

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received FEB 2 1984  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Boyce Block

and/or common Boyce Block

2. Location

street & number 216-224 East Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town Muncie N/A vicinity of

state Indiana code 018 county Delaware code 035

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name See continuation sheet

street & number

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Recorder's Office

street & number 100 W. Main St.

city, town Muncie state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Historic Architectural Survey  
title City of Muncie

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1980  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Office of Community Development

city, town Muncie state Indiana

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## 7. Description

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**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Boyce Block is located in the original City of Munseytown that was laid out in 1826. Today the building stands in the heart of downtown Muncie just two blocks east of the courthouse.

The building is located on the southeast fourth of a typical square city block. The original Boyce Building, built in 1880 for James Boyce, prominent businessman and leader of the city's commercial development, was rectangular in plan. It did not extend all the way to the alley behind it. However, with additions over the years in the back, the building became a square in plan, utilizing the whole southeast part of the block. The building is a corner building, and the main elevation addresses Main Street to the south, and a secondary elevation fronts Jefferson Street to the east. Both north and west elevations face alleys.

The building is a two story brick structure with brick bearing walls. The high, floor-to-ceiling heights and a large sheet metal cornice make the building appear taller than its two stories.

The building facade is symmetrical and divided into five major bays in an ABCBA rhythm. Both of the end bays "A" have a little more linear feet of frontage space and are thus bigger than the other three. Although the B and C bays are both the same size, the center "C" has an elaborate parapet to define the center of the building.

Most of the first level has remained relatively unchanged. The original limestone base is still visible. The original windows and mullions are intact in the center three bays. Original brick columns and cast iron pilasters are still in place. A modern marquee and other fixtures have been added to the westernmost major bay. The easternmost bay has, likewise, been sheathed in modern materials.

A cast iron belt course separates the first and second floors. The pilasters from the first floor intersect this, then continue up to the second floor, giving the building vertical divisions. The second floor has remained basically unaltered and is an excellent example of turn-of-the-century commercial architecture.

The windows are all double-hung wood. The windows are tall and narrow, indicative of the high ceiling heights of the second floor. The pilasters define the fenestration system. The windows are set back six inches from these. Windows on the end bays (A) have three sets of paired, double-hung sash, and each of the center bays has three single double-hung windows. Above each of the windows are lintels of Indiana limestone with incised detailing.

A short distance above the window lintels the cornice starts with corbelled brick work. Above the corbelling a metal cornice begins. The cornice continues the articulation of the pilasters and windows, and gives the building a tall height typical of what was wanted at the turn of the century. In the middle bay the cornice becomes a parapet which proclaims the building's name, The Boyce Block, and date, 1880.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1880, 1890, 1904 **Builder/Architect** Mr. Grosvernor, Jackson, Michigan

**Statement of Significance** (~~to one paragraph~~)

The Boyce Block is one of Muncie's best and least altered examples of 19th century commercial architecture. Built in 1880, it was the first major, modern commercial structure in Muncie, the first to use electricity, and one of the first to use gas. It is also important as the place of business of James A. Boyce, one of Muncie's most important early entrepreneurs. Since 1904 it has housed a theatre, which has changed little over the years.

James A. Boyce was one of the main figures in the commercial growth of Muncie. After starting many businesses in different sections of the country, only to have them destroyed by fire, Boyce moved to Muncie in 1870 to start once again. The first business that Boyce started in Muncie was a bagging mill. He also invented, manufactured and shipped other machinery to his home country of Scotland.

Boyce was a man of progress, and a very strong, driving force in modernizing Muncie. He brought in the first lawn mower, bath tub, and many other modernizing conveniences. In 1874 he was one of the initial stockholders of the city library and also became a member of the Library Association. He built the first steam heating plant and, before the big natural gas boom in Muncie, he was the largest employer in the area. In 1880, Sexton and Boyce started their spade handle factory.

Also about this time Boyce wanted to stimulate modernization in the commercial area of town. Boyce had this building erected and named the Boyce Block. The original building was described as being two stories high and having the dimensions of 125 feet by 80 feet. The Boyce Block contained five first-class business rooms on the first floor and a number of fine office rooms in the second story. Since Boyce owned the steam plant, the building was heated by steam. It was the main office for Boyce.

In 1887, during the natural gas boom, Boyce was instrumental in bringing other businesses to Muncie. He donated land and \$10,000 to C. H. Over Glass Works to relocate to Muncie, and also talked the Ball Brothers Company (Ball Mason jars) into moving to Muncie.

In 1885 Boyce built the first electric generating plant in Muncie. On December 19, 1885, the Boyce Block and H. Klein's Jewelry Store were the first commercial buildings to be lighted by electricity. In 1890 a fire destroyed the interior of the building. Boyce decided to rebuilt immediately.

