

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Propertyhistoric name Kleinhans Music Hall

other names/site number _____

2. Locationstreet & number Symphony Circle☐ not for publicationcity, town Buffalo☐ vicinitystate New Yorkcode NYcounty Eriecode 029zip code 14201**3. Classification**

Ownership of Property

☒ private☐ public-local☐ public-State☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

☒ building(s)☐ district☐ site☐ structure☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

1

Noncontributing

_____ buildings

_____ sites

_____ structures

_____ objects

_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Allentown Historic DistrictNumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 1**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☐ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Music Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

International Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls steel frame, brick and stone walls

roof slab concrete

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Located on one of the landscaped circles designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in their great plan of Buffalo parks and boulevards, the Kleinhans Music Hall is set on a triangular site with approximate frontages; 550 feet on Porter Avenue, with a direct view of Lake Erie, 450 feet on Normal Avenue with some parking facilities across the way and 500 feet on Pennsylvania Avenue. There have been minimal alterations on the original site. In 1960 the reflecting pool outside the Chamber Music Hall was filled in because a child had drowned and parking space was also added for 300 more cars at that time.

Under its flat roof the walls rise one and two stories with a basement below. The walls are steel frame with trusses with the large auditorium carrying walls of Wyandotte, Ohio, common brick from Sandusky, Ohio; the smaller Chamber Music Hall has walls of Mankato, Minnesota, limestone. The sleek, modern profile of the Music Hall shows no cornices, dormer windows or porches.

In plan the Music Hall consists of a large auditorium seating approximately 3,000 people, and a smaller auditorium called the Chamber Music Hall with a capacity of about 800 and named the Mary Seaton Room. In addition to these two main music halls, there is a still smaller Rehearsal Room (Livingston Hall), accommodating about 200. There is also a spacious Main Lobby and under this foyer, a large cocktail lounge. Originally there was an attached kitchen which was moved in 1951, allowing expansion of the bar to a 115-foot oval. A new, beautifully equipped kitchen was then installed. The complete mechanical and electrical systems include air conditioning and food service systems. Equipment and furnishings and machinery are complete and the orchestra pit can accommodate stage expansion of 100 chairs.

Both the acoustics and lighting systems are superb. Eliel Saarinen wrote in detail about how these requirements decided the shape of the auditorium, the texture of the ceiling, walls and floor covering, the lighting system, and even the colors used on walls and upholstery. The acoustical engineer, Charles C. Potwin, described how the hall achieved its excellent sound and what rules he applied:

1. The desirable ratio of proportions of the floor plan for each auditorium. (Proportions in both rooms are 1:1.3.)

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☒ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D NHL #4

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

20th Century

Significant Dates

1938-1940

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Saarinén, Eliel and Eero
Kidd, J. Franklin and William A.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

One of the three commissions given to the new architectural firm of Eliel and Eero Saarinen after the long, lean years of the Depression, Kleinhans Music Hall ranks among the firm's finest work and indicates the growing influence of the younger Saarinen. In addition to the Buffalo music hall (1938-40), the buildings are Tabernacle Church (now First Christian Church), Columbus, Indiana (1939-42) and the Crow Island School, Winnetka, Illinois (1938-40). Having done extensive design work in 1937 on Tanglewood in the Berkshires with Sergei Koussevitzky, the commission to do the Buffalo Hall was a coherent expression of Eliel's late work in which he integrated his principles of design and, at the same time, a demonstration of Eero's great design ability.

The Music Hall was endowed by Edward L. Kleinhans, who owned a large clothing store on Lafayette Square in Buffalo. The Hall is dedicated to the memory of his wife, Mary Seaton Kleinhans, and his mother, Mary Livingston Kleinhans.

This memorial was planned by him several years before his death, in conversations with the late George F. Rand. Mr. Kleinhans divulged to Mr. Rand his desire to provide through the instrumentality of the Buffalo Foundation some suitable memorial which would serve and inspire the citizens of Buffalo for many years.

