THALIAN HALL: WILMINGTON'S ASSEMBLY ROOM

Isabel M. Williams

Construction on Wilmington's City Hall began in the autumn of 1855. Work on the splendid theatre wing was delayed a year while the Town Commissioners and the Thalian Association haggled over the division of financial responsibility. The people of Wilmington eagerly watched the construction as the months passed. By the spring of 1858 enough of the theatre's interior was finished to allow a first performance. The member of Mr. Frensley's Dancing School gave an exhibition on April 5th. It seems only proper that the first performance should belong exclusively to the residents of the town, since Thalian Hall was to become so much a part of almost every memorable event in the years to come.

Work on the stucco facing and ornamentation of the exterior continued until June, 1859, but the formal opening could not wait for the completion of the building. Cost of construction had risen from an estimated $8,000 to a gigantic $17,800, and the Thalian Association as well as the Town Commissioners were anxious to put the hall on a paying basis. A formal opening of the Theatre was scheduled for October 11 with a stock company under the management of G. F. Marchant. Last minute arrangements forced a delay of one day, but finally citizens of Wilmington were welcomed into the hall. The attendance was good, though many of the playgoing public had not yet returned from summer homes. "After the performance of the National Overture by the Orchestra, the curtain...rose upon the members of the Thalian Association. James G. Burr, Esq., as one of the oldest members came forward to discharge the duty devolving upon him, and in the name and on behalf of the Association, to welcome his fellow citizens to the splendid new temple of the drama which they had this night opened."

A source of great pride to the people of Wilmington, a badge of distinction for a growing American city, Thalian Hall was to become an integral part of Wilmington life. Besides providing entertainment, it was a place of assembly for so many solemn occasions, school exercises, memorial services for great men, meetings of stern political import. It would radiate love during its many children's programs and amateur performances by well-known local musicians and actors. It would bring intellectual stimulation through visiting lecturers, and cultural advantages through concerts, grand opera and heroic drama. It would bring joy to the young through balls, military drills, roller skating parties, visits from college glee clubs and other touring amateur groups. It would host many benefit performances to help sufferers and causes. Thalian Hall is a building which has been many things to a great proportion of the Wilmington population, more a part of the people than the City Hall or the Court House, drawing as it has for one cause or another many sectors of society.

During the early years theatre-lovers were most anxious that attendance would become a habit of Wilmington families. Theatre was not then consistent with Victorian propriety, and it was not thought nice for ladies to attend any but certain accepted entertainments. The newspaper often noted the number of ladies in the audience. Tickets were offered free occasionally to a lady accompanied by a gentleman, and special family matinees were scheduled for the benefit of "the modest sex."

"Some are opposed to theatre from principle," stated a newspaper editorial, "but the main causes of opposition have been traceable to the objectionable surroundings of theatre in large cities—their bar—third tiers, etc. These do not exist here. There is nothing necessarily wrong in dramatic representations, any more than in any other work of imagination. Nothing worse in seeing a story acted, than in reading it."

The success of Thalian Hall was placed squarely on the social leaders of the community, and they responded by turning out for first-class presentations of many diverse forms of entertainment. The newspaper strove to teach proper audience behavior. "Whistling and stamping...is no doubt boyish thoughtlessness, but Continued on Page 3
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

With the Christmas season past, we have passed the main event of the year, insofar as public perception of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society is concerned. The Candlelight Tour and the Wassail Bowl are the evident work of our society, though the Archives epitomize the purpose of the Society.

The Tour, the Wassail Bowl and the Christmas Shop were all great successes. Bob Warren, Chairman of the Candlelight Tour; Louise Gorham, Chairman of the Wassail Bowl; Bob Lane, Chairman of the Latimer House; Muriel Piver of the Residents of Old Wilmington who ran the Christmas Shop; and many, many others are all thanked so very much for their dedication and contributions.

The Christmas events are vital to the health of the Society. Without their support and contribution I fear the Society would wither away and our precious museum house, the Latimer House, would be unaffordable.

Teamwork among all facets of our Society is the essential bond. I think we have that teamwork. It was marvelously displayed in mid-December.

To use an old Navy expression, to All Hands—WELL DONE!

Sincerely,
Frank Conlon

GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY

The Society gratefully acknowledges the following gifts to the Archives:

From Dr. B. Frank Hall: The 1872 receipt book of B. F. Hall; two 1827 silver medals presented to Alexander Sprunt; a variety of stock certificates issued to Pearson & Hall.

