

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Ohio</b>
COUNTY: <b>Hamilton</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Cincinnati Music Hall**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**Cincinnati Music Hall**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**1243 Elm Street**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Cincinnati**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

STATE: **Ohio** CODE: **34** COUNTY: **Hamilton** CODE: **061**

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Concerts</u> <u>Meetings</u>

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**Mayor, City of Cincinnati (See Continuation Sheet)**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**City Hall**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Cincinnati**

STATE:  
**Ohio**

CODE:  
**34**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Hamilton County Court House**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Court and Main Streets**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Cincinnati**

STATE:  
**Ohio**

CODE:  
**34**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS (See Continuation Sheet)**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**Inventory and Appraisal of Historic Sites Buildings and Areas (City Planning Commission)**

DATE OF SURVEY: **November 1960**  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
**Cincinnati Historical Society**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Eden Park**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Cincinnati**

STATE:  
**Ohio**

CODE:  
**34**

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Cincinnati Music Hall designed by Cincinnati architect Samuel Hannaford, is a stunning composition in the High Victorian Gothic mode so pervasive in American architecture in the 1870's. The facade freely combines Gothic stylistic elements with Romanesque corbeling, towers, and round arches. A student of the Music Hall suggests "that it is a design of very high quality that may be favorably compared with other, frequently more discussed examples of the High Victorian Gothic in the United States."<sup>1</sup>

Constructed in 1878 the building occupies nearly an entire city block 500 feet long and 400 feet in depth. It consists essentially of a central auditorium--the Music Hall proper--and two flanking buildings 90 by 293 feet integrated by the facade, and designed as exhibit halls. The auditorium space is divided into an entrance foyer, the main auditorium and stage. The exhibit halls today contain reduced exhibit area, dressing rooms, offices, scenery storage, a carpenter shop, and rehearsal room. While these alterations have eliminated the great open spaces of the exhibit halls they have provided an adaptive use which contributes to the viability of the structure as a performing arts center which was a predominant function of the building. While the auditorium was originally constructed without a proscenium, one was provided within the first few years of operation.

Music Hall Facade

The foremost feature of the central Music Hall is the central gable, whose ridge is emphasized by attenuated corbeling. At its apex is a pedestal which apparently was never graced by sculpture. The central feature of the gable is a recessed pointed arch which encloses a large rose window.<sup>2</sup> At either side of the main arch, on the second and third stories, are round-arched windows--those above with their own corbeled balustrades. Below the rose window are three gables which enclose additional recessed pointed arches and round-arched windows. The flanking gables border the lower portion of the rose window, while the central gable overlaps it. The tripartite vertical divisioning continues to the second story, and the projecting entrance portico. The central feature on the second story is a frontispiece with recessed pointed and trefoil arches, which encloses double doors leading from the second level of the main vestibule to the

<sup>1</sup>Robert Thomas Gifford, "The Cincinnati Music Hall and Exposition Buildings" (unpublished Master's thesis, Cornell University, 1973), p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, pp. 103-106. The following description is taken verbatim from Gifford. In view of the likelihood that the Cincinnati Music Hall might be regarded as an important building architecturally, the preparer of this form, who is not an architectural historian, believes it is best to provide too much than not enough. Gifford's esthetic judgments on the Music Hall facade have been included in the interest of stimulating consideration of the building possibly as an architectural landmark.

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |  |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1878 - present**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry    | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |   |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Cincinnati Music Hall, built in 1878, importantly illustrates the musical tradition of the German-American Saengerfests or Singing Festivals which permeated large sections of the United States in the 19th century and can still be witnessed today. It was this tradition that assisted in transmitting improved musical taste to the new lands of the west. Acoustically, regarded as one of the finest halls in the country, it was, and still is, associated with many of the nations most highly acclaimed artists and musical organizations. Theodore Thomas, who ranked with Walter Damrosch, as the most eminent conductor of the day, conducted the Saengerfests and then the May Festivals, the latter from the opening of the Music Hall in 1878 until 1904. The Music Hall is likely the only remaining example of an early civic center--a concept that was gaining popularity in the 19th century but waned only to be revived in the present century. It is more than a Music Hall, it is a unique joining of a cultural center with industrial exposition halls--an intriguing compromise between culture and industry at a time when both were seeking visibility on a new frontier.

Architecturally, the Music Hall is a singular composition designed by Cincinnati architect Samuel Hannaford in the high Victorian mode. It successfully unifies three distinct buildings into a single undifferentiated whole. While original interior spaces of the industrial halls have been subdivided and adopted to present uses, these uses are associated with the performing arts character of the Music Hall. The Music Hall proper essentially reflects its historic appearance as does the exterior of the building most particularly the Elm Street or predominant facade.

History

Cincinnati came to be known as the "Athens of the West," rich in cultural tradition and boasting a musical heritage already a half-century old when the Music Hall was born. Its cultural prowess was sustained by its economic wealth. By 1870 the "Queen City" was seventh largest in the United States and clearly the first commercial center of the upper mid-West. This amalgam of capital and culture was reflected in the complex of Music and Industrial Halls known today as the Cincinnati Music Hall.

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Chase, Gilbert, *America's Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966.

Cincinnati Music Hall Association, *Golden Jubilee--Cincinnati Music Hall, 1878-1928*. Cincinnati: Privately published, 1928.

Sheblessy, Sylvia Kleve, *100 years of the Cincinnati May Festival*. Cincinnati: Privately Printed, 1973.

Stern, Joseph S., Jr., "The Queen of the Queen City: Music Hall," the Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin, 31 (Spring, 1973), p.8

Thomas, Louis R., "A History of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra to 1931." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1972.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		39° 06' 33"	84° 31' 09"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		UTM		
SE	° ' "	° ' "		16.714520.4331640		
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1 city block

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
Benjamin Levy, Senior Historian

ORGANIZATION Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service DATE 9/5/74

STREET AND NUMBER:  
1100 L Street NW.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE D.C. CODE

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>_____ Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____ Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date _____</p>
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4. Owner of Property

Roger O. Pellens  
Manager  
Cincinnati Music Hall Association  
1243 Elm Street  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

The Cincinnati Music Hall Association is the leaseholder and manages the Music Hall. Correspondence should be directed to the Association as well as to the Mayor.