As a result of these conversations Mr. and Mrs. Kleinhans left their residuary estates to the Marine Trust Company of Buffalo as Trustee for the Buffalo Foundation

"to build and erect a suitable music hall in the City of Buffalo, New York, to be known as 'The Kleinhans Music Hall' in memory of Mr. Kleinhans' mother and wife, which at such time as shall be deemed proper and suitable, shall be turned over to the City of Buffalo, New York, upon the express understanding that the same shall be perpetually known as 'The Kleinhans Music Hall' and upon such further conditions as my said Trustee may deem proper and advisable. Such Music Hall shall be for the use, enjoyment and benefit of the People of the City

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
has been requested
- ☒ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings
Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 4.2 acres

UTM References

A

1	7
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6	7	2	8	1	0
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4	7	5	1	8	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

☒ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This is the original parcel on which the Kleinhans Music Hall was built.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Carolyn Pitts, Historian		
organization	History Division, NPS	date	2/9/89
street & number	1100 L Street, NW	telephone	(202) 343-8166
city or town	Washington	state	DC zip code 20013

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2. The proper cubic foot volume per person, as dictated by the purposes for which the rooms would be used. (Volumes are 230 cu. ft. per person in the large auditorium; 210 in the smaller.)
3. The relation of seating areas to the stage, for hearing as well as sight.
4. The arrangement of the main lobby with regard to noise transmission from one auditorium to the other.

The main auditorium has a fixed music shell shaped to distribute sound evenly over the audience area. The large ceiling and the underside of the balcony are both shaped to direct the sound in full volume to the rear seats. Comparatively little absorbing material is used, surfaces consisting mainly of hard plaster, plywood, and perforated flexwood. Elimination of tone distortion and irregular sound distribution is accomplished by the shaping of wall and ceiling surfaces, and by irregular spaced bracing where the plywood is used. In the small auditorium the use of materials is roughly similar.

In the rehearsal room, through the strategic placing of wall and ceiling surfaces, and with the use of small areas of absorbing material irregularly distributed, it has been possible to create a design which gives the orchestra members a sensation similar to that experienced in the main auditorium.¹

The lighting consultant, Stanley McCandless, also wrote of the collaboration of architects and the plan for the interior lighting:

1. The entire seating area of both auditoriums is lighted by hundreds of so called "down lights" through small holes in the ceiling. This permits adequate illumination for finding seats and reading programs without affecting the general atmosphere of the room itself.
2. The ceilings are lighted from wall pockets by carefully designed optical equipment. These give a general glow in the space and also serve as an apparent source of illumination which retains some of the crystalline glitter and glamor of old chandeliers and wall brackets.
3. The side walls are lighted by a warm glow to give intimacy and also to show the richness of the grain in the wood paneling.
4. The platform area is lighted by another set of "down lights" so that the musicians can see to read easily.
5. The walls and ceiling over the platform are lighted by concealed coves.

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6. The conductor and soloists can be spotlighted softly by a carefully confined beam of light directed from concealed parts in the ceiling.
7. Footlights and special outlets about the platform are included to provide a highly flexible lighting distribution for occasional presentations such as pageants and ballets.
8. All these sources of light are under the control of a switchboard in each auditorium. The one in the Main Auditorium incorporates a feature which permits the smooth blending from one lighting to another simply by moving the fader lever on the board. The operator can see the progress of a performance through a small port located in the side of the platform near the switchboard.
9. The lobbies, landing platforms, lounges and rest-rooms are lighted specially to suit their function and to provide the proper atmosphere.²

The interior finishes are simply detailed millwork, prima vera, flexwood in the large auditorium. In the Chamber Music Hall the wood is rose and zebra wood with parquet flooring. The lobby is beautifully finished in rose and zebra wood with grand staircases and intermission balconies with elegant trim and railings. The furniture was designed by Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen.

Footnotes

1. Kleinhans Music Hall, 1945 (Buffalo: Kleinhans Music Hall Management, Inc., 1953), p. 35.
2. Ibid., p. 33.

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of Buffalo. Any surplus that may remain over shall be used to maintain such Music Hall."

