

Music Hall (Carnegie Hall)  
154 West Fifty-seventh Street  
New York  
New York County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5717

HABS  
NY  
31-NE 40  
108-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
MID-ATLANTIC REGION NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HABS  
NY  
31-NEWY  
108-

ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

STATE New York	COUNTY New York	TOWN OR VICINITY New York
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) Music Hall		HABS NO. NY-5717
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE Carnegie Hall (after Andrew Carnegie who provided funds)		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES) 154 West Fifty-seventh Street		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE) 1889-1891	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE) William Burnet Tuthill (Contract drawings)	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE) Carnegie Hall's name is synonymous world-wide with musical excellence. It is noted for its acoustics as well as its rich musical history. The hall, together with the artists' studios which surround it, create a unique treasure.		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE) Romanesque revival		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) Steel and cast iron structure with masonry bearing walls. Tile arches. Cinder and concrete floor.		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE) Rectangular 200' x 150' 16 stories plus basement and cellar		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE Light yellow iron spot Roman face brick with terra cotta detailing		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED) See Attachment A		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES See Attachment B		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE Fair condition; concert hall with artists' studios above		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE Renovation of the Recital Hall entrance and stair is to be funded by EDA. Mitigative documentation of the affected elements was carried out under the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.) See Attachment C		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION Tyler H. Donaldson - James Stewart Polshek & Partners, Architects	DATE November 5, 1981	

Attachment A

Interior features of note:

The following text was extracted from the premier program of Carnegie Hall. The text provides a picturesque description of the "Music Hall", as it was originally called, when it first opened in 1891.

### MUSIC HALL

The name under which this great structure is known is the including title of a varied and large series of halls and apartments prepared for every form of public assemblage.

Its exterior design is stately, rich and dignified, in an architectural style easily and simply expressing the public purposes for which the structure is intended. The terra-cotta of the enrichments and architectural forms blend with the clear luminous color of the bricks - a sequence of graded browns - forming a whole of peculiar beauty. The entrances to the several portions are clearly indicated. The principal doorways - or those leading into the Main Hall - are approached by a series of steps eighty feet broad, and are enriched by splended groups of polished pilasters of Peterhead granite.

The chief feature, by the nature of the case, is the "Main Hall," a great and rich concert hall, with accommodation to seat about three thousand people, and ample standing room for one thousand more. Its entrance is on Fifty-Seventh Street, through the vestibule - a splendid apartment, seventy feet long, covered with a semi-circular vault twenty-five feet high, and richly elaborated in marble, mosaic and color. The Hall was designed purely as a concert hall, and is not equipped in any way with theatrical devices; it has neither drop curtain nor footlights.

The Parquet itself, seating over one thousand persons, has nine exits upon the corridors surrounding it, the corridors continuing entirely around the building, and giving egress both on Seventh Avenue and Fifty-Sixth Street, as well as into the main vestibule.

Above the Parquet are two tiers of boxes, the "Dress Circle" and the "Balcony." The arrangement of these several tiers is different from the usual method in that they do not extend entirely around the three sides of the house, stopping at the line of the proscenium, but are terminated on the side walls at points further and further back from the front of the auditorium, gradually expanding the hall, displaying its peculiar shape, and naturally leading to the magnificent ceiling which spans the great apartment.

The decoration of the Main Hall is rich in plastic form and refined in color, the general scheme being a soft ivory with gold, relieved by rich tones of old rose. The Boxes are finished in darker shades of old rose, in which color is also the covering of the chairs in the Parquet, and the carpets.

The treatment of the illumination by electric lights gives a most beautiful, decorative effect, the lights being essential features of the enrichments. The disposition has also been carefully studied so as to avoid, as far as possible, placing the lights immediately in front of the audience, where they must be continually in sight.

The form of the hall, both in plan and section, has been designed with the acoustic perfection of its every portion as a controlling idea. The surfaces surrounding the stage and that portion of the building immediately in front of it, have been so modeled that not only is no sound lost to the audience, but it is so directed that every portion of the house has relatively perfect acoustic value.