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

National Register of Historic Places  
January 1970 Federal; State  
Depository (1) Ohio Historical Society  
The Ohio Historical Society  
Interstate #71 at 17th Avenue  
Columbus, Ohio 43211

(2) National Register, Office of Archeology and  
Historic Preservation, National Park Service,  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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balcony. This elaborate entranceway, which overlaps the window above, is flanked by two round-arched windows at each side. The vertical lines of the main arch, and its interior divisions, are continued to the entrance platform by the piers that separate the five, segmentally-arched, entrances to the hall. The subtle projection and recession of the brickwork in each of these areas adds a good deal of interest and variety--and some measure of depth--to the planar wall surface.

Black brick and white stone are used to articulate and define all of these features, and, together with the red brick, produce an immensely rich polychromed effect. White stone terminates the ridge of the gable, which is further emphasized by a line of black bricks along its edge. The top of each of the round-arched corbels is outlined with black brick. The main arch is framed by an intricate pattern of black and red brick, and outlined with stone. The rose window is bordered by a decorative pattern of black brick. Each of the gables is outlined with stone, and contains black and red diaper ornament at the top. The arches within the gables are bordered by stone and alternating red and black brick. A similar decorative treatment is employed for windows and arches throughout the building, occasionally with an additional defining line of black brick.

Stone string courses, sometimes in combination with black brick, extend across the entire facade on several levels. From a distance, the stone stands out boldly, while the black brick blends with the rest of the red surface until one is near the building. The continuous string courses, and the consistent polychrome surface treatment, play a decisive role in helping to unify the disparate forms of the facade. Decoration contributes significantly to the overall effectiveness of the structure.

Flanking the central gable, and projecting forward from it, are the square towers, between which the entrance portico is enclosed. In comparison with the height of the gable, the towers are quite low, their brickwork extending only to the springing of the recessed gable arch. They are terminated, however, with steeply pointed black slate roofs which considerably increase their total height. The silhouette of the facade remains dominated by the gable, but the spiky tower roofs distinctly accentuate the verticality of the whole. The cornice of the towers is corbeled outward, imitating medieval machicolated forms. On the third story of each tower are triple round-arched windows on the front and gable sides. On the second story, a single pointed arch, infilled with red and black diaper ornament, surmounts a double window. Double round-arched windows, with corbeled balustrades, appear on the first story.

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Flanking the towers on either side are three story wings, thirty-three feet wide and sixty-six feet high, which correspond to the north and south lobbies and corridors flanking the main auditorium on the interior. On the first story, each contains two double-doored entrances, divided by a central pier. Above the entrances, a projecting corbeled section rises to the top of each wing where it is terminated by a gable, which repeats, on a much diminished scale, the central gable, and extends in front of the black slate hip roof. The corbeled center sections contain double segmentally-arched windows on the second story, with black and red diaper ornament at the top. On the third story are three narrow windows, whose vertical divisions are repeated in half-round windows in the gables. The peak of each gable contains red and black diaper ornament. The stone balustrade above the central entrance portico is repeated on either side of the corbeled center section of the wings, with tall narrow windows on the second and third stories above.

The total width of the Music Hall facade is 178 feet. Each of the nine double-doored entrances is deeply recessed behind the portico facade, with segmentally-arched fanlights above. The entrances are elaborately polychromed. The segmental arches are patterned with black brick, and the separating piers feature courses of stone and black brick, as well as carved stone capitals. Broad flights of stone steps lead from the sidewalk to a twelve foot wide entrance platform, which extends across the entire facade, except where interrupted by the towers.

The Music Hall facade is a complex combination of architectural forms and decorative motifs--and a most successful one. Given the high gable as a primary focus of the design, which it apparently was, the flanking towers perform a critical function. Without them the appearance of the facade would have been most "unsatisfactory" indeed. The towers effectively offset the extreme height of the gable, and provide much needed width which changes the proportions of the entire facade for the better. It appears that the towers and gable were seen by the architect as a single unit. If the line of the ridge of the gable is extended downward, it precisely meets the outer corners of each tower, indicating that the tower placement and height were carefully considered, and are anything but arbitrary.

Among the problems Samuel Hannaford faced in designing the Music Hall, was the transition from the lofty central section to the lower wings--a transition that would become even more critical when the additional horizontal emphasis of the Exposition buildings was added to the composition. The towers admirably perform this function, in addition to effectively enclosing the entrance portico. Their steeply pointed roofs provide a gradual stepping down from the top of the gable, and their projecting square profiles serve as an important intermediate element between the planar expanse of the central section and the almost domestically scaled side wings. The latter would have appeared ridiculous placed next to the massive gable without an intervening element to soften the transition.

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In spite of their small scale, the wings very effectively complete the composition. Gable, towers, and wings merge into a unified whole, with even the smallest feature contributing markedly to the overall effect. The projecting gable above the roof line of each wing, for example, echoes the main gable and the three recessed gables, and provides a small vertical accent that is decisive for the total effect. Without these gables, the wings would have appeared to be awkwardly integrated second thoughts, tacked on to the whole.

Exposition Halls

Samuel Hannaford's Exposition wings effectively completed the Music Hall complex. Although the wings were separate structures, the three buildings formed a single composition, and the design of the wings had to complement the forms of the central block if overall coherence was to be maintained. Each of the Exposition buildings was more than a single structure also. Of prime visual importance was the three story section on Elm Street, behind which the wings extended to Plum Street, where they were terminated by an additional two story section. No attempt was made to express the divergent functions of each wing on the exterior. The building facades give absolutely no hint of what was going on behind and within them.<sup>3</sup> They could just as easily have been court houses, or schools, or any type of public building. Art and Industry may have come together on the inside, but the exterior presented a very formal architectural treatment.

The Elm Street section of each of the Exposition wings is a rectangular block, 95 feet wide and 60 feet deep, with a wide, decisively projecting section at the front. Centered in each is an additional entrance bay, which projects subtly, and rises to a terminating gable that extends above the cornice line. The cornice line of the flanking wings of the Music Hall is continued in the Exposition buildings, and the entire complex is unified by continuous stone and black brick string courses. According to the drawing of the complex published in 1878, each wing was to have a mansard roof, topped by a railing, with hipped roofs on the projecting center sections which adjoined, and extended above, the mansards. The hipped roof on the North wing came to a point, while that on the South had a flat profile. The roofs were constructed as illustrated, with the exception that the mansard roof of the South wing was changed to a pitched roof.

<sup>3</sup>Except for a few small decorative bas-reliefs which symbolize the activity within. For example, a cog-wheel relief suggests the industrial arts.