From Dr. and Mrs. James R. Beeler: Two photographs of "Moorefield's," the Hillsborough home of Justice Alfred Moore; an article on "Moorefields" from the Raleigh News and Observer.

From Mr. and Mrs. James D. Carr: Materials relating to "Plantation Memories," by Mrs. Carr's great aunt, Fanny C. Watters.

From Mr. E. M. McEachern: "St. James Church Historical Records—1727-1852," compiled by Ida B. Kellam and Elizabeth F. McKoy.

From Dr. and Mrs. John Cashman: Two lamps for the Archives Room; a copy of A Guide to Cape Fear Leisur (1983).

In Memoriam

Mrs. Ann Moore Bacon
Charles Irving Cavannaugh
Colonel John Hogarth Jones
Jeremiah MacMullan Newbold
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it ought to be reformed." Group attendance was encouraged, and entire clubs or military companies were given reserved seating. A lawyers’ convention and a meeting of railroad men attended the theatre during its first months. This promoted interest beyond Wilmington and probably brought others into town to attend a performance.

Several deterrents to attendance, which appeared during the first few months, were to recur throughout the century. The state of the weather was always important. Because the audience walked to the theatre or was brought by horse and carriage which waited for hours, rain caused a “virtual suspension of theatre-going.” Cold weather was also a factor since the large space in the theatre was difficult to heat, and for some years after its opening there was no adequate furnace at all. An 1886 newspaper article reported, “If the auditorium is uncomfortable the stage is simply outrageously cold. At the Kellogg concert Monday night, Miss Kellogg shivered all over. She even had to hold the music on the piano, as the wind was constantly blowing it over. It was cold enough on that stage to freeze out what there was of Miss Kellogg’s once glorious voice. The poor little tenor never did get thawed out.” At the end of the century they were still complaining, “The audience sat huddled in cloaks and capes and shivered for three solid hours... How could the band expect applause when the audience was frozen stiff?” Saturday night and the Lenten season promised small attendance, and other community interests often preoccupied the population, such as a capital case at the Court House or a vigorous political campaign.

Until 1865 stock companies provided entertainment during several months each winter. At the end of the first professional season lasting 85 nights, the Thalian Association, which was heavily in debt for the finishing of the theatre interior, hoped to make some money by mounting the play. The Heir-at-Law. The newspaper assured Wilmingtonians that “the hall is so thoroughly ventilated that there is no probability that the audience, however large, will be at all inconvenienced by the heat.” The size of the audience and the performance were satisfactory, but the newspaper critic commented, “the greatest obstacle in the way of successful representation by amateurs is the great and very natural difficulty in making boys look like girls.” It would be many years before young ladies could be persuaded to act in an amateur play, though shortly after this occasion, they would take to the boards in tableaux and pantomimes to raise money for the war effort.

Less than two years after the formal opening the Thalian Association released control of the theatre to the Town Commissioners. They were unable to meet the financial terms of the contract which specified that the Association would pay at least $6,250 to complete the interior of the theatre within two years, and pay the Town a rent equivalent to 7% per annum on the amount expended by the Commissioners, estimated at a little over two thousand dollars per year.

One measure of success of an undertaking in a theatre is the size of the audience, and it is interesting to note that through the years, with the exception of the appearance of very famous theatrical personalities, the largest number of people attended special lectures, meetings and memorial services, or local performances particularly if they involved school children. The first big audience in Thalian Hall after the opening night attended a lecture on George Washington by Edward Everett, the noted orator, to raise money for the Ladies Mount Vernon Association. Lectures and orations filled Thalian Hall several times each winter for decades, many of them sponsored by the Wilmington Library Association. In 1871 Bishop Gibbons delivered a lecture on temperance before an “overwhelming crowd,” mostly ladies. The famous humorist, Josh Billings, spoke in 1876 before a large audience. “The difference between old fashioned courting and the fashionable marriages of the present day was particularly good, while the three-mile walk before breakfast after a drink to find the hotel a temperance house touched a tender spot in many a throat.” The most publicized lecture of that decade was given in 1875 by Zebulon B. Vance, Governor of North Carolina during the Civil War, who spoke on “The Scattered Nation,” under the auspices of the True Brothers Society for the benefit of the Temple of Israel being built at 4th and Market Streets. A Press Convention was then meeting in Wilmington, and 38 members of the North Carolina press preceded Vance into the Opera House. He was greeted by continuous applause for many minutes, and at the close of his address, “bouquets were thrown upon the stage by the fair occupants of the boxes.”

