive mural, which creates an interesting relationship of the wall to the street.

The Patterson Theater has been a landmark in the Canton Highlandtown area for 80 years and the structure for 69 years. Here, in a time before television, the theater represented the powerful influence the movie industry has had on Baltimore, and the Country. Though simply ornamented, the Patterson illustrates the over reaching desire of communities to experience, the magic of Hollywood. As a strong and viable working class neighborhood, the Patterson fits into the neighborhood's mainstreet in size and scale as well as design – that of well built simple buildings. Therefore, the Patterson is significant as a social monument to the neighborhood. Here, for generations, the Patterson has provided a venue, an outlet for the neighborhood residents to come together and collectively get away from the daily toils of life. Unlike the two or three screen cinemas of the 1970s and 1980s that are now defunct, because they were not as intricately linked to the social network of the communities, the Patterson has survived because of its ties to the community. Today, the landmark designation of this social monument, as identified by the rare vertical Art Deco sign, marks a new era for the building.

6510 41st Ave.,
University Park, MD 20782
22 August 1999

E. Holcomb
CHAP
417 E. Fayette St.,
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Mr. Holcomb,
It was good talking with you last week. One of these days when I'm in Baltimore, maybe we could get together for lunch. I certainly wish you good luck with the Patterson application. I'd like to see both the Patterson and the Grand saved and put to good use. Something really nice could be done with the Grand and for the vertical sign alone it's worth saving the Patterson. Of course, if I can be of any help to you, let me know. I've been working on a newspaper database which contains articles on Maryland theaters (from the 1870s to the present). So far, I've got nearly 6600 articles. I can search by name of theater or name of exhibitor and on certain key topics like censorship, Sunday movies, architects, projectionists. I'll be happy to search it for anything that may help you.

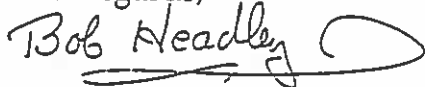
I am enclosing a copy of a draft article on John Zink and a provisional list of his theaters. I'm certain that he did more. Feel free to use this, but I would like it credited as an unpublished manuscript.

My Washington movie book came out last month. I'm enclosing a couple of copies of the flyer on it for your information. I hope to have the first draft of the completely revised Baltimore movie book finished by the end of the year.

I appreciate the information about the material in the City Archives. I'll have to make arrangements to go over there and take a look at the new material. I'm anxious to see the photo of the Roosevelt.

Thanks again for all the info. I hope you will keep in touch.

Best regards,



Robert Headley