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The treatment of the Exposition wing facades below the roof line is identical in each building, and effectively echoes the features of the Music Hall. The areas at either side of the central projecting section are articulated by triple round-arched windows on the third story, and double segmentally-arched windows on the lower stories. Stone and black brick "eyebrows" cap each window, a treatment that is repeated elsewhere on the facade. The entrance bay of each wing has a half-round window in the projecting corbeled gable, and a pointed arch, infilled with diaper ornament, surmounting a double window and corbeled balustrade on the second story. Round-arched and segmentally-arched windows flank the entrance bay to complete the central section. The projecting gable of each wing effectively echoes the treatment of the Music Hall wings. The repetition of the pointed arches on the second story of the towers further helps to relate the Exposition wings to the Music Hall. That Samuel Hannaford was dealing with an unwieldy combination of elements in the total complex cannot be denied. The fact that he was able to bring them together with considerable sophistication and overall effectiveness was a significant accomplishment.

A good deal of attention was also given to the sides of the Exposition wings-- especially those of the North wing, which rise directly from the sidewalk on 14th Street, the northern boundary of the site. The side of the front section on 14th Street was given a treatment similar to the Elm Street facade, with a projecting center bay, and a gable rising above the cornice. To the west, the two-story windowed elevation of Power Hall was articulated by pilasters, a stone string course, and a decoratively patterned cornice.

Plum Street Facade

While less elaborate than the Elm Street facade, the Plum Street front, as originally designed and executed, was handsomely detailed and carefully organized. The tripartite divisioning of the entire complex is reflected on Plum Street, but the height of the individual elements is reduced. As suggested earlier, the Music Hall and Exposition buildings on Elm Street are, in effect, separate structures. They maintain a minimum three story height that is continued westward only about sixty feet. The Exposition wings behind are only two stories in height, and the gabled roof over the auditorium proper is about thirty feet lower than that of the main gable. The drawing of the Plum Street elevation reflects this change in height, with all the forms on Elm Street rising considerably above those on Plum Street. Because of the extreme depth of the buildings, however, these elements are not particularly apparent on Plum Street, with the exception of the main gable.

The hierarchy of tall central section and low wings is maintained on Plum Street. The main feature is the gable of the auditorium, with a central projecting apsidal section which reflects the placement of the organ at the rear of the stage, and reveals Music Hall's strong relationship to ecclesiastical building forms. Pointed arches, sometimes infilled with

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windows, articulate the sides of the apse, and are repeated on the adjoining side walls. The tops of the arches are defined by alternating black and red brick, and outlined with stone. The central section of the apse continues to the street in an unbroken plane, but two story wings, topped by an open parapet, extend from it at the sides, ending in hipped roof sections, with central gables and projecting entrances, that correspond to the wings next to the towers on the main facade.

The central section of the Plum Street facade illustrates the importance of the towers on Elm Street in softening the transition from the gable to the lower wings. Although the wings on Plum Street are effectively tied to the central apsidal section by the continuation of their two story elevations across its front, they are nonetheless dwarfed by its dominating silhouette. A similar awkwardness would have characterized the Elm Street facade were it not for the towers. Once again, Samuel Hannaford's impressive abilities to resolve compositional difficulties are confirmed.

At the extreme ends of the Plum Street facade, the Exposition wings are terminated by two story structures with mansard roofs. Like the corresponding sections on Elm Street, these buildings are separate entities. They effectively punctuate the Exposition wings, and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the facade. A projecting central section in each contains an additional projecting entrance bay, with a gable rising above. As on Elm Street, the repetition of gables throughout contributes markedly to the general effect. A segmentally-arched entrance fills the entrance bay on the first story, with double segmentally-arched windows on the second story, and a single round-arched window in the gable. The areas on either side of the entrance bay contain triple segmentally-arched windows on the first and second stories.

Stone string courses extend across the entire Plum Street facade, and black brick also appears--most interestingly in a double line that extends across the apse at the springing of the pointed arches. In general, however, the polychrome treatment on Plum Street is considerably less elaborate than that on Elm Street, thus reflecting the relative importance of the two facades.

While less elaborate than the Elm Street facade, the Plum Street front, as originally designed and executed, was handsomely detailed and carefully organized. On the basis of a single drawing, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Samuel Hannaford's rear elevation was considerably more impressive and inviting than Ware & Van Brunt's proposed front elevation.

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Interiors<sup>4</sup>

The main arcaded entrance of the Music Hall led into a central vestibule, 46 by 112 feet, which was flanked at the north and south by additional lobbies, 31 by 48 feet, with their own exterior entrances. These lobbies contained the stairways to the second and third floors of the hall, and led to eighteen feet wide corridors which ran along the entire length of the main auditorium. From the central vestibule, three entrances led directly into the auditorium, which was 112 feet wide, 192 feet long and 67 feet high. It contained a dress circle, projecting sixteen feet from the sides and rear, and a balcony at the east end.

Free-standing iron columns, sixty-four feet high, were ranged along the sides of the hall, spaced sixteen feet on center, and five feet from the walls. At the top of each, arched brackets with a radius of sixteen feet formed a coved ceiling, eighty feet in height, which was broken up in a rectangular pattern of beams and cross beams. Windows were placed in the arched upper areas between each set of brackets.

The chorus and orchestra were seated at the west end of the auditorium. The rear wall of the stage area was curved gently outward, with space for a large organ provided at the center. Here, too, the ceiling was coved, and ninety degree angles were avoided throughout the entire interior for acoustical reasons. A slight slope was allowed in the main floor of the auditorium, of one foot for every thirty, to allow sight of the stage for an audience of 5,500!

Five doorways were fitted between the entrance towers, which led to the "grand vestibule." The vestibule was 46 by 112 feet, and forty-one feet high. A gallery extended around the vestibule at the second floor level, leaving a well hole of thirty-nine feet by sixty-eight feet. A small hall was located on the third floor, directly above the two story entrance vestibule. Forty-six feet wide, one hundred and sixteen feet long, and thirty feet high it was to have a simple stage at the south end, and to accommodate 1,200.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 74-81

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Changes--1896<sup>5</sup>

By 1880, Music Hall trustees realized that opera could not be presented without adequate stage facilities. By the following year they had provided an elaborate temporary proscenium, flanked by three tiers of round-arched stage boxes, which extended across the entire width of the auditorium at the front of the existing stage area. The proscenium was 112 feet wide and 84 feet high overall. The boxes were decorated in satin and gold, and an orchestra pit was provided at the front of the stage. The remainder of the hall was not altered.

In 1882, the slant of the auditorium floor was increased from four feet eight inches to nine feet to provide a better view of the stage. In 1886 the proscenium was reconstructed and a row of twenty-two boxes was installed which extended across the central part of the auditorium.