In the 80’s, Dr. Joseph Wilson, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church and father of Woodrow Wilson, spoke in the hall, and his talks were well attended and always reported at length in the newspaper. In 1885 Carl Schurz, Secretary of the Interior under President Hayes, devoted the greatest part of his lecture on education to the subject of educating girls to become useful women and good mothers. During the last decade of the century the new YMCA auditorium was found to be suitable for lectures and few of them were booked in Thalian Hall.

Several political meetings packed the hall during the first half of 1861, and not all favored the defense of South Carolina. In January a Union meeting took place. After speeches by F. D. Poisson, J. C. Burr, George Davis and Dr. James H. Dickson, a large crowd passed resolutions in favor of “the settlement of existing difficulties in the Union.” The theatre was again densely packed in February to hear the Commissioner for the State of Georgia, and again at the end of the month during the Southern Rights Convention. In March George Davis returned from the Peace Conference in Washington to give a full account of the failure to arrive at any agreement, and voiced his opinion that “the Union could only be preserved with dishonor in the South.” The immense crowd, including many ladies, received his words in profound silence.

During the war years Thalian Hall was devoted almost exclusively to stock company entertainment, though the Thalian Association presented one bill in April 1863 for the benefit of smallpox sufferers, during which a short farce, locally written, was acted, entitled “Did You Ever Send your Wife to Smithville?” It is probable that during much of the war regular Wilmington residents did not often attend the theatre. The audiences were drawn from the permanent and temporary military forces, the blockade-running crews, the speculators and business men who were drawn by the port activity. Down-town Wilmington was then a rough place, especially in the
evening. Two entertainments which may have drawn local crowds were a war panorama, or moving painting, with mechanical figures, simulating the bombardment of Fort Sumter and the Battle of Vicksburg, and the appearance in 1862 of a musical prodigy named Blind Tom. He was born Thomas Greene Bethune in Columbus, Georgia, the son of Negro field hands. He composed and performed astonishing feats of memory on the piano. He was hailed as a genius and would appear in Wilmington many times over the next 25 years.

After the war the management made every effort to make the theatre acceptable “with a view to secure the comfort of our old patrons and public generally.” The hall was renovated, the woodwork painted, and the walls papered. The hall would receive several new wall papers throughout the century. The management announced that “paid policemen will be stationed, whose duty it will be to take out any person guilty of conduct annoying to his neighbors. Gentlemanly ushers, who may be distinguished by their neat black dress with white gloves and neckties, will be in attendance to show the audience to their seats and make them comfortable in every way in their power. In short, the Theatre will not be a pandemonium of rowdies, but a pleasant place of resort, where all classes, of every disposition, may spend an evening of quiet, intellectual enjoyment.” The efforts were evidently fruitful, since the newspaper reported that “in the audience we noticed a number of Wilmington’s fairest daughters, and some of our most esteemed and intelligent citizens lent the dignity of their presence.”

For the next thirty years the United States experienced the flowering of touring theatre which brought the great names in drama and opera to Thalian Hall and acquainted Wilmingtonians with the best that playwrights, actors and musicians offered anywhere. The stars were the idols of the day and their activities followed avidly by many people. In Thalian Hall the professional season was short and spotty. Imported entertainment occupied about 40 nights or seven weeks a year, rising during the peak years to about 15 weeks. While many citizens attended the star performances, it continued to be true that far greater crowds were drawn by other forms of entertainment and local happenings. Between the dramatic and musical engagements Wilmingtonians were diverted by lectures, meetings and amateur amusements. Amateur activities were revived after the war in 1869 when the ladies of St. John’s Church presented a program of statuary and music, entitled “Tableaux Vivants.” The newspaper reported that Thalian Hall was “positively crowded and the standard of performance was high.”

In the 70’s there were three or four well-attended amateur concerts each winter, usually under the direction of a music teacher. Wilmington citizens enjoyed gathering for such an occasion, and when the programs were particularly good, they were repeated to another large crowd. In February 1871 the Philharmonic Society presented the cantata Esther and repeated it in May for the benefit of the Richmond yellow fever victims. It is probable that truly outstanding vocalists were available and responsible for the audience enthusiasm and community participation. Mrs. D. Kahnweiler appeared repeatedly in concerts at this period, and when she was unable to grace the occasion, the audience and reviews were disappointed. Cornet groups were popular at this time, and a Wilmington Cornet Club gave many concerts. In 1875 when the state tax situation caused wholesale cancellations by professional companies, Wilmington amateurs jumped into the breach and produced an operetta The Fairy Grotto, which drew one of the “largest audiences of several years.” The Sextette Concert Club and the Quartette Orchestra entertained between acts.

