

"King All Glorious" music was written by George M. Vail.

George Vail was an organist, choir director, and music publisher. Born 1892, Orient, Long Island, NY, he graduated from the Guilman Organ School, and studied piano with Mrs. A.M. Virgil, choir training with G. Edward Stubbs and Clement R. Gale. He served as organist at five churches, worked with the G. Schirmer music publisher, and later was Vice-President and Musical Editor, Harold Flammer, Inc., music publishers.

Mr. Vail was also co-owner of the Vail-Leavitt Music Hall, Suffolk County, NY. It is on the National Register of Historic Places due to the fact that in 1914, the Music Hall was used by Thomas Edison as a demonstration site for kinetophone, an early attempt at the synchronization of sound and film.



The Vail-Leavitt Music Hall is a late nineteenth century theatre presently in use on the east end of Long Island in Riverhead, New York. The Theatre/Music Hall was built by David F. Vail, with the help of his son **George M. Vail** in 1881. David was a local lumber dealer in Riverhead and Eastern Suffolk County Long Island area.

The theatre/music hall opened on October 11, 1881, and has only occasionally served as a movie theater since its beginnings. With its almost 130-year history, the theatre/music hall could hardly be more distinguished as when Thomas Edison used the theater for early experiments in sound movies in 1914.

The music hall began its start with candle lighting, however, it is said The Music Hall had its own gas plant behind the theatre, gas fixtures were placed all along the horseshoe balcony, and gaslight continued at the music hall until the advent of electricity arrived in July 1888. The venue now had electric lights.

In 1908, George M. Vail, now sole owner of Music Hall, sold the building to Simon Leavitt, father of the late well-known men's clothier, Theodore Leavitt, whose widow, Mollie Leavitt, owned the music hall until its acquisition by the Council for the Vail-Leavitt Music Hall in 1982 through a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development arranged by the Town of Riverhead's Community Development officer, Robert Schemer.



Early History - The Vail Years

Located on what today is known as Peconic Avenue (then called Bridge Street), the Music Hall was the talk of the town when David F. Vail, a venturesome local lumber dealer built it with the help of his son, **George M. Vail**.

The Long Island Traveler of April 22, 1881, noted: "Numerous improvements are being made throughout our village. The large brick building is rapidly nearing completion and when finished will be a marked improvement over the old rookeries which now front on Bridge Street..." A week or two later, the Traveler reported that "Mr. J. W. Flack will soon start embellishing and frescoing the interior." Mr. Flack was a well-known Eastern Long Island interior decorator of the period, and an expert in the application of gold leaf. Even today at Music Hall, we can see gold highlights at various places in the restored interior.

The Mozart Orchestra, under the direction of Professor Arthur M. Tyte, was a staple of early-day entertainment at Riverhead's Music Hall. Prof. Tyte's family still survives in the area. It has been said that some of the Tyte compositions, including the scores of several operas, are still in existence in the possession of descendants.

After a number of previews, including a strawberry festival and musicale, Music Hall opened with fanfare on October 11, 1881. The event was a concert with both professional and amateur talent, sponsored by the Rough & Ready Engine Company of Riverhead. A smashing success, the show continued until 3 A.M. It was then that the firefighters were called to duty- to extinguish a blaze in a barn over on Osborne Avenue, owned by Mr. Osborne. Off they went, according to the Riverhead News, "grabbing such hats as they could get" from the coat hooks still to be seen on the walls of the theatre - and "leaving the ladies to wend their way home as best they could."

Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was Music Hall's first professional play, and was produced at the Music Hall by several companies during its early years. One of the earliest performances included a wondrous curiosity billed in the programs as **"Edison's Electric Parlor Lamp."** Since electricity was still in the future as a common lighting source, we can only surmise that the lamp must have been battery-powered. This was Music Hall's first connection with the name of Thomas A. Edison.

In the ensuing years, Music Hall played host to a variety of events. A lecture by one Theodore Tilton entitled "The World of Tomorrow," so stirred the Music Hall audience that the editor of the Long Island Traveler called for the founding of a group to present more such offerings and to give the proceeds to the Riverhead Reading Room, located on the top floor of the yellow-brick Bank Building still standing on Main Street. This was the start of the Riverhead Lecture Society, which in turn brought about what we know today as the Riverhead Free Library.