Throughout the decade of the 1880's it was clear that temporary stage facilities would not meet the needs of the performing arts. To remedy the deficiency the trustees encouraged major renovations of the auditorium interior in 1895 and 1896. This remodeling is basically the one retained today.

The Hannaford design was accepted. It was a radical proposal for the auditorium. On the other hand, it left the corridors and entrance vestibule intact.

A proscenium wall was built across the hall, eight feet in front of the old stage line, with the stage itself extending fourteen feet forward. To increase the depth of the stage, the organ was moved back twelve feet, to the extreme rear wall of the auditorium. These changes increased the total depth of the stage from fifty-six feet to seventy feet. The curtain line was fifty-six feet from the rear, and the total width of the stage remained 112 feet, as before. Two places were provided for the orchestra: a pit between the footlights and curtain, measuring fourteen by fifty feet; and an area in front of the stage which was separated from the audience by a brass rail. When not being used, the pit was covered, and became part of the main stage floor.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 200-218.

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A double proscenium arch was installed. The main arch was seventy-two feet wide and fifty-five feet high. At the rear of the arch--at the curtain line--hydraulically powered panels could be extended and lowered to reduce the width to fifty feet, and the height to thirty-five feet. This was an important feature since it made the stage adaptable for large-scale music festivals, as well as productions using scenery. The stage itself was fitted out with a rigging loft or gridiron seventy-two feet high, fly galleries, and a full range of other apparatus--all of which was not installed by May, 1896. The areas at the sides of the stage, on the first and second floors, were remodeled to provide increased dressing room facilities. As a whole, the auditorium was provided with one of the largest and best equipped stages in the country which, with small later changes, has continued to meet the needs of performers to the present time.

The audience area of the auditorium was, for all practical purposes, gutted. The wood paneling on the walls was removed, the existing dress circle and balcony taken out, the ceiling lowered five feet, and the slope of the orchestra floor heightened to eight feet. A new dress circle and balcony were installed, both of which curved around three sides of the hall, and were supported by thin metal columns. New, fully upholstered chairs were installed, and the seating capacity reduced from 4,428 to 3,623--still making it one of the largest concert halls in the United States.

The new walls and ceiling of the auditorium were plastered, as all the other interior walls of the Music Hall had been since 1878. The ceiling was articulated by deeply coffered panels--a large panel at the center, surrounded by smaller panels with decorative bosses at their centers. Coffering, on a much reduced scale, was also used to decorate the underside of the main proscenium arch. The new ceiling design echoed that of the original main vestibule, and visual continuity throughout the interior was thus increased. The side walls of the auditorium above the balcony were articulated by round-arched windows, separated by pilasters.

Many other smaller changes were made throughout Music Hall. A new heating and ventilation system, and new plumbing were installed. The organ was cleaned and turned, and floors and roofs were repaired. Electric wiring was installed, together with new gas and electric fixtures. The old stage in Dexter Hall, as the small hall had become known, was removed, and the walls and ceiling redecorated. The 46 by 112 foot hall was to retain its original uses, but also to serve as a foyer for the balcony.

The 1896 remodeling transformed the main auditorium from a starkly severe multi-purpose hall into a beautifully proportioned, handsomely articulated, and eminently functional concert hall and theater which was, for the first time, an appropriate complement to the gracefully elegant entrance vestibule. The auditorium and vestibule were certainly among the most beautiful in the United States in 1896.

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Changes--1927<sup>6</sup>

The need to remodel the Exposition Halls, stated in 1895, was not filled until 1927. The renovation was quite extensive. It consisted of completely new interiors for both the North and South Halls and a remodeling of the entire west facade on Central Parkway, formerly Plum Street.

The North wing was redesigned primarily as a sports arena, 90 feet by 250 feet and 41 feet high. Its unobstructed floor space could be used for all indoor sports, from basketball to boxing, and accommodate a crowd of 6,000. Balconies were constructed at the east and west ends of the hall, each seating 1,000. Entrance lobbies and stairs to the second floor were provided at each end, and connections were retained to the central Music Hall. The building could be converted "overnight" from athletic arena to exhibition space.

The design for the South wing was similar to that of the North, except that two floors were provided. The first floor was to be used for exhibitions. In addition to lobby stairways, two ramps to the second floor were provided along the south wall. The second floor was an unobstructed space with a truss roof twenty-four feet high. Designed primarily as a ballroom, it featured a maple floor over concrete, and contained kitchen facilities to permit its use as a banquet hall. Like the first floor, it could also be used for exhibition purposes.

The remodeled Exposition wings were designed to serve a wide variety of purposes, and could be used individually, or in conjunction with the Music Hall. Their spaciousness and adaptability made them a natural focus for an ongoing series of civic events.

The facade remodeling on the west front of the complex retained the basic forms of the original structure. The major visual change was the removal of the mansard roofs and projecting gables of the end sections of the two story Exposition wings, and their replacement by a parapet with a low gabled section at the center. Large entrances were provided at the center of each wing.

One of the reasons for the west facade remodeling was to provide entrance lobbies to both the Music Hall and wings at either side of the Music Hall. To accomplish this, projecting entrances were constructed in front of what

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 226-228.

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was formerly the space between the buildings which, in the rear half of the complex, had been filled in to serve as corridors at an earlier date. Each entrance was divided into three sections with pointed arches--an attempt to repeat the window forms of the projecting apse of the auditorium.

The original fenestration patterns of the facade were retained, and the changes as a whole did not measurably disrupt the original facade. The projecting entrances did add a further note of confusion to an already busy series of forms, and the handsome mansard roofs and projecting gables of the end pavilions were eliminated.

At the completion of the 1927 remodeling, the entire exterior and interior of the Music Hall complex had, with minor exceptions, taken the form they have retained to the present. Throughout both major remodelings, no changes were made in the size of any of the original spaces. All alterations consisted of reallocating and redefining the uses to which the various spaces within each area of the complex would be put. The virtues of the original, well-reasoned plan were amply demonstrated.

Later Remodeling<sup>7</sup>

The Music Hall was redecorated in 1936-37 and 1955. At neither time were structural changes made to alter the interiors as they were established in 1896 and 1927. The Elm Street facade remains almost exactly as it appeared in 1879.

In recent years the great majority of window openings have been infilled with brick although the glass has mercifully remained in the windows of the central gable on Elm Street. Elsewhere, the brick has been recessed in the openings leaving the window outlines clearly visible. Nevertheless, the effect of infilling is clearly to dampen the interest of the facade punctuation provided by the original fenestration.