Thalian Hall offered a perfect setting for the exhibitions of the charms and talents of school children usually around Christmas and in the late spring, and naturally admiring relatives always crowded the auditorium.

“The annual exhibition and examination of the Union and Hemingway Grammar Schools under the efficient superintendence of Miss Amy M. Bradley, took place at Thalian Hall last evening,” the newspaper reported in June 1871. “There was an immense crowd present, dress circle, parquette and all the available space elsewhere was filled to repletion and a great many were unable to obtain seats, while not a few turned away from the building without entering on account of inability to secure even good standing position. The exercises were of a most interesting character, embracing dialogues, declamations, vocal and instrumental music, etc., and evidenced a thoroughness of training, a proficiency in study and a degree of mental capacity which was exceedingly creditable to both teachers and pupils. The scholars were all neatly and appropriately dressed, and in some of the dialogues the participants appeared on the stage in costume. The whole affair was admirably arranged and carried out in a manner which challenged the appreciation of the large assembly, a fact which was sufficiently attested by the applause which greeted the youthful performers and the unflagging patience displayed by the audience throughout the lengthy exercise, which were kept up until a late hour.”

During the decade of the 70’s music teachers often presented a juvenile opera. The pupils of the Misses Burr and James, who themselves participated in adult concerts, presented the musical play Laila in 1871. In 1874 115 ladies, gentlemen and children twice performed The Palace of Industry which consisted of a “combination of solos, duets and choruses, joined with a pleasing moral and an astonishing regularity and precision of movement, as much as to put it beyond any description.” In the 80’s the pupils of the Misses Burr and James were still performing. In 1885 they presented The Miracle of the Roses, which contained an exhibition of calisthenics and featured the Misses Peshau, Lippitt, Barlow, Hall, Jewell, Hintz, Agostini, McPherson, Blue and Grench. Another ambitious project was the operaetta Golden Hair and the 3 Bears whose cast “was made up of 74 young ladies, misses and boys, plus many of the best amateurs, male and female... including a triple quartette of gentlemen.” Mary Lilly Keenan who played Golden Hair was “exceedingly winning,” and the children in light and airy costumes performed an intricate marching routine that “brought down the house.” In 1884 the Peabody colored school gave a program for the benefit of their library which included some “splendid” singing. At the end of the decade 75 pupils of Hemenway and Union Schools presented A Merry Company, or the Cadet’s Picnic, to raise money for the library fund. The “chorus girls” wore white dresses, the gypsy maids red, and the boys were dressed in black pants, grey jackets and red sashes.
Other Wilmington activities utilized Thalian Hall. In October 1883 a very novel production was a merchants' carnival for which the Germania Band furnished the music. "The attendance was probably as large and select a gathering as the Opera House has ever held," the newspaper reported. It opened with a carnival march in which 40 young ladies sang "The Boom of Wilmington," dressed in costumes with semblances of the trades they represented. The entertainment concluded, after many vocal numbers and skits, with an "amusing dialogue between Miss Annie Ulrick representing the Carolina Central and Miss Fannie Knoblock, the Atlantic Coast Line."

Earlier that same year the Fair of the Fruit Growers Association of North Carolina held a ball in Thalian Hall. A portable dance floor connected with the stage covered the orchestra boxes and parquet seats. The doors and windows were opened, and the park and hall were illuminated with Chinese lanterns. The Cornet Concert Club played on the south portico, and a fireworks display climaxed the evening. Balls were often held at the hall.

During the 70's there were several each winter. 1875 was a particularly big year for balls, and an adjustable floor was constructed which could be easily assembled. At the Hibernian Society Ball in March many colored banners were hung "in lavish festoons" around the walls. At midnight the guests were seated for supper at two long tables, and toasts were drunk in champagne.

Sports occasionally occupied the hall. In the 70's roller skating became a national mania. A roller rink was situated in the City Hall upstairs room and was so popular that a skating contest could draw an audience away from a touring theatrical performance in Thalian Hall. In 1885 a rink was constructed in Thalian Hall during a long pause in professional engagements, the opera house orchestra providing music for the skaters.

