

## **Building Chronology & History of the Music Hall**

In 1869, the town commissioners of Easton resolved to tear down the old wooden market house in Easton, Maryland, and build an enlarged and improved market building. A group of citizens felt that the new building should also address the need for a town hall and place for public assembly. Consequently, the Easton Town Hall Company was incorporated with \$5,000 in subscriptions and worked jointly with the commissioners to build the dual-purpose market place and town hall. Completed in 1870, it became Easton's first purpose-built hall for public entertainment and community events. The building was considered to be an excellent structure, although it was short-lived. On October 1, 1878, a morning fire destroyed the building. The fire swept down Court Street destroying many commercial establishments as well as the Odd Fellows Temple at the corner of Court and Washington Streets. The courthouse roof caught on fire but it was extinguished by bucket brigade. The wind died down, and the fire halted before igniting the Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church on Washington Street. Fortunately, the Easton Market/Town Hall was fully insured.<sup>1</sup>

The Easton Town Hall Company increased the capital stock to \$7,000 and, again, worked jointly with the town commissioners. The new three-story brick building cost nearly \$12,000 in 1879, which in 2005 would be equivalent to approximately \$233,500 (Figures 1, 2). George Garey described the Music Hall in 1881.

The building is 42x100 feet, three stories high, with pressed brick front, and slate roof surmounted with peaks and minarets. In architectural design and finish it is one of the handsomest buildings to be found in any town in the state. The Market on the ground floor is well arranged for the convenience of buyers, and lighted with gas; the main auditorium, on the second floor, is a very large hall with lofty arched ceiling, and will comfortably seat 600 with all necessary appurtenances, including drop curtain, traps, sliding scenery, footlights, etc, with three private dressing rooms beneath. The scenery was painted by Hagadorn, the scenic artist of Baltimore. The Hall is lighted by four large gas chandeliers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>George O. Garey, The History and Directory of Easton. (Easton, PA: Gazette Steam Book and Job Office, 1881) and Dickson J. Preston, Talbot County: A History. (Centerville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1983), p. 264.

<sup>2</sup> Garey, The History and Directory of Easton.

The architect was Frank Davis, a prominent Baltimore architect. William D. Roberts & Sons, of Easton, was the contractor and builder<sup>3</sup> along with Mr. W.T.H. Lee, who served as Superintendent and contractor<sup>4</sup>. Among many significant projects completed by Frank Davis was the massive Richmond Market built in 1872 to serve Baltimore's expanding northwest suburbs. Davis was also responsible for Easton's Gothic Revival Odd Fellows Hall on Washington Street.

The Music Hall was built in an eclectic Gothic Revival style with spired turrets and steeply pitched roofs (Illus. 1). The dormers were highly ornamental featuring columns supporting spirelets and Gothic gables with finials and Gothic sash. Inside, the Music Hall was furnished with "nice chairs, settees and chandeliers."<sup>5</sup> The Music Hall space was designed to seat 600; half of the seats were chairs so that the central area in front of the stage could be easily cleared for dances and other functions that required open floor space (Illus. 13). The gallery above the back section of the hall was supported by pillars and had tiered seating.<sup>6</sup> Elaborate polychrome stenciled patterns decorated the walls and ceiling of the music hall (Illus. 18-20). The high ceiling was supported by exposed wooden trusses with chamfered edges and ornamented truss joints (Illus. 21, 22).

Originally, the Music Hall was dubbed "The Academy of Music," but in actual practice it had always been referred to as "Music Hall."<sup>7</sup> The hall became a center for community events and entertainment; it featured recitals, concerts, and charity balls. Society and popular taste were intertwined at vaudeville benefit shows (Figure 8). Packed into one evening's entertainment were musical quartettes and dances with titles like "The Spirit of the Woods" or "The Enchanted Rose" as well as impersonations and light drama. Minstrel acts and stock companies performed popular plays such as "East Lynne," "Count of Monte Cristo," "Ten Nights in a Bar Room," and "Uncle Tom's Cabin."<sup>8</sup>

In the mid-teens Music Hall was showing Greater Vitagraph "Photoplay Art" beginning a quarter-century run as a movie theater (Figure 9).<sup>9</sup> In 1915, silent screen stars such as Irene Fenwick in "The Girl Next Door" or Fania Marinhoff

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The Enterprise 1.1 (July, 1879).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> A photograph published in the Star-Democrat March 29, 1913, showed the hall cleared of its chairs for a charity ball. The article also described how "the pillars supporting the gallery were converted into trees" by decorators for the event. The silhouette of the formerly raked floor for the gallery seating can still be observed on the walls of the present mechanical room, which occupies the former balcony space.