The stage is an integral part of the hall and its decoration and illumination governed by the same system as the greater auditorium. The floor of the stage is constructed in a modified form, as a resonator. At one side of the stage is the organ.

Each portion of "Main Hall" is equipped with its individual hat and cloak and toilet rooms, and is separately reached by broad and easy staircases. Back of the corridor of the second box-tier, is a large foyer. The arrangement of the general staircases is such that all portions of the building can be put into immediate communication.

When so required, the Parquet can be floored over, transforming the auditorium into an immense and magnificent ball-room, the entrances and exits from which are the same as those for the Parquet when used for concerts or other purposes, as none of them are interfered with by the temporary flooring. From the northerly ends of the east and west corridors, broad staircases give access to the hall below, transformed into a banquet hall, connected with which is a complete suite of kitchen and serving rooms. The adjacent building, in immediate communication with the Parquet corridors, furnishes, in addition to the local accommodation, all the essential meeting, hat, cloak and toilet rooms demanded for a great ball, convention, or similar gatherings.

To the ventilation of this hall the most minute and painstaking care has been given. Each division of the house has its separate supply of fresh air, and its separate exit for the vitiated air. The volume of fresh air delivered into the building is sufficient to entirely renew the contents three times per hour.

Personal ease and comfort, perfect illumination, acoustics, vision and ventilation, rich and elegant decorations, rank this hall without a superior for the purposes for which it was designed and to which it may duly be applied.

The second great room in the building, "Recital Hall," is located below "Main Hall" having its separate entrance on Fifty-Seventh Street, and being equipped in every particular for public functions. Its accommodation is twelve hundred. This hall has also many special features which take it out of the body of the usual concert halls. It has a balcony at the rear and a gallery on either side; the galleries, however, are very low - only three feet higher than the main floor of the room. The rails separating them from the main portion can be removed at will. The same is true of the chairs, so that with a minimum of effort the room can be turned into a ball-room, a grand dining-hall, or prepared for such other use as may be legitimate. The acoustic properties of the hall are most perfect. Its decorations are similar in style to those above described as being placed in "Main Hall," and its system of illumination and ventilation equally ample and elaborate. Connected with this hall is a large kitchen, fully furnished as the kitchen of a hotel; it is also in communication with all the floors of the Lateral Building by means of a swift-running double elevator, so that dinners or collations may be readily served in any one of its various apartments.

Above the kitchen - that is, on the first floor of the Lateral Building - is the small dining-room, capable of seating at the table one hundred and fifty persons. The room has immediate access from Fifty-Seventh Street and has attached to it serving-room, hat and cloak and toilet rooms. It can also, by means of a special stair, be connected with the parlors and "Chamber Music Hall" above.

The parlor is on the second floor of this building and is richly decorated and furnished. In connection with it are separate hat and cloak-rooms for ladies and gentlemen, and a ladies' private parlor and toilet-room. It is in immediate relation to the hall above - "Chamber Music Hall" - a beautiful room fitted either for the purpose named in its title, or for readings, small balls, dinners, etc. As a concert hall, its accommodations fit four hundred and fifty. A gallery is built at its northern end. Still above this hall is another, of almost equal size, called the "Chapter Room," because planned with the special requirements of such a room in view, but applicable for all the purposes for which the "Chamber Music Hall" could be used. Above this is still another hall, of equal size, appointment and application.

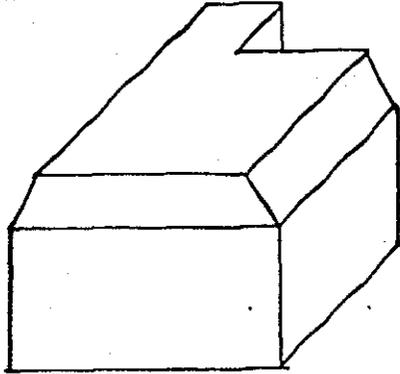
The entire roof of "Music Hall" is occupied with a series of rooms, planned to be used as lodge-rooms. They are reached by the elevators and corridors, and are fitted with every detail required for their intended purposes. The larger corridor is furnished with sofas. Opening from the corridor is a beautiful smoking-room, luxuriously fitted up, a committee-room, and a group of storage closets for the use of the lodges.