Mr. and Mrs. Kleinhans passed away within a few months of each other in 1934, leaving an estate aggregating one million dollars.

In order that as much of this estate as possible be conserved to provide an endowment for the building, in accordance with Mr. Kleinhans' wish, the Governing Committee of The Buffalo Foundation, under the leadership of Mr. Rand, approached Thomas L. Holling, Mayor of the City of Buffalo, and members of The Common Council. With their cooperation a contract was entered into between The Buffalo Foundation, the City of Buffalo, and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration of Public Works, commonly known as the P.W.A.

Under the contract the United States Government provided a grant of \$583,675 towards the cost of the Hall. The balance, amounting to \$751,704, was paid by The Buffalo Foundation from the Kleinhans estate. A non-profit corporation known as The Kleinhans Music Hall, Inc., was organized to construct the Hall and to operate it until a permanent arrangement could be made with the City of Buffalo.

The building was dedicated at an opening concert by the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra on October 12, 1940. After the dedication a new non-profit corporation known as the Kleinhans Music Hall Management, Inc., was formed and entered into a contract with the City of Buffalo for the permanent management of the building.¹

Buffalo's interest in music goes back to 1820 when the town was not much more than a frontier village and the first pianos were delivered by the Erie Canal. Jenny Lind sang in concert in 1851. In the 1860's, there were several German singing societies and an opera season and finally in the 1880's there were Music Festivals in the first Music Hall (1883). The great Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo in 1901 contained a Temple of Music--a suitably elaborate, although temporary building. It gained historic importance as the place President McKinley was shot during an official public reception. The advent of the Kleinhans Music Hall established a new era in Buffalo.

Eliel Saarinen (1873-1950) was one of a handful of internationally known architects in the early years of the 20th century, having established his reputation in Finland with the Helsinki Railroad Station (1904). He gained an immediate reputation in America for his second prize entry in the Chicago Tribune Tower competition in 1922. It was Louis Sullivan who praised the entry and established Saarinen's reputation in this country. In that same year, Saarinen arrived in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, under the patronage of the Booth publishing family to begin his work at Cranbrook.

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The Buffalo Music Hall was one of the first buildings that was the result of a remarkable father-son partnership. Eero had always assisted his father in the drafting room at Cranbrook, and after completing his formal training at Yale, he returned to Michigan. At the same time that Eero was working with his father, he was working with Charles Eames on the now well known molded plywood chair that has been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art. A friend described the collaboration thus, "The father's advice was always respected by the son; on the other hand, Eero was always encouraged to advance his ideas by a very tolerant father." The Buffalo commission received wide acclaim.

With the Buffalo firm of F.J. and W.A. Kidd as architects in charge of construction, the Saarinens developed the designs with detailed drawings and a model which showed with remarkable fidelity the building's exterior and interior. In view of the technical requirements of this concert hall, the conception was in itself as complicated as a musical instrument, molded completely by numerous techniques difficult to coordinate.

All the elements of the Kleinhans concert hall come together in a unified organism. Here, as in the Gothic cathedral, the building not only satisfies utilitarian requirements but also expresses the aesthetic purpose of the structure. It is one of the most satisfying examples of Eliel Saarinen's philosophy of design, enriched by Eero's contributions.

With the assistance of Stanley McCandless, lighting consultant, and Charles C. Potwin, acoustical adviser, the practical demands of the structure were met; the experts were so successful that the concert hall has frequently been lauded in words of highest praise by performing artists who could appreciate its excellence.

The large auditorium, which seats about three thousand, and the smaller one, with a capacity of about eight hundred, are models of the integration of architectural designing with technical considerations. Eliel Saarinen and his son arrived at a plan which, like a fine musical instrument, fulfills its mechanical purpose and which, again like a well-made instrument, is an honest expression in the art of design.