<sup>7</sup> The Enterprise 1.1 (July, 1879); Garey, The History and Directory of Easton; Norman Harington, Easton Album. (Easton, MD: Historical Society of Talbot County, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> Based on articles and program schedules published in the Star-Democrat.

<sup>9</sup> A Music Hall flier advertised "I Will Repay" starring Mary Maurice and William Dun in a 1917 Greater Vitagraph adaptation of O'Henry's short-story "A Municipal Report." (Talbot County Free Library, Maryland Room).

and Paul McAllister in “The Money Master” were seen at Music Hall. In 1916, Easton enjoyed Mary Pickford in “Hulda of Holland” and the comic drama “When Love is King,” starring Carroll McComas and Richard Tucker.<sup>10</sup> In fact, until the Avalon opened its doors in 1922, Music Hall was Easton’s only movie theater.<sup>11</sup> By 1920, Music Hall was showing a different film every day of the week with the exception of Sundays when none were shown. Music Hall was equipped with a Fotoplayer to provide musical accompaniment for the silent films of the day. The American Photo Player Company manufactured Fotoplayer brand photoplayers. Music Hall had the smallest Fotoplayer, the Style 20, which featured the two-roll “Double Tracker” player piano with one cabinet of pipes, traps and effects (Figure 10, Illus. 30). The Style 20 was only 10-foot long compared with the grand 21-foot long Style 50 with two large cabinets and many effects. The Style 20 offered such effects as pistol shot, door and telephone bell, thunder, wind siren, fire gong, Klaxon automotive horn, steamboat and locomotive whistles, as well as a host of musical instruments. The Fotoplayer was located to the right side of the stage just in front of the apron (Illus. 12). The blower to supply air to the pneumatic tubes that ran the player was tucked into a tiny room below stage with the air pipe passing through the apron wainscot to the machine.<sup>12</sup> The operator could see the screen and would select appropriate rolls of music for the scenes such as romantic or chase music. Then the operator would pull appropriate levers to crash cymbals, fire shots, etc. while the music was playing automatically.

Three years after Easton’s elegant new Avalon Theater’s grand opening in February of 1922, Music Hall ceded to competition in 1925. “Realizing the futility of continuing motion pictures in face of approaching opposition of the magnitude of ‘The New’ Theatre,” operators of Music Hall Mr. Marvil and Mr. Quillin of The Easton Photoplay Company, announced that the last pictures would be shown Saturday, February 28, 1925 (Figure 11).<sup>13</sup> By then, Music Hall was no longer showing first-run movies; the last show featured the 1920 romantic drama “Deep Waters” and the 1921 cliff-hanger comedy “Hurricane Hutch.” However, Music Hall continued as a movie theater for many more

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<sup>10</sup> Norman Harington, Easton Album. (Easton, MD: Historical Society of Talbot County, 1986). Internet Movie Data Base, <http://us.imdb.com>.

<sup>11</sup> “New Theater Plans: But Little Now Remains To Be done Before Opening Night on February 3 Next,” Easton Star-Democrat (January 21, 1922).

<sup>12</sup> February 5, 2005, interview with L. Richard Carroll, piano tuner, son of Lewis R. Carroll who tuned and maintained Music Hall’s Fotoplayer. As a boy of about nine-years-old L. Richard Carroll went to the Music Hall with his father to service the Fotoplayer. At that time, the case of organ pipes, percussion instruments and sound effects was no longer operating but it was still in place from the earlier days of silent films. The piano was being used as a standard upright at the time, but the machinery fascinated Carroll and his father explained how it had worked.