The other portions of the building are occupied by rooms of various sizes, and applicable to the purposes of studios, piano-rooms, etc.

Every portion of the building, which is literally fire-proof (being built of steel, iron and terra-cotta), is under the same general system of illumination and ventilation, and to properly accomplish it a most elaborate plant has been established. The fresh air is taken in above the roof, at the height of about one hundred and thirty feet above the curb line, and through a shaft to the fan-room, where its propelling power is four great fans, each with its engine (the inlet capacity being over eight millions of cubic feet of air per hour), and distributed through the house by a most intricate system of ducts, some of them almost as large as some of the corridors for the public. Supplementary to these are three fans and engines in the upper portion of the Lateral Building. Four great dynamos, with their engines, with a capacity of five thousand lights, a system of continuous wiring for the electric lights, and the three batteries of boilers, constitute the remaining important features of this portion of the equipment.

Attachment B

Major alterations and additions with dates:

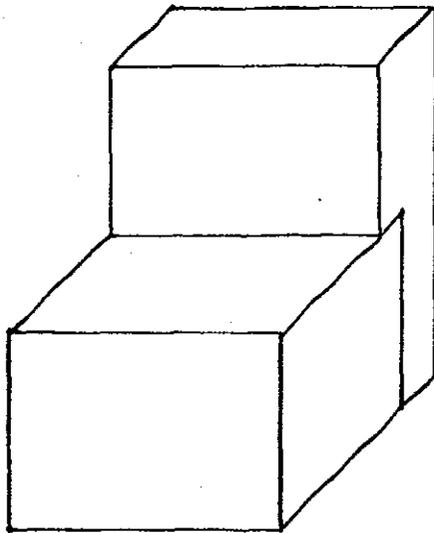


1

1887 - Carnegie Agrees to Funding

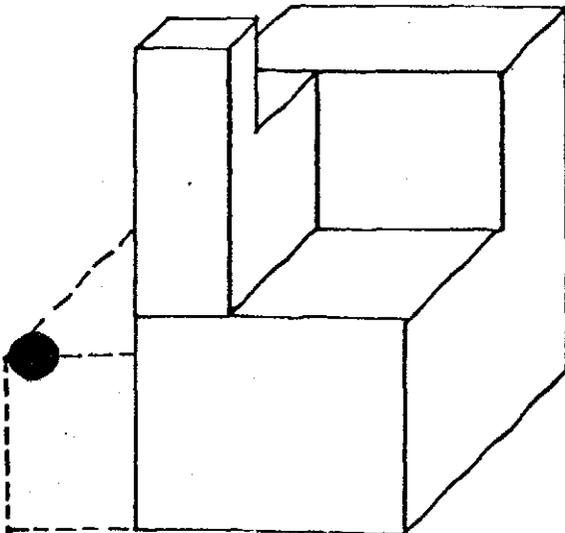
1889 - Excavation Begins

1891 - "Music Hall" Opens



2

1894 - Rear Building Added  
Mansard Removed, Roof  
Raised and Skylights  
Added.



3

1896 - Top Floors Added to  
Lateral Building

1898 - Officially Called  
"Carnegie Hall"

1903 - Adjacent Property Purchased  
"Rembrant Building"

1929 - Space Altered on Street  
For Rentable Property

Attachment C

Sources of information:

1. Carnegie Hall, New York  
Cherouny Printing and Publishing Co.  
189\_
2. The House That Music Built  
Ethel Peyser  
R.M. McBride and Co.  
1936
3. Portrait of Carnegie Hall  
Theo. Cyon and Burt Goldblatt  
Macmillan  
1966
4. Carnegie Hall, N.Y.  
Singing V. 3  
December 1928
5. Carnegie Hall, N.Y.  
Program No. 1  
Pusey & Troxel Press  
1891