

State Theatre Marquee

609 Congress Street, Portland



Significance

One of the most prominent and well-known buildings on Congress Street in Portland's Arts District is the State Theatre building. Built in 1929, the theater played some of the first talkies and silent films in Maine. The State Theatre is Portland's only surviving movie palace from the early 20th century. It operated as a first-run movie house until the late 1960s. The theatre's three-story entrance dominates the Congress Street façade of the building and has always featured a large marquee. The original marquee was removed decades ago and replaced with a less ornate version of the original.

Project Scope

Using historic photographs from the 1930s, the Scott Simons Architects worked with the City's Historic Preservation program to ensure a faithful reconstruction of the original marquee on this designated local landmark. The new marquee is illuminated, as it was when the theatre opened nearly 90 years ago. Care was taken to replicate details like the marquee's lettering and scrollwork and to reuse original materials like the supporting chains. The ten-month project used \$18,000 from the City of Portland's façade improvement program, which is funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grants.

Recognition

The new State Theatre marquee is a great example of a public-private partnership between building owner Redstone, theatre operator Alex Crothers & The Bowery Presents, and the City of Portland to enhance the grandeur of the State Theatre. The new marquee telegraphs the vitality of the interior of the music venue, whose elaborate Spanish Revival interior was renovated in 2010. The gorgeous new marquee is another key element in the rejuvenation of the Congress Street Arts District corridor.