Exterior sandblasting was part of the most recent remodeling of the Music Hall which was begun in the summer of 1969, and completed in 1972. As in 1896, this remodeling was concerned chiefly with the Music Hall--the auditorium and other public spaces, the backstage areas, and the stage itself.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 235-238.

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Aside from sandblasting, the chief exterior change was the construction of a projecting canopy in front of the five entrances of the central section on Elm Street. The flat roof of the canopy is lower than the segmentally-arched entrances, and supported by square columns.

Phase 1 of the renovation was completed in June 1970, and consisted of installing air conditioning, new wiring and lighting, plumbing and restroom fixtures. A new Green Room, offices, dressing rooms and library were also completed. An escalator to the second and third floors was unobtrusively placed in the south lobby, and carpeting installed in all the corridors. The auditorium and all public spaces were redecorated in red, white, and gold, and new chandeliers and velours draperies installed.

The major purpose for the second phase of the renovation was to revamp the stage facilities for the Cincinnati Summer Opera which, for fifty years, had been performing at the Cincinnati Zoo. While the 1896 remodeling had gone a long way toward adapting the stage for opera, the stage was not adequately equipped as an opera theater. As Music Hall is the home of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, it was not desired to have a permanent orchestra pit separating the stage from the audience. The problem was solved by extending the stage further into the auditorium, and installing a hydraulic lift under most of it--thus allowing a sunken pit or full concert stage.

An electronic system of stage lighting was installed, as well as new rigging and other equipment to provide complete facilities for the most elaborate production needs. In the renovation process, the North wing was converted from athletic arena to rehearsal hall for the Cincinnati Symphony, as well as a carpenter shop and scenery storage area, with space for storing the sets for more than forty operas. The first floor of the South wing was converted into office space, as well as additional dressing rooms. The second floor ballroom continues in active use.

While the uses for which the Exposition buildings were originally planned have changed considerably over the years, the wings have continued to perform an important role in increasing the overall flexibility and versatility of the complex, and have provided for activities which Music Hall alone could not have accommodated.

It is the versatility and adaptability of the buildings that has proven to be among their most important virtues in the perspective of later developments. For within the buildings, as completed in 1878 and 1879, it has been possible to accommodate the numerous interior alterations, in both the Music Hall and Exposition wings, that have been necessitated by changed uses and new needs in the intervening years. The soundness of the original design--with its large spaces, and carefully planned circulation patterns--has been proven again and again. The later history of remodelings and alterations is

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an outstanding example of thoughtful planning, which has introduced the new, while preserving all the best features of the original buildings, including the entire gabled, towered and polychromed Elm Street facade.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Gifford, pp. 199-200.

BOUNDARY

The Boundary of the Music Hall is the property line on the south; the west curb of Elm Street on the east; the south curb of West 14th Street on the north; and the east curb of Central Parkway on the west.

It should be noted that the vista along Lincoln Park Drive toward the west facade of the Music Hall is critical to the presentation of the building and should be retained. Furthermore, the Elm Street facade has never been presented toward an open space the way it was designed. Washington Park in not extending to West 14th Street does not permit the essential view of the west facade on a direct line of sight with the axis of the central gable.

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8. Significance Continued page 1

As early as 1800 music instruction was available in Cincinnati.<sup>1</sup> By 1808, French and German musicians were giving band concerts at Fort Washington. Seven years later musical organizations like the Appollonian Society were formed by German immigrants. The Bohemian quality of Cincinnati's musical tradition was already being felt. In 1819 a Haydn Society was organized which three years later performed Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus." In 1832 Harriet Martineau recorded that Mozart was being performed by a 25-man orchestra with chorus.<sup>2</sup> Two years later the Eclectic Academy of Music appeared "to promote knowledge and correct taste in music."<sup>3</sup>

The May Festival, the occasion and inspiration for the construction of the Music Hall, became the springtime musical event of Cincinnati. It was formed by a merger of the English and German singing societies established a decade earlier. In 1844 Timothy Mason formed the city's Haydn and Handel Society. By 1864 the Harmonic Society of Cincinnati succeeded the Haydn and Handel Society and together with the Orpheus Singing Club, became the nucleus of the first May Festival Chorus of 1873.

At the same time, the German quarter was evolving a musical mode that was to permeate sizeable sections of the nation and win national acclaim. This was the Saengerfest. The Saengerfest was a musical event involving numerous German-American voices. The form was ordinarily male double quartets singing four-part songs a capella. A Saengerbund, or union of these singing groups, embracing an area to Louisville, Kentucky, and Madison, Indiana, launched the first combined Saengerfest in 1849 in Cincinnati. By 1851 many more communities had joined and large choruses of the classical repertoire were being added. By 1868 the popularity of the Saengerfest had grown to the point that a National Saengerbund Association was chartered and headquartered in Cincinnati. The Saenger Halle, predecessor of Music Hall was erected that year and equipped to handle a chorus of 2,000 voices!

So popular was the first season that the organizers insisted that someone of national reputation be urged to conduct the following year--1869. Theodore Thomas was asked. His acceptance was the crowning event which certified the Saengerfest as a moment of national importance.

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph S. Stern, Jr., "The Queen of the Queen City: Music Hall," *The Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin*, 31 (Spring, 1973), p. 8. This article is the basic source for the musical forerunners of the Music Hall.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., quoting Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel* (Cincinnati, 1838), II, 54.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., original source not cited.

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8. Significance Continued page 2

Christian Friedrich Theodore Thomas grew up as a child prodigy in Germany. He immigrated to the United States with his family in 1845. Playing his violin for pennies at dances, theatres, and saloons, he followed an itinerant circuit through the back country of America. In 1853 he was "discovered" by the conductor Louis Antoine Jullien who put young Thomas among his first violins. The following year he was elected to the Philharmonic Society of New York.

Within the next decade he rose from performer to innovator. With his surprise discovery of the baton for a performance of Halevy's, *The Jewess*, he was recognized as a rare talent on the podium. He organized his own orchestra and conducted it all the while making guest appearances. In 1866 he initiated his famous summer Concerts at Terrace Garden which continued for eleven years. It was at this time that Thomas came to Cincinnati to lead the Saengerfests and May Festivals and later to return to assume a 2-year directorate of the Cincinnati College of Music.

In 1877 Thomas took over the New York Philharmonic. He was to conduct that orchestra until 1885 at which time he agreed to conduct the American Opera Company. In 1891 he accepted the baton of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra until his death in 1905. In 1893 he directed the musical activities of the Chicago World's Fair.

Theodore Thomas is regarded, along with Walter Damrosch, as one of the greatest American conductors of the 19th century. A talent with the baton, his greatest contribution was as a musical missionary. He traveled with his orchestra about the land for the purpose of raising the level of musical taste. His programs were brilliant, dovetailing popular melodies with substantial works of the classical repertoire. He was probably the most significant figure of his day in the effort to educate the American musical audience.<sup>4</sup>

Within 10 years the Feste Halle proved inadequate to contain the popularity of the events or the talents of Theodore Thomas. He had already turned his attention from the Saengerfest to the May Festival. In 1871 he was induced to return to Cincinnati to conduct the first May Festival in 1873. He returned again and again--in 1878 to conduct at the opening of the great new Music Hall; thereafter at every biennial festival until he closed out his career in the 1904 Festival which featured Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink.

<sup>4</sup>Gilbert Chase, *America's Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 623; John Tasker Howard, "Christian Friedrich Theodore Thomas," *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Dumas Malone, XVIII (1943), 424-426.

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8. Significance Continued page 3

The construction of Music Hall in 1878 was the crowning event in the evolution of a musical tradition at first local and imitative but ultimately nationally acclaimed and innovative.

Reuben R. Springer, Kentucky merchant who made a fortune in Cincinnati, is more responsible for the creation of Music Hall than any one single person. A man of great civic pride and a love for choral music, he donated over \$220,000 to the project. What ultimately emerged was a unique complex of cultural display and industrial exhibit--a curious and politic amalgam of two forums in which to show-off the achievement of a developing people in the new lands of the west. Here music and the market place were mixed--a structural representation of the democratization of culture.

The Music Hall is really a Music Hall and two Industrial Halls. The Music Hall was built first, in one year, 1877-78. It might not have been built at all had not Reuben Springer committed more of his wealth to the construction of the companion Industrial Halls. In time for the 1879 Cincinnati Industrial Exposition, Art Hall and Machinery Hall were completed. For a decade, Cincinnati became an active center of industrial exhibits. The great spaces of the industrial halls were admirably suited to these displays.

The decade of the 1880's added associations to this grand hall. Dramatic festivals were staged. Thomas brought the American Opera Company to Music Hall. Huge crowds heard the noted evangelists Sam Small and Sam Jones. But the highlight of the decade was the Democratic National Convention of 1880. Major General Winfield Scott Hancock was nominated by the Democrats. He went on to be defeated by James A. Garfield that November.

In later years the Music Hall became the home of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (1894) and the Cincinnati Summer Opera (1920). It continues to be ranked acoustically as one of the best halls in the country. The high level of its contribution to music is testified to even today. Paul Hume, music critic of the Washington Post, speaks of the Cincinnati Opera production of Boris Godunov as "one of the richest visual realizations of the opera achieved in many decades and one that is destined to be seen widely during the years ahead." Nor should it be forgotten that, like Reuben Springer a century ago, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Corbett of Cincinnati, who are among the country's most generous and imaginative donors in the world of opera, are associated with the Music Hall and its productions.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Washington Post, September 1, 1974, p. k2.

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WEST

14 TH

STREET

1243 ELM STREET  
AUDITOR'S RECORD PLAT:  
81-3-40

LINCOLN

PARK DR.

ANN ST.

CENTRAL PARKWAY

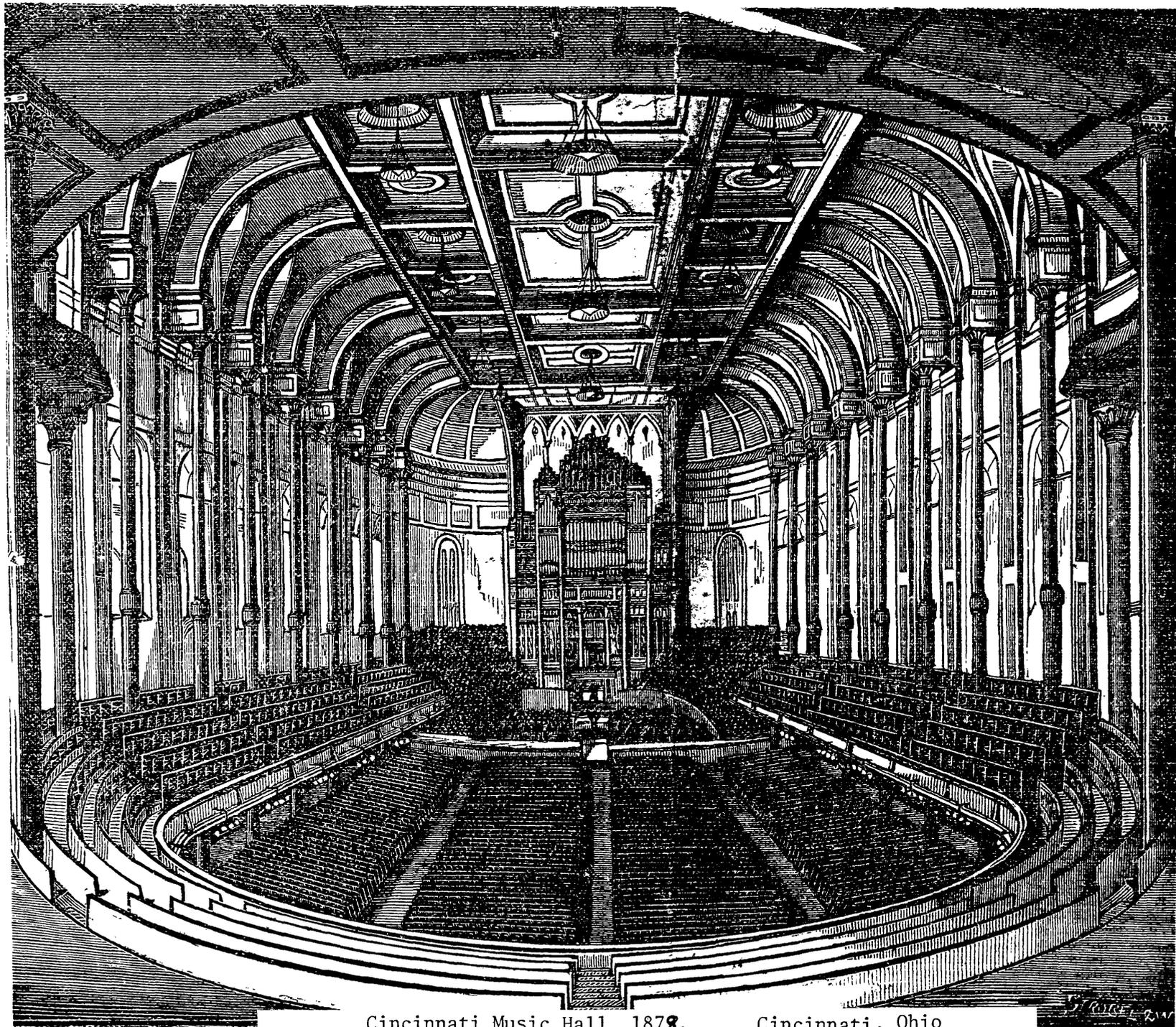
ELM STREET

WASHINGTON  
PARK

GRANT ST.

**EXHIBIT "A"**

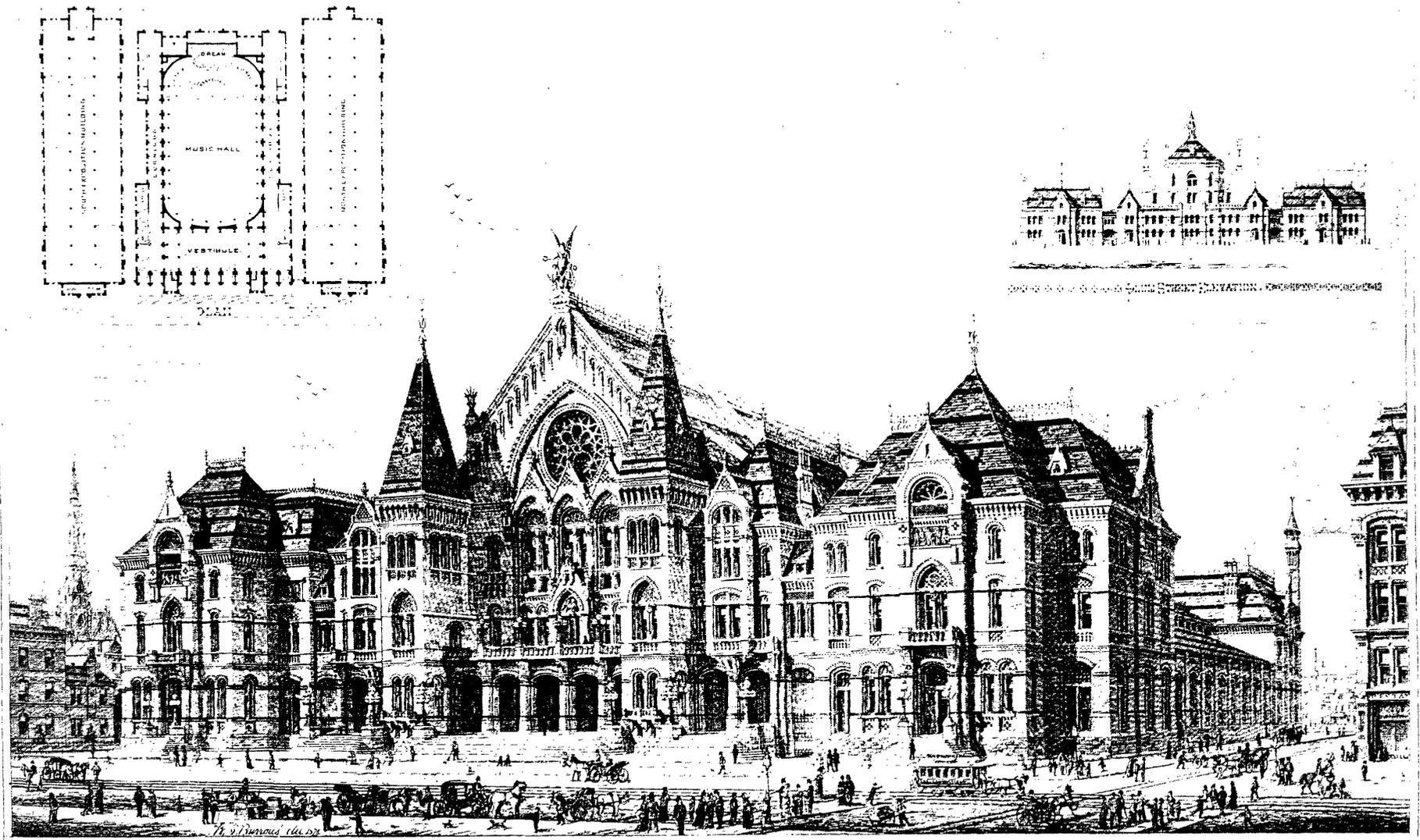
LISTED PROPERTY PLAT  
 ( ORDINANCE NO. 214 -1973 SECTION 1 )  
**CINCINNATI MUSIC HALL**  
 1243 ELM STREET  
 CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
 CINCINNATI OHIO (1"=100') FEBRUARY 1973