A Wilmington success story in the entertainment world occurred in the 80's. In 1883 a group of young men put on their version of a Humpty Dumpty show, a combination of fantasy, acrobatics, good music and fun for the entire family which had become wildly popular during the 70's. One of the young men was Robert A. Hewlette who performed on the tight rope. He gave an exhibition of his skill outside the theatre before the performance which was "marvelous." His "inside performance was cut short by the giving away of the sill of the box to which one end of the wire was fastened." He showed ability also in his clown impersonations. The performance was a great success and was repeated. Shortly after this, Hewlette gave up his job with the Star newspaper and performed with several circuses, learning new tricks in addition to perfecting his wire walking. He formed the Hewlette and Lester Comedy Company which went on the road and visited Wilmington in January 1886. Hewlette, billed as "The Slack-Wire King," appeared on a small telephone wire as a "regular dude, concluding with an electric charge of costume, and performing many wonderful feats of equilibrium with rare skill." He also performed outside, making a high-wire ascension from the ground to the roof. He returned to Wilmington several times over the next few years during which time he was regularly employed at Pastor's Theatre in New York. In 1891 he and his wife and baby took part in a benefit for the Wilmington Light Infantry. They performed a farce-comedy, Fun on a Clothes Line, involving a slack wire performance and a skit, Is Marriage a Failure, with Wilmingtonian Henry Newman. The Hewlettes were again on hand in 1894 to assist the Wilmington Naval Reserve with their benefit show, On Board the Nantucket. This time the Hewlettes took charge of the costumes and scenery as well as performing.

In the 1890's, though there were now several smaller auditoriums throughout the city, large amateur productions continued to be held in Thalian Hall, and as in past years drew large and enthusiastic audiences. There were some serious concerts, some pure vaudeville, and occasionally a combination of the two forms, a revival of amateur dramatics and an increase in lavish money raising pageants by ladies' societies. In 1898 the newspaper commended Wilmington musicians. "One of the main attractions connected with nearly all the entertainments given by home talent in the theatre is the superb orchestra... composed of some of Wilmington's finest musicians. Cornet, Prof. J. E. Wilison; violin, Prof. S. A. Schloss; violin, Mr. Mason Burr; flute, Mr. W. A. Martin; slide trombone, Mr. Robert Morris; piano, Mr. E. H. Munson; traps, Henry Newman."

Two amateur vocal concerts that were special social occasions during Christmas week were the appearance of the Princeton Glee Club in 1891, and the Columbia Glee Club, Banjo and Mandolin Club in 1892. The Columbia concert was of particular interest since it included a talented Wilmingtonian, Mr. Kenneth Murchison, who could play eight or nine instruments, among them a mandolin and cello. With another young man he presented a musical act in which they mixed comedy with performance on various instruments. A large audience turned out and the concert was a success in spite of the sleet rattling on the building all the while.

Representative of the lavish children's performances of the decade was one presented by the pupils of Miss Alderman's School in 1894 for the benefit of the Associated Charities. On the program were a series of tableaux vivants taken from famous paintings and a Memorial Day scene in which six boys in blue and grey "sweetly" sang "Waiting for Judgment Day." The Misses Mildred Davis, Alice Borden and Mathilda Schollen sang, and little Master Russell Foster recited "Asleep at the Switch."

During the 90's amateur dramatic clubs flourished for the first time in many years. The Wilmington Dramatic Club had great success with several plays, but especially with The Substitute. They planned to tour the play to Charlotte, Greensboro and Winston, but shortly after the first performance the news of the sinking of the Maine came, and the tour was abandoned. In 1899 the Paint and Powder Club introduced a double bill of a comedy, The Merry Maid, and a costume piece, Comedy and Tragedy, which, after a great success in Thalian Hall, was toured to Fayetteville, Durham, Winston, Greensboro, Raleigh and Goldsboro.

Pageants given by volunteer groups, mostly women, consisted of tableaux, illustrative scenes and dancing. By the middle of the 90's they had become very elaborate. The high point was reached in 1896. The Ministering Circle of the King's Daughters enacted The Story of the Reformation with a cast of 150. Two performances were given to standing room only crowds. For the pageant, The Kermis, costumes were brought in from Philadelphia and New York, and ladies practiced the dancing for many weeks. The presentation was given for
four nights, each night having a change of program. Two nights were designated for New Bern and Fayetteville, who sent contingents down by train. The program began with a triumphal procession of all nations led by Mrs. A. H. Harriss as the Queen of the Kermis. Dances from Egypt, Japan, Greece, Germany, Sweden, India and Spain were performed. Still a third entertainment was sponsored by the Colonial Dames: Under Two Flags, a dramatization of Ouida’s novel. British and French soldiers were represented by the Wilmington Light Infantry and the Naval Reserves. Annie Blount DeRosset took the role of Venetia which called for riding a horse across the stage. The wigs and costumes were sent from Philadelphia to transform the amateurs into Arabs, soldiers and dancing girls. Money raised was for the monument of Cornelius