<sup>13</sup> While the Easton Photoplay Company’s notice for discontinuing movies in Music Hall did not specify the year, February 28<sup>th</sup> fell on Saturday in 1920 and 1925. The release date for “Deep Waters” was October 10, 1920 (The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures) and “Hurricane Hutch” was produced in 1921. Kalton C. Lahue, Continued Next Week: A History of the Motion Picture Serial. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), pp. 93, 221-222, 285; Raymond William Stedman, The Serials: Suspense and Drama by Installment. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), p. 42.

years under new management. During the days when segregation was still common practice, Music Hall welcomed all patrons regardless of race.<sup>14</sup> The new Avalon Theater catered to the white clientele.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, the public market below Music Hall had closed and by 1912 was replaced by Easton Wholesale Grocery Company (Figure 3 and Illus. 4).<sup>16</sup> The former market served as commercial space for businesses including Phelps-Laing & Company, a farm equipment dealer, which conducted business on the site during the Twenties (Illus. 6), and D. Selkow's discount store during the Thirties (Illus. 7).<sup>17</sup> The Music Hall still hosted live performances, dances, and civic events through the Teens, but during the Twenties it served predominantly as a movie theater showing different films every day of the week except Sunday when none were shown. By 1920, the brick pediment over the east entrance had been removed (Illus. 5)<sup>18</sup> and by 1927, a frame entrance porch with heavy entablature and columns was added over the main entrance on the east façade.<sup>19</sup> In addition, two fire escapes were installed on the north and south side of the building to the second floor Music Hall.<sup>20</sup> During the Thirties, a frame structure was built across the full width of the west façade (Figure 4).<sup>21</sup> By the late Thirties the outmoded building was becoming dilapidated and was considered an embarrassment for the town of Easton (Illus. 8).

In January 1937, plans were afoot to demolish Music Hall, widen Court Street and erect a new community building and library. The plans were contingent upon the ability of the Easton Utilities Commission to spend \$40,000 to \$50,000 to acquire the property and build a new building of colonial design to complement the Court House. The hope was that the Utilities Commission could divert money to the project, provided the Commission, the Mayor and the Council could all agree.<sup>22</sup> Discussions continued, and the county purchased the building from the town of Easton driven by the need for additional space for

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<sup>14</sup> Fifteen years after The Easton Photoplay Company discontinued movies, when Music Hall finally closed permanently, the management, Schine's Circuit, announced that their new movie theater location on Washington Street would "have provision for colored patrons, as did Music Hall." "Music Hall to Close Doors on Saturday," *Easton Star-Democrat* (May 32, 1940).

<sup>15</sup> February 5, 2005, interview with L. Richard Carroll, piano tuner, son of Lewis R. Carroll who tuned and maintained the piano in the Avalon. L. Richard Carroll remembered the Avalon well and believed that originally the new theater served white patrons only.

<sup>16</sup> Talbot County Free Library, Maryland Room. Sanborn Insurance Map of Easton, MD, 1912.

<sup>17</sup> Photo documentation of these businesses operating in the Music Hall building can be seen in the Talbot County Free Library, Maryland Room and in the Talbot County Historical Society's archives.

<sup>18</sup> A circa 1920 photograph of the Music Hall and plaza shows that the pediment over the front entrance had been removed. Talbot County Free Library, Maryland Room.

<sup>19</sup> The 1927 Sanborn Fire Insurance map for Easton shows the frame porch on the east entrance of the Music Hall. Talbot County Free Library, Maryland Room.

<sup>20</sup> Talbot County Free Library, Maryland Room. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Easton, MD, 1927.

<sup>21</sup> Talbot County Free Library, Maryland Room. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Easton, MD, 1932-36.

<sup>22</sup> James Clayland Mullikin Papers, Talbot County Free Library, Maryland Room.

county offices, the need for a larger space for the county library, and spurred by civic pride scorning the dilapidated building adjacent to the historic Talbot County Court House. The Town Council of Easton had agreed to appropriate \$10,000 toward a new library building, but the project was shelved since the library would need \$20,000 and the county could not offer matching funds. After viewing the Music Hall on June 13, 1938, Adeline Pratt, Head of the Maryland State Library Commission, addressed the Talbot County Library Board to state her opinion that the Music Hall site had possibilities.<sup>23</sup> This meeting helped to unify the Library Board in their support of the move into the refurbished Music Hall rather than to try to build their own space.