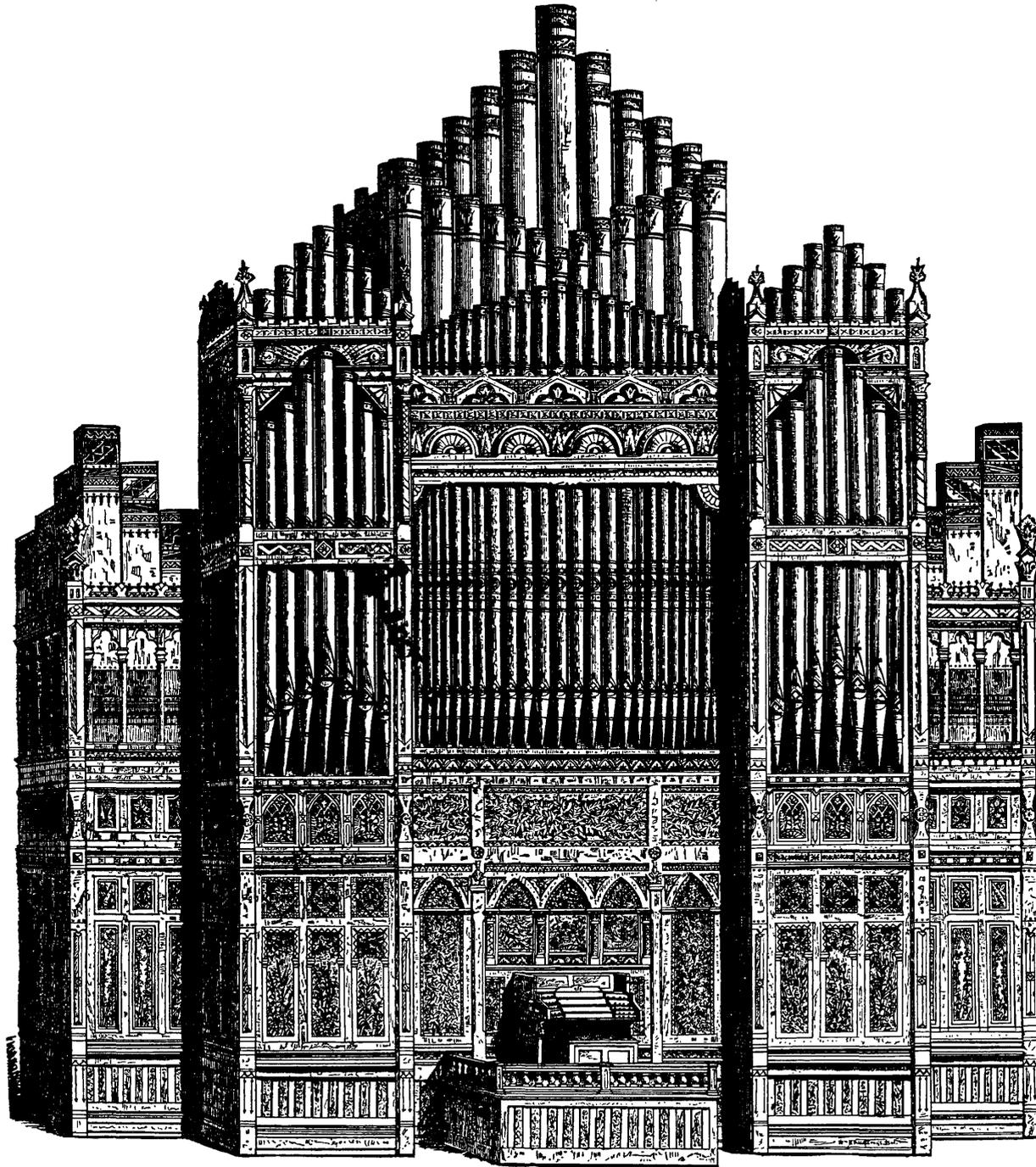
Cincinnati Music Hall, 1878.

Cincinnati, Ohio

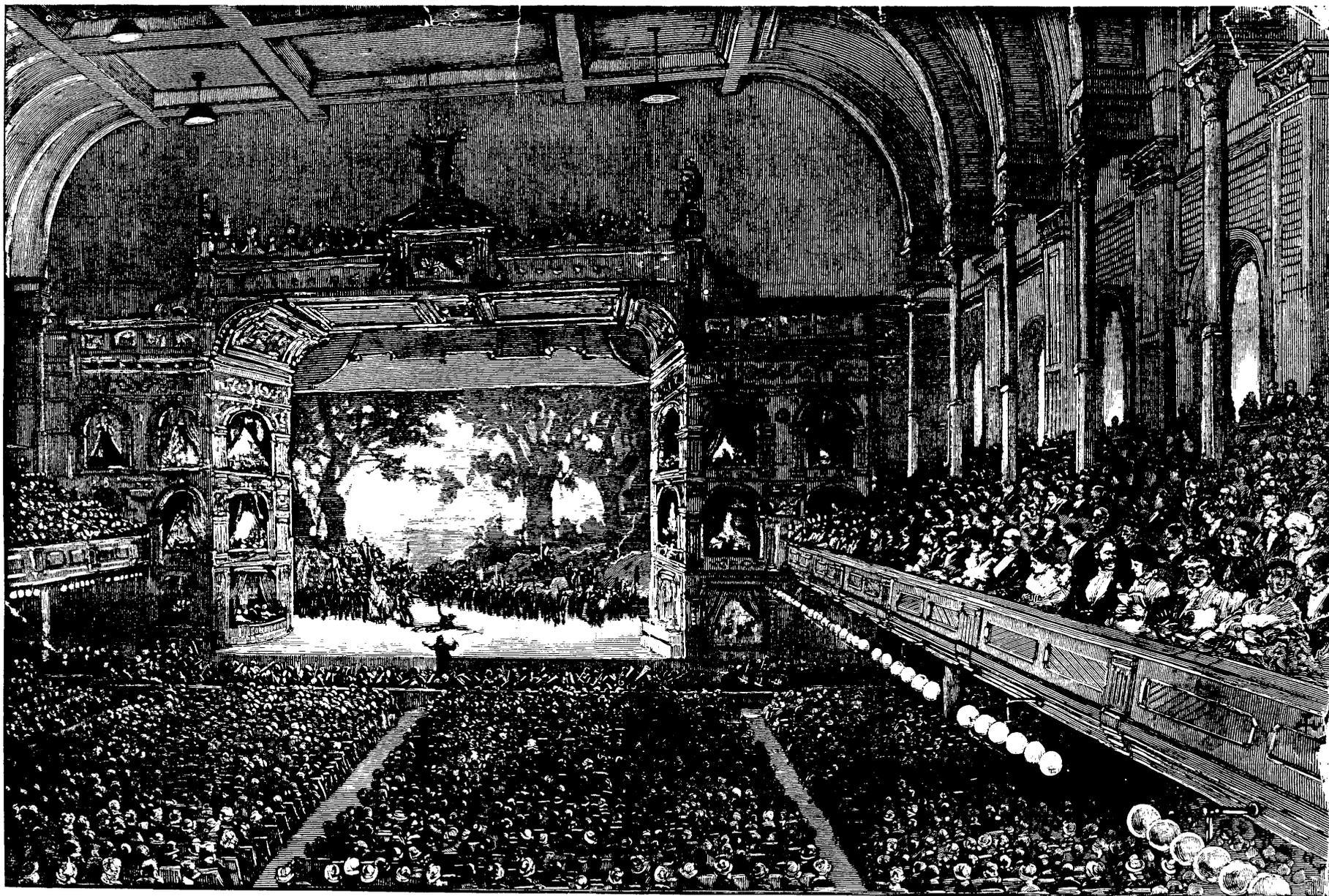
W. C. C. R. M.



Cincinnati Music Hall and Plan, 1875  
Cincinnati, Ohio.



THE CINCINNATI MUSIC HALL ORGAN.



Cincinnati Music Hall, c. 1895  
Cincinnati, Ohio. 83