

LOBBY RENOVATION AT THE MUSIC HALL ENTERS FINAL PHASE

6 Months of Groundwork Complete, Work Begins on Interior Finishes

**Music Hall plans for a third “Stunning” September Unveiling
Patrons get first look at new lobby on Telluride by the Sea Weekend**

Artifacts uncovered during excavation being studied, traced by Music Hall historian

Lobby Access Restricted, Box Office Walk up Service Suspended July 1 – Sept 18

******Photos available for download******

PORTSMOUTH, NH, July 7, 2008 – The Music Hall, the nationally recognized theater and an American Treasure for the Arts, last week concluded the most ambitious work of its lobby renovation – the excavation of approximately 700 cubic yards of rock ledge beneath the theater to make room for a 2,600 square foot entrance lobby opening in September.

“We are on our way to creating a gracious space in what was just months ago a collection of dusty crawl spaces,” said John Merkle, principal, TMS Architects the lead architect. “The past six months we’ve been focused on the removal of ledge rock, and we’re all excited to get to the point where we can do some construction.”

Coming: 21st century amenities, ingenious interior design reflecting history

“Working from our strategic plan, we began planning for the renovation and expansion of the current cramped, cold, and inadequate lobby space in October of 2006. As we enter the final phase of work, I can say with certainty we’ll accomplish our goals – to provide patrons the single biggest upgrade in services in the Hall’s 130-year history, to become as ‘green’ as possible within the antique space, and to reflect the Beaux Arts design and history of the grand Victorian theater but with striking 21st century amenities,” said Patricia Lynch, The Music Hall’s Executive Director.

Doug Nelson, Music Hall Board Member and Chair of the Facilities & Restoration Committee, said, “Patrons this fall will experience a remarkable transformation. The Committee has worked tirelessly, conscientiously, and continuously to guide the improvements to this important public space. While we’ve stayed within the building’s historic footprint, we’ve advanced it far in time and in services.” The new lobby, tiered with pillars, will feature expanded concession areas and new restrooms. Artifacts and designs from The Music Hall’s history have been incorporated throughout the space.

Found objects shine light on Music Hall past

The first phase of work yielded some dramatic discoveries, as artifacts dating from 1913 to 1957 were found hidden under floorboards in the space, including ticket stubs, rally buttons, fan magazines, and personal effects. Music Hall Historian Zhana Morris, who is currently inventorying and researching the objects, said, “the range of artifacts is remarkable, from the personal to the political. They show that for several generations the theater has been a community center, where people come together and share their cares and delights. In the process, they leave things behind. The great surprise is that little has changed. The Music Hall today is used in much the same way. We’re looking forward to displaying some of the artifacts in the new space.”

The excavation and groundwork was completed by construction manager John DeStefano and his team from DeStefano & Associates, working with TMS Architects' John Merkle and TMS project manager Nicole Martineau. Merkle's previous work includes the restoration of the Wentworth by the Sea Hotel in New Castle, NH, as well as the Louis deRochemont House in Newington, NH, and The Atlantic Hotel in York Beach, ME.

Teams from near and far recreating the space

DeStefano and TMS will continue on through the next phase, and will be joined by interior designer Jason McLean, known for his theater and restaurant designs, as well as by Carey Thornton, owner of Art-Tech Productions, a design and construction company. Art-Tech will manufacture custom seating for the space, cabinetry for the concession bar and box office, as well as the lobby's 21st century digital displays. Custom built reproductions of the theater's 1878 doors have been made by Mill Pond Millworks and Construction in Berwick, ME. Local gilders have been asked to join the finishing team working on painting and gilding.

Their work has been highly collaborative. Said DeStefano, "together we've blended heavy construction, skilled craftsmanship and artistic detail, all while meeting the demands of cost control and project deadlines."

With this team approach, The Music Hall is following in the footsteps of those who first built and adorned the building. The theater as experienced today was envisioned and created by many, from near and far. Shipbuilders stationed at the naval yard, decorative painters from Concord NH, gas pipe and heating people from Portsmouth and Exeter, machinists from Boston, MA, and a chandelier maker from Providence, RI, all took part in the 1878 construction. "With this renovation work we've cast a similarly wide net to create the best space for our patrons," said Elena Maltese, The Music Hall's Director of Special Projects. "We've added the challenge of being as green as possible and we've succeeded. With the heating, lighting, plumbing, and electrical, we'll gain remarkable efficiencies from the moment it's put into use."