Eliel Saarinen himself made this comparison:

The shape of the violin has not derived from a preconceived style form. It has derived from and through its own function as a musical instrument and distinct requirements as to the quality and carrying capacity of its sound, and as to how it is handled by the player. That is, the shape of the violin is based on both musical and human qualifications. And as a concert auditorium to its inmost nature is a musical instrument, its formation must derive accordingly.²

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The Hall is basically two horseshoe-shaped auditoriums sharing a long, slightly bowed lobby which has a stair at either end leading to a large balcony. The interiors seem to be in motion because of the "moderne" curves, stairs, coved ceilings and sofas in the lobby. The arm chair design by Eero Saarinen for the Chamber Music Hall remains a classic today.

In the interior of the auditorium the Saarinens showed their ability to relate the proportions, colors, and textures to the spiritual expression of the building. There were, in these two halls, vital problems of functions which needed to be solved above all. Eliel said:

In order to satisfy the demands of the spiritual issue, there were many practical and technical requirements which were of basic significance.

First, there were the acoustical requirements, which to a considerable degree determined the general form of the auditorium and the disposition of the stage, seats, and surfaces. Furthermore, these acoustical requirements decided much of the character and texture of the ceiling, walls, and floor covering, so as to ascertain satisfactory reverberation.

Second, there was the problem of an adequate relationship between the musicians on the stage and the public in the auditorium proper. In this respect we do not mean particularly that practical matter of adequate sight from every chair, but even the psychological side of a pleasant participation in the performance.

Third, there was the problem of shaping the auditorium so as to provide for possibilities of various and varying light effects according to the changing moments and accents, as the performance proceeds. This point the designers considered of particular importance, as the proposed double lighting with cold and warm color is essential in the bringing of forms and proportions to their full value and also in bringing the varying light effects into accord with corresponding variations of performance and intervals.³

In the interior plan, color was used judiciously to produce the effect the designers wished to achieve. Eliel explained:

The soft-blue fabric of the main auditorium is intended to bring a quiet scale of color to the room, together with the light-wood color of the walls and the light-gray color of the ceiling. This color combination of subdued character is apt still more to emphasize the strongly indicative lines of the auditorium design. Moreover, this color combination of subdued character is and will always be seen together with

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the varying and gradually rising and sinking effects of electric light in both warm and cold tones. Such being the case, it is obvious that the color selection of the auditorium and the study of the lighting problem have been worked out hand in hand with the auditorium design itself. And the color selection for the two auditoriums already settles to a certain degree the color key of the whole building throughout the various rooms.⁴

Surrounded by ample space, rich in natural growth, the Kleinhans Music Hall offered an opportunity which, unfortunately, comes all too rarely in the life of a designer. The money available for this project gave sufficient freedom to the designers' imaginations. The liberal and willing spirit of the committee's request was one that encouraged the best design that the artists could conceive. The cooperation of capable and understanding colleagues supplied the technical features the building had to possess.

As a result, this gift to the people of Buffalo has been adjudged to be one of the great works of art in contemporary architectural design. Joseph Hudnut, of Harvard, wrote in Architectural Forum in 1941: "If I had my way, every city in America should have a Kleinhans Music Hall, fitted like a garment to the idea of music as popular solace and enlightenment--an act of faith made express and visible."⁵

This beautiful small Music Hall shows both the fine hand of Eero Saarinen (1911-1961), destined to become one of the leaders of post-war architecture in the United States until his untimely death, and the great skill of his father, Eliel (1873-1950), who was Frank Lloyd Wright's only rival of his own generation in America.

Footnotes

1. Kleinhans Music Hall, 1945 (Buffalo: Kleinhans Music Hall Management, Inc., 1953), p. 35.
2. Albert Christ-Janer, Eliel Saarinen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948, 1950), p. 92.
3. Ibid., p. 94-95.
4. Ibid., p. 96.
5. "Kleinhans Music Hall," Architectural Forum, 75 (July 1941), 41.

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Saarinen, Eliel. Search for Form. New York City: Reinhold and Braziller, 1948, 1962.

Spade, Robert. Eero Saarinen. New York City: Simon and Shuster, 1971.

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All that tract or parcel of land, situate in the City of Buffalo, County of Erie, State of New York, and more particularly bounded and described as follows:

Beginning at the point of intersection of the northeasterly line of Normal Avenue and the northwesterly line of Pennsylvania Street; running thence northeasterly along the said northwesterly line of Pennsylvania Street 324.56 feet to the point of intersection of said line of Pennsylvania Street with the southwesterly line of Fourteenth Street; running thence northwesterly along the said southwesterly line of Fourteenth Street 313.13 feet to the point of intersection of said line of Fourteenth Street with the southerly line of Porter Avenue; running thence westerly along the said southerly line of Porter Avenue 198.80 feet to the point of intersection of the said line of Porter Avenue with the division line between subdivision lots Nos. 6 and 5 of Block No. 89, which said point of intersection is distant 231.08 feet easterly from the point of intersection of the said southerly line of Porter Avenue with the said northeasterly line of Normal Avenue, measured along the said southerly line of Porter Avenue; running thence southerly along the said division line and at right angles with the said southerly line of Porter Avenue about 105.41 feet to the southwesterly corner of said subdivision lot No. 6; running thence southeasterly along the division line between said subdivision lot No. 6 and subdivision lot No. 7 in said Block No. 89 about 44 feet to the point of intersection of said division line with the southeasterly line of a certain parcel of land conveyed by Ellicott R. Colson as Executor of the last Will and Testament of Mary C. MacFarlane, deceased, to The Ashland Realty Company, Inc., by deed dated the 11th day of May, 1922, and recorded in the Office of the Clerk of the County of Erie, State of New York, in Liber 1588 or Deeds at page 592 on the 12th day of May, 1922; running thence southwesterly along the said southeasterly line of the said parcel of land so conveyed by the said Ellicott R. Colson as Executor of the last Will and Testament of Mary C. MacFarlane, deceased, to the said The Ashland Realty Company, Inc., as aforesaid, about 124.17 feet to the point of intersection of said southeasterly line with the said northeasterly line of Normal Avenue, and running thence southeasterly along the said northeasterly line of Normal Avenue 323.40 feet to the place of beginning.

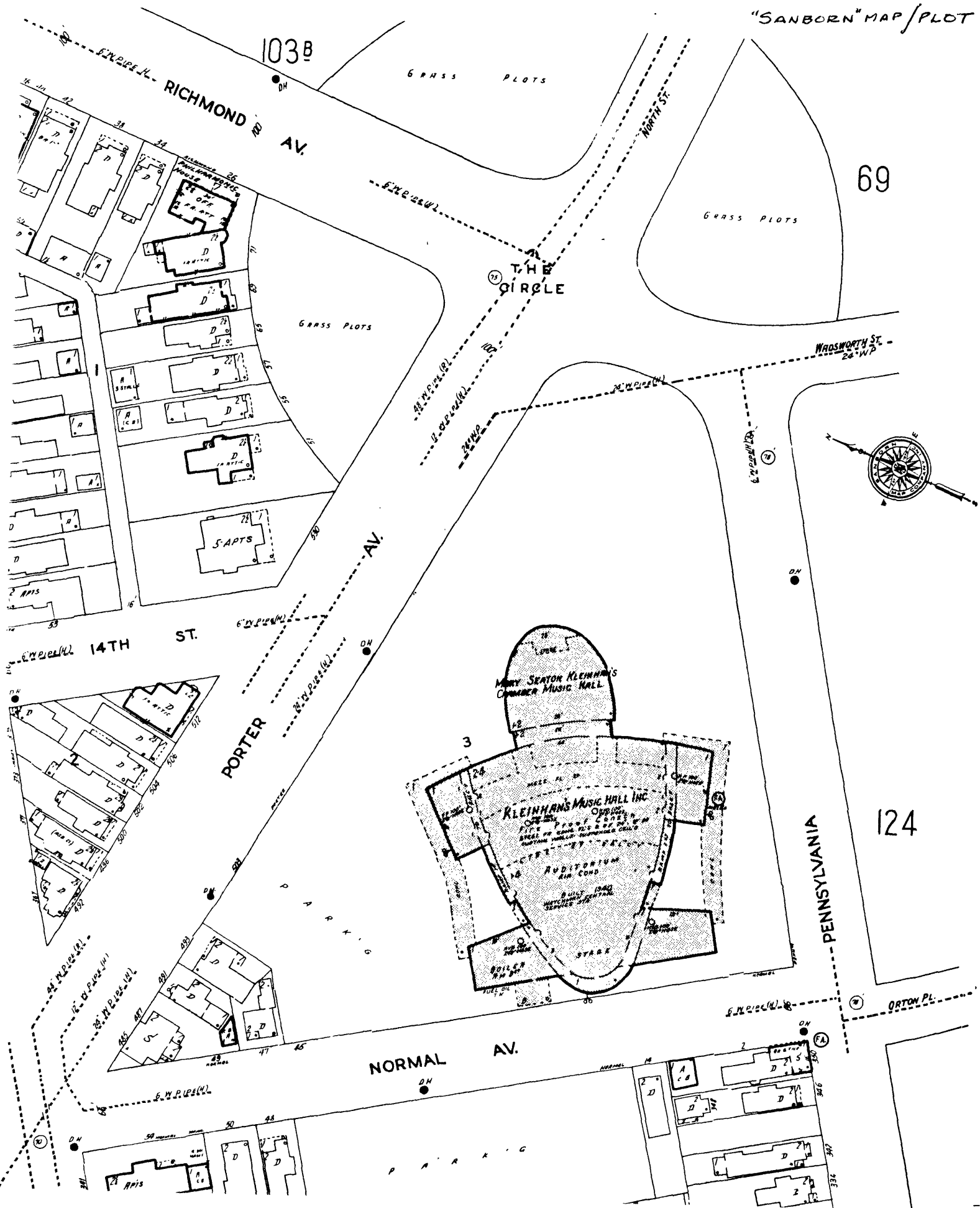
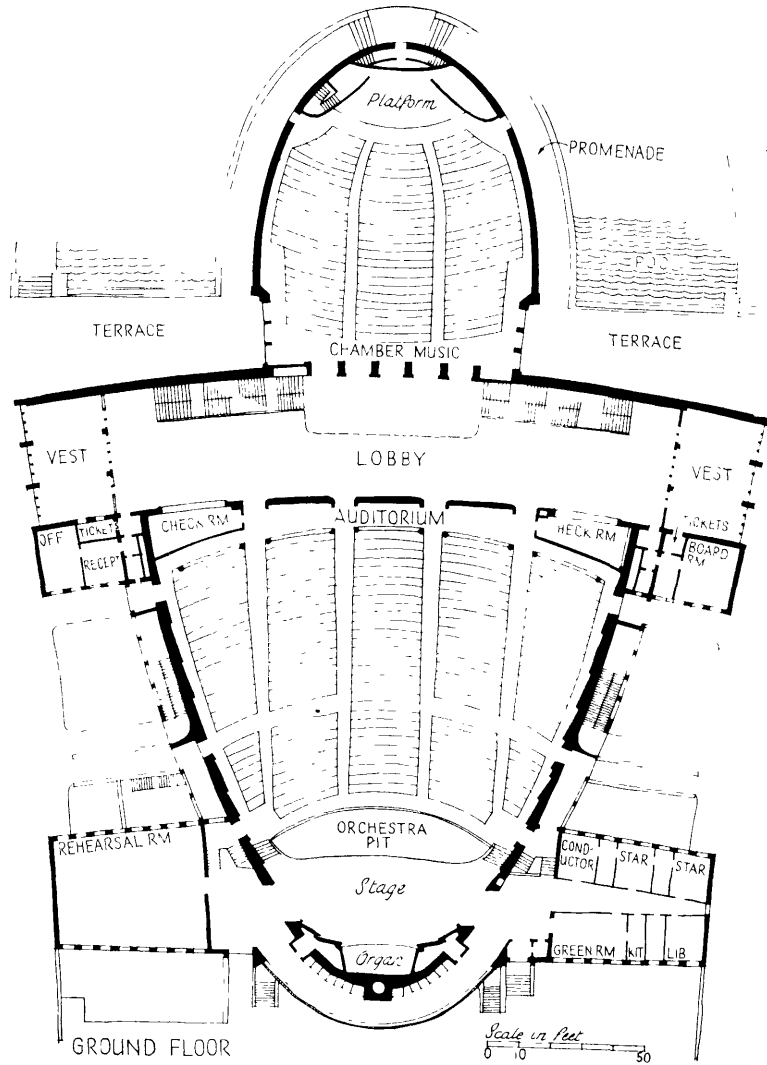
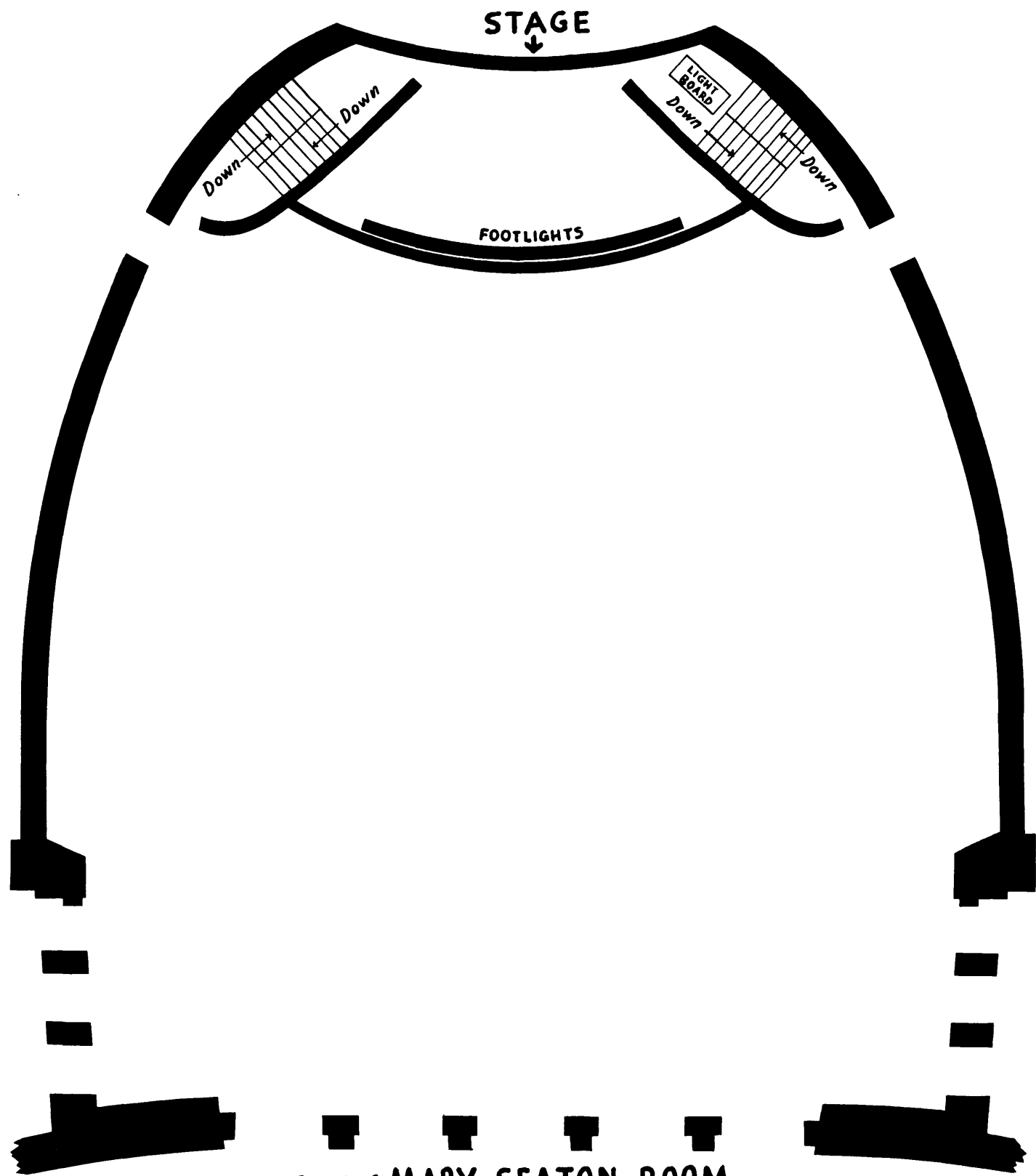
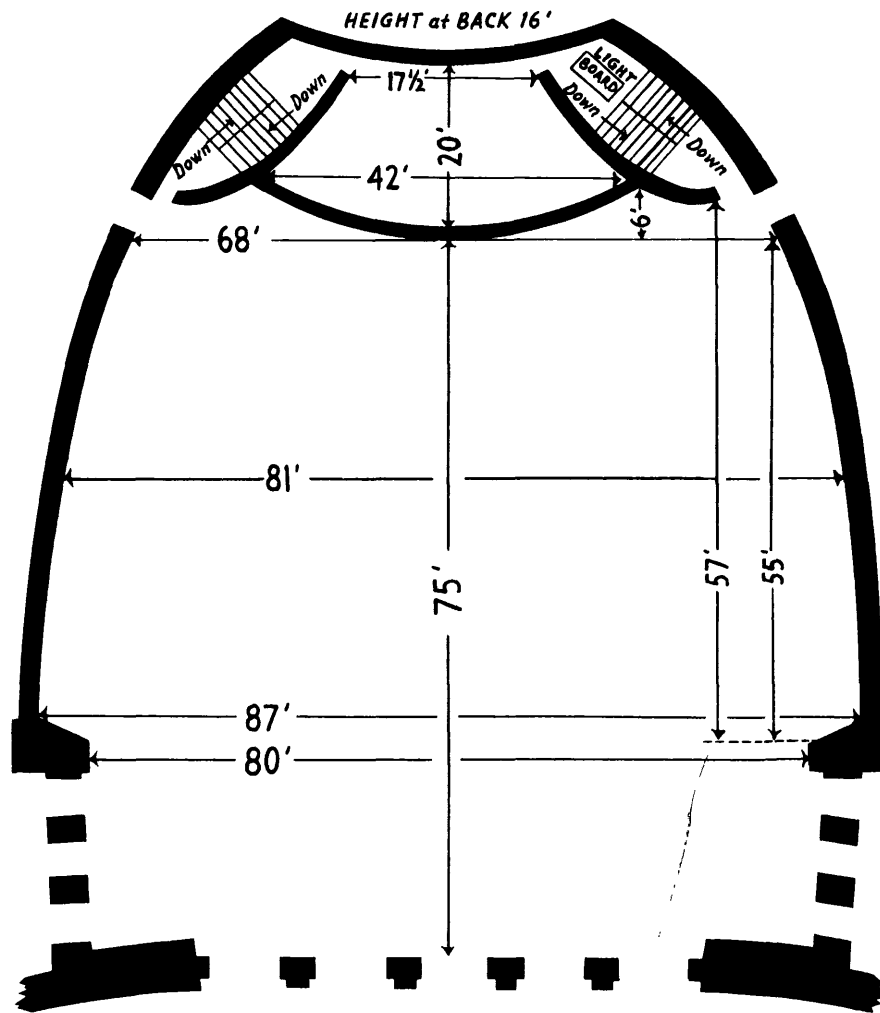


DIAGRAM OF HALL—SHOWING INTERIOR
ARRANGEMENT





PLAN of **MARY SEATON ROOM**
KLEINHANS MUSIC HALL
Buffalo, N. Y.



One Wicket Door Each Side of Stage Wing.
 Stage Curtain Available.
 Stage Height is 4' Above Floor.
 Ceiling Height of Hall is 23'.

MAIN AUDITORIUM STAGE