The two west bays of the Boyce Block were converted into the Star Theatre in 1904. The Star was the first theatre in Indiana to be equipped with Von Duprin patent exit locks, which made it impossible to lock the doors from the outside. Another fire safety feature was a 10' x 36' fire flue over the stage for ventilation. The theatre was also the first to have a fine ventilation system that was cleaned each morning, and a private vacuum cleaner that cleaned the theatre by the compressed air process.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Muncie West

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	6	6	3	7	5	4	0	4	4	5	0	3	0	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

B 

Zone	Easting			Northing										

C 

Zone	Easting			Northing										

D 

Zone	Easting			Northing										

E 

Zone	Easting			Northing										

F 

Zone	Easting			Northing										

G 

Zone	Easting			Northing										

H 

Zone	Easting			Northing										

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Brown's Donation, Block 11, Lots 7 and 8

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gordon R. Stagge, Director

organization Muncie Civic Theatre date November 1, 1983

street & number 2245 Warwick Road telephone 317/282-2530

city or town Muncie state Indiana 47304

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature J. M. Redin

title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer date 1-24-84

**For NPS use only**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

J. Alva Byers Entered in the National Register date 3/1/84

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

Muncie Civic Theatre Association, Inc.  
(Owns 216, 218, 224 East Main Street)  
216 East Main Street  
Muncie, Indiana 47305

Mr. Stephen Reed  
(Owns 220, 220½, and 222 East Main Street)  
P.O. Box 395  
Gaston, Indiana

The east facade of the building is secondary. There are no large plate glass windows on the first floor here; however, there are three small round windows to articulate the first floor. The belt course and cornice are wrapped around from the front for only a few yards. A cornice follows on top but is not as detailed as in front. On the second floor, double-hung wood windows are placed at a greater distance apart than in front. The pilasters of brick exist on the side, also, and articulate the wall.

The west facade of the building faces an alley. Most of the openings here have been bricked in. The rear, north, facade also faces an alley.

In 1890, a fire damaged portions of the interior of the building. At this time, iron cresting that had adorned the front parapet was removed. Major changes occurred in 1904, when the two west bays of the building were converted into the Star Theatre. The second floor was removed to make room for the theatre. The stage was 50' x 30' with a proscenium arch of 24' x 28'. The stage was 46' high. Dressing rooms were located in a deep basement under the stage. The stage now has an asbestos curtain plus a water curtain in case of fire. A 10' x 36' fire flue was built over the stage to take care of ventilation in case of fire on stage. The original theatre had 10 exits in all.

The marble veneer, mirrors, and glass on the theatre facade were probably added in the 1930s. The marquee was added in 1976.

The aluminum siding and false brick on the east end of the building were added fairly recently. The center three bays of the ground floor are relatively intact, except for the addition of modern doors.

The building has seen many different stores come and go over the years, from its original dry goods and notions to a bowling alley, barber shop, and bakery. The interiors have not changed as much as the storefronts. The original high ceilings are still visible on the first floor and are made in a pressed tin design. The second floor houses apartments which have been somewhat more altered than the first floor to meet current needs. The major alteration of the original building's interior is in the two west bays, the current location of the Muncie Civic Theatre. The theatre is well detailed and in good condition. (See photo).

The Star was built as a vaudeville theatre. It was affiliated with the National Vaudeville Managers Association, which provided Muncie with access to the very best performances during the vaudeville age. The theatre served as a vaudeville theatre until the late 1920s, then stood vacant until 1936.

In 1936 the theatre opened again as the Hoosier Theatre, which provided both live entertainment and motion pictures, and was a staple of Muncie's social life until 1955.

The theatre stood vacant again for several years, reopening in November, 1961, under the new name of the Muncie Civic Theatre. The Civic Theatre was a non-profit organization and continues to provide live entertainment.

Although there have been different theatres over the years, the original Star Theatre's qualities have seen little change. Many of the original architectural details are still evident. The proscenium arch, along with the original asbestos curtain, are still the major focus in the interior of the theatre.

- Bartolini, William F., Chairman of Muncie Civic Theatre Organization, interview.
- Boyce, A. E. "James Boyce," in An Atlas, Delaware County, Indiana. Griffing Gordon and Co., 1887.
- Current Plat Maps; Center Township Assessor's Office, County/City Building, Muncie, Indiana.
- Delaware County Indiana Index of Names of Persons and Firms, W.P.A. Vol. I, pp 60-61 from Stoeckel Archives, Bracken Library, Ball State University.
- Haimbaugh, Frank D. History of Delaware County, Indiana. Vol. II. Indianapolis, Indiana: Historical Publishing Company, 1924.
- Helm, T. B. History of Delaware County, Indiana. Chicago, Illinois: Kingman Brothers Lake Side Building, 1881. Reedited in 1976.
- Kemper, G. W. H., M.D. History of Delaware County, Indiana. Vol. I. Chicago, Illinois: Lewis Publishing Company, 1980.
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