This current phase of restoration and renovation of the 1878 Music Hall has been underway since 2003, when the historic hall was designated an "American Treasure" by the U.S. Senate, honored in the federal Save America's Treasures Program overseen by the National Park Service and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In September 2006, the gloriously restored proscenium arch was unveiled. In September 2007 the ceiling dome and interior historic finishes were revealed – work heralded in the press and among patrons and preservationists. The arch and dome projects were awarded a 2008 Preservation Achievement Award by the NH Preservation Alliance this past May.

Another memorable 'first' in Music Hall history

The lobby opening in September will be another memorable 'first' in the history of The Music Hall. "The changes patrons will experience when they first enter will be stunning," said Lynch. "At last our 100,000 patrons each year will gain the space and services they deserve. Not only did we fix the broken floors and plumbing, but we took a critical step in strengthening and advancing The Music Hall's impact as an arts and education center for the broadest community."

Patrons will get a first glimpse of the expanded lobby space at the 10th Telluride by the Sea film weekend, September 19-21. Patron Pass holders will enjoy a special celebratory reception on Friday night, September 19.

Lobby access restricted as work intensifies

As work intensifies leading up to the September debut, access to the lobby has been restricted. From **July 1 through September 18** event ticket sales will be limited to phone, internet and mail. SummerFilm tickets will be sold 1/2 hour before the start of each film at the outside box office window on Chestnut Street. **There will be no elevator access.** Our nightly Summerfilm patrons are gaining rare access to the backstage restrooms during the final weeks of lobby renovations. Historic Tours will continue through the summer at 5:30pm on alternate Wednesdays.

Photos Available for Press use at <ftp://ftp.themusichall.org> in the “Restoration” directory Available: Found artifacts (3). Contracting, architecture, and design team with Music Hall project managers. The new lobby space under construction. Architectural design/elevation of interior and box office. Seating Design detail by Jason Mclean.

Please be advised that all photos need credits, as detailed on the FTP site. Contact Margaret Talcott (mtalcott@themusichall.org) or Andree Van Oss (avanoss@themusichall.org) for access.

About TMS Architects

Portsmouth, NH-based TMS Architects was founded in 1984 by partners John Merkle, AIA and William Soupcoff, AIA. These two founding principals, along with new partners Shannon Alther, AIA and Robert Carty, AIA and a talented team of project managers, drafts people and administrative staff, develop the schematic design and programs for all TMS projects. TMS Architects’ designs include residences, with a specialty in waterfront homes, and commercial developments for the financial, hospitality, private education and historic preservation sectors.

TMS has been recognized with many awards for its work including an AIA NH Excellence in Architecture Award for the renovation of the Wentworth By The Sea Hotel in New Castle, NH. For more information visit www.tmsarchitects.com <<http://www.tms-architects.com/>> .

About The Music Hall: An American Treasure for the Arts

The Music Hall is a nonprofit performing arts center that entertains 100,000 patrons, including 20,000 school children, annually with acclaimed film, music, theater, and dance performances. Its historic 900-seat theater, built in 1878, is the oldest in New Hampshire and designated an “American Treasure” by the National Parks Service’s Save America’s Treasures Program.

Living out its mission to be an active and vital arts center for the enrichment of the Seacoast community, The Music Hall presents diverse and relevant programming, including its signature series and innovative community outreach programs, and hosts numerous community fundraisers and celebrations for the benefit of more than 40 local nonprofits. A cultural anchor in a thriving Seacoast economy, The Music Hall and its patrons contribute \$5 million annually to the local economy through show and visitor related spending. The Music Hall is a 501c3 tax exempt, fiscally responsible not-for-profit organization, managed by a volunteer Board of Trustees and a professional staff. The historic hall is located in Portsmouth, the seaport city recently named a “Distinctive Destination” for 2008 by National Trust for Historic Preservation. For more information about The Music Hall and its schedule of events, visit www.themusichall.org.