The Music Hall efforts really began to move forward when the Talbot County Commissioners' National Youth Administration Work Project Application was approved on December 27, 1939, for \$17,324.<sup>24</sup> The National Youth Administration was a New Deal program that provided young people out of school and unemployed with on-the-job training in federally funded projects. The labor to remodel the Music Hall would be carried out by youths with guidance from professionals. The youths were paid by the NYA while the county was responsible for purchasing the supplies. It was pointed out at the time that the county could borrow at one percent to finance the estimated \$37,000 dollar project.<sup>25</sup> The county would therefore save about \$15,000 a year since it was spending \$28,000 on rent for the Health Department, County Agent, the library and other offices which would move into the refurbished building.<sup>26</sup>

No time was lost in starting. Max Chambers, District Supervisor of the NYA, advised the Talbot County Commissioners, "I am asking the Baltimore office to assign all available youths to report Monday morning, January 6 at 8 A.M."<sup>27</sup> On Tuesday the 9<sup>th</sup> about 50 young men had already started working at tearing up the old floor and cleaning bricks. It was announced that about 100 more youths between the ages of 18 and 25 and willing to learn a trade were needed.<sup>28</sup> By April, major demolition and construction was well underway in the Music Hall.<sup>29</sup> The plans called for the division of the former market space by inserting a new floor that bisected the high ceiling market into two floors. The old windows had to be bricked shut and new ones cut into the walls for the ground floor because the new floor cut across the middle of most of the original windows. The actual readjustment of the windows was carried out in May.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Gilbert Byron, "Talbot's Libraries." (Easton, MD: Talbot County Free Library, 1965) from the Talbot County Historical Society's archives; [Easton Star-Democrat](#) (June 17, 1938).

<sup>24</sup> Talbot County Operations Center Records.

<sup>25</sup> The actual cost turned out to be about \$48,000. James Clayland Mullikin Papers, Talbot County Free Library, Maryland Room.

<sup>26</sup> [Easton Star-Democrat](#) (January 12, 1940).

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Max Chambers to the Talbot County Commissioners, January 3, 1940. Talbot County Operations Center Records.

<sup>28</sup> [Easton Star-Democrat](#) (January 12, 1940).

<sup>29</sup> [Easton Star-Democrat](#) (April 12, 1940).

<sup>30</sup> [Easton Star-Democrat](#) (May 17, 1940).

Heavy timber posts from the original building supported the steel girders on which the floor was laid. A boiler room was constructed and a doorway was cut through the north side for access. A partition wall to divide the new library space from the new County Health Department was built, and other brick walls were going up to conform to the new plans. The new brick walls were faced with gray brick. The original stairway to the Music Hall was removed.<sup>31</sup>

In May, work had begun on the outside of the building. Most of the heavy interior work was completed, and workers were laying bricks for the Colonial Revival addition at the east end of the building.<sup>32</sup> The newly constructed twin staircases curving from the northwest and southwest corners of the building served as fire escapes for the Music Hall space. They exited onto a new centered landing on the west facade outside the recently added floor level.<sup>33</sup> The concrete steps on the west façade that ran from the new first floor level to the street were completed in May. The movie theater continued to operate in the Music Hall while construction was in progress.<sup>34</sup> But after the last show on Saturday night June 1, 1940, Schine's Circuit, managers of Music Hall, finally closed the doors. Remodeling had progressed to the point that the county took possession of the leased Music Hall space. Schine's Circuit had plans to move to their new theater that was being built on South Washington Street. "The new building will have provision for colored patrons, as did Music Hall," Schine's Circuit assured its patrons.<sup>35</sup> The following week all of the movie equipment was stripped from the old music hall and temporarily stored at the Avalon until the theater was built. Only the chairs remained at Music Hall, as they had been part of the building's furnishings.<sup>36</sup>

With Music Hall vacated, workers immediately proceeded to dismantle the hipped roof above the stage.<sup>37</sup> With its removal and replacement with a gable roof, the fly space for lowering scenery from over the old stage was lost. Next, workers tore down the outdated steeply pitched Victorian roofs atop the main façade of Music Hall, once one of Easton's prides.<sup>38</sup> The public took much interest in the transformation as the new gabled roof was constructed over the emerging Colonial Revival addition.<sup>39</sup> The newspaper column "Under the Court House Dome" reported:

Music Hall is fast getting in shape. Workmen have been employed for months remodeling this building, and today the roof is

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<sup>31</sup> [Easton Star-Democrat](#) (April 12, 1940).

<sup>32</sup> [Easton Star-Democrat](#) (May 17, 1940).

<sup>33</sup> [Easton Star-Democrat](#) (April 12, 1940).

<sup>34</sup> [Easton Star-Democrat](#) (May 17, 1940).

<sup>35</sup> [Easton Star-Democrat](#) (May 31, 1940).

<sup>36</sup> [Easton Star-Democrat](#) (June 7, 1940).

<sup>37</sup> [Easton Star-Democrat](#) (June 14, 1940).

