

Introduction

This historic structure report documents the history of “Music Hall,” located at the center of the Easton Historic District in Easton, Maryland. Owned by Talbot County, Music Hall forms a part of the Talbot County Court House complex.

In February 2003, the former Music Hall was slated for major renovations as part of the rehabilitation of the Talbot County Courthouse. However, when the demolition crews began removing suspended ceilings, partitions and furred-out walls inside the former Music Hall, it became apparent that much of the original fabric from the 1879 Music Hall still existed. In response to this discovery the Talbot County Public Works halted any further demolition that was considered to be invasive to the original fabric.

Public interest in the preservation of the Music Hall arose supported by local preservation and entertainment communities. Requests were made to the County Council to stop work. A debate followed with impassioned pleas to preserve the space with several options put forward. County Council came to the prudent conclusion that in order to make an informed decision about how to proceed, a series of studies needed to be conducted including an historic structure report. Consequently, in September 2004, the Talbot County Historic Preservation Commission, on behalf of the Talbot County Council, initiated the HSR with additional support from the Maryland Historical Trust. The purpose of conducting the historic structure report was to document the evolution of the Music Hall, to identify significant design elements and materials both extant and missing in the Music Hall, and to make recommendations for restoration and adaptive use priorities.

Following the introductory material, the historic structure report is divided into four major sections: 1) Building Chronology & History of the Music Hall, 2) Architectural Synthesis, 3) Recommendations, and 4) Analysis of Historic Finishes. The Building Chronology & History of the Music Hall section presents the findings of the archival research including historic photographs, drawings and information from oral interviews conducted with informants familiar with the historic space. Next, the Architectural Synthesis section presents the architectural evolution of the Music Hall as derived from the analysis of the historical documentation in conjunction with the physical evidence gathered from on-site investigations. The Recommendations section provides guidelines for historical interpretation, restoration and reuse of the Music Hall. At the end of the report is the Analysis of Historic Finishes section. It provides a detailed scientific study of the paint chronology, the decorative finishes, and of the laboratory analysis of samples taken from on-site investigations.