<sup>38</sup> [Easton Star-Democrat](#) (June 28, 1940).

<sup>39</sup> [Easton Star-Democrat](#) (August 5, 1940).

practically on and a general view of the building as it will appear when completed is readily seen.<sup>40</sup>

The brick walls and roof of the Colonial Revival addition were finished in August 1940, but windows and trim were not completed and much work still had to be done to the addition and inside the renovated building (Illus. 9). The bids for the installation of the heating plant, for example, did not go out until September, and the heating plant was not fully operational until the end of January.<sup>41</sup> The back of the Music Hall was also receiving improvements as the County Commissioners reviewed the drawings for “a very handsome” iron grille and railings for the stairs.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, the new space below the former music hall was becoming a modern State Laboratory for the Board of Health. Electrical equipment and outlets were installed, and preparations were made for additional equipment. The laboratory was used not only to combat the spread of disease but also served economic needs: crab meat, oysters and milk were Talbot’s prime products that required laboratory tests in order to be shipped out of state.<sup>43</sup>

The new “County Municipal Building,” as the former Music Hall became known, neared completion and attention turned to the landscaping and parking issues. Heated debates over these issues were tossed about for many weeks between the Mayor and Council and the Talbot County Garden Club, The Easton Businessmen’s Association and other concerned parties. At issue was a narrow strip on Court Street at the southeast corner of the County Municipal Building where cars had been able to park diagonally. Some felt that the court house grounds should be a fenced square absorbing the tight parking spaces into the grounds, while others felt equally strongly that the loss of the parking spaces would hurt business.<sup>44</sup> The proponents for a beautified Court House Plaza finally won.

On January 7, 1941, the County Commissioners toured the new county building, which was almost ready for occupancy (Illus. 10). The architect for the project was Frank Ross, who had also built Easton’s Avalon Theater. Ross did a remarkable Colonial Revival conversion of the Victorian Music Hall by building an addition that wrapped around the former main facade and by heavily remodeling the original building. The result was a symmetrical Colonial Revival main façade with the original building cleverly appearing as a subsidiary rear ell. The new County Municipal Building was highly praised for conforming to the Talbot County Court House in design. The Sunday American went so far as to exclaim that “the new building fits into its setting so admirably that one could believe it has stood there since the days of General Washington,

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<sup>40</sup> “Under the Court House Dome,” Easton Star-Democrat (August 9, 1940).

<sup>41</sup> Easton Star-Democrat (September 6, 1940); Ibid (January 31, 1941).

<sup>42</sup> “Under the Court House Dome,” Easton Star-Democrat (August 9, 1940).

<sup>43</sup> Easton Star-Democrat (September 27, 1940).

<sup>44</sup> The landscaping controversy was regularly featured in The Easton Star-Democrat through November and December of 1940.

when Easton was known as Talbot Court House and when the court house itself was new.”<sup>45</sup>

Inside, a new auditorium occupied much of the former music hall’s space. A brick partition wall shortened the hall and cut out the former gallery space. The rest of the second floor became county offices. The Star Democrat reported “the Board of Education moved into its new quarters on the second floor front. County Agent Brown and Miss Smith, Home Demonstration Agent, will move this morning in [to] rooms just back of the School Board. Entrance to these offices will be in the side of the building, next to the Court House.”<sup>46</sup> The County Agent and Home Demonstration Agent offices occupied the space that had formerly been the rear portion of the Music Hall auditorium. The column “Under the Court House Dome” described this reconfigured space. “County Agent’s quarters are sufficiently large to hold meetings in the main room, with connecting rooms for the various sub-departments and also for the home demonstration agent.”<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, this office configuration is still fairly intact today. The adjacent civic auditorium was also described in the contemporary report:

The older folks of Easton will be surprised at the auditorium, which has been changed considerably yet bears the earmarks of a decade or more ago when it was the only show house in Easton. The ceiling has been lowered five or six feet, said the commissioners, and a new arch adorns the front of the stage. Two hundred persons will be accommodated. Over that number is not allowed by the inspectors in a public building that is not absolutely fireproof. The stairways are fireproof, the window sashes of metal, and in various other ways the building has been made perfectly safe while using wooden floors.<sup>48</sup>

The former balcony space became a third floor room that had a projection window to serve as the civic auditorium’s projection room. Also above the second floor offices, a large third floor room, “paneled handsomely in knotty pine,” was equipped for meetings and exhibitions.”<sup>49</sup> The Talbot County Free Library occupied the first floor of the new addition including the east end of the former Music Hall building (Illus. 11). The west end of the first floor was occupied by the County Health Department. Below that, on the ground floor at the rear of the building, the rural women’s clubs had furnished and equipped a

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<sup>45</sup> Sunday American (May 4, 1941), James Clayland Mullikin Papers, Talbot County Free Library, Maryland Room.

<sup>46</sup> “New County Office Building Now Occupied,” Easton Star-Democrat (January 31, 1940).

<sup>47</sup> “Under the Court House Dome,” Easton Star-Democrat (January 10, 1941).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Sunday American (May 4, 1941), James Clayland Mullikin Papers, Talbot County Free Library, Maryland Room.



large room “designed as a headquarters for farm women visiting town.”<sup>50</sup> The Welfare Board moved into the ground floor offices facing on West Street.<sup>51</sup>

The civic auditorium could be used for public assembly by applying to the Commissioners for permission. The auditorium continued to be used for about thirty years (Illus. 14, 15).

After World War II, attention was turned to expanding the overcrowded Court House. In December 1947, a Court House Improvement Committee recommended that a two-and-a-half story addition be built on the back of the Court House which purportedly would not alter the historic appearance of the original building. The proposal opened a storm of debate that tied into the efforts of several groups to promote the Colonial character of the Court House square. The controversy over whether to add to the historic Talbot County Court House or to build an annex at a nearby location dragged on into the mid-Fifties.

In May 1956, the Talbot County Committee for Historical Preservation met to review plans for remodeling and expanding the Court House. Among the tentative proposals were drawings submitted by the large Boston architecture firm Perry, Shaw, Hepburn and Dean. (Illus. 16)<sup>52</sup> Architects William G. Perry, Thomas Mott Shaw and Andrew H. Hepburn had all gained renown through their extensive reconstruction work in Colonial Williamsburg during the Twenties and Thirties. Initially, Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn were the architects responsible for directing the Williamsburg restoration efforts.<sup>53</sup> Locally, the firm restored/reconstructed the historic Wye Church through a grant from Arthur A. Houghton, Jr. in 1949.<sup>54</sup> The firm’s proposal for constructing subsidiary symmetrical wings setback on either side of a restored Talbot County Court House was favorably received. The south wing tied into the front of the former Music Hall, and the north wing blocked the undesired view of the jail.

The remodeled Music Hall underwent major changes in 1958 when Perry, Shaw, Hepburn and Dean, completed the Court House additions with brick hyphens that joined the two buildings. The portico was removed from Frank Ross’s Music Hall addition and the Court House’s new south wing covered two-thirds of the 1940 façade (Illus. 17). However, the 1958 remodeling had little effect on the auditorium space itself. The Board of Education took over the auditorium but continued to use the space for holding public meetings throughout the Sixties. The former changing room beneath the stage was converted

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Easton Star-Democrat (February 14, 1940).

<sup>52</sup> Easton Star-Democrat (May 4, 1956).

<sup>53</sup> Edward A. Chappell and Mark R. Wenger, “Fiske Kimball and Colonial Williamsburg,” Colonial Williamsburg Research Review 6:1 (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1995/96).

<sup>54</sup> Christopher Weeks, Where Land and Water Intertwine (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. 45-46.

into Board of Education staff offices where a supervisor was able to have an office with space for a few additional desks.<sup>55</sup> About 1970, the auditorium was partitioned into office space.<sup>56</sup> The stage was converted into the finance office for the Board of Education and the auditorium received an acoustic tile drop ceiling and partition walls to create additional offices. Gelson Brooks, Operation Manager and thirty-year veteran of the Board of Education explained that there were never any architectural plans or schematic drawings filed for the renovation to the space. He believes workers made a few quick sketch-plans and built the offices as they went. At the time of this report, the offices had already been razed for current Talbot County Court House renovations. During the demolition work some of the original fabric of Music Hall was uncovered and work was halted to conduct a thorough historical analysis of the Music Hall space and to produce this Historic Structure Report.

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<sup>55</sup> March 2005, interview with retired Superintendent Norman Moore.

<sup>56</sup> May 2005, interview with Gelson Brooks, Board of Education Operations Manager. Mr. Brooks recalled that the auditorium had been converted to offices by 1970. When he began working for the Board of Education in 1975 he reported to work in the offices located in the former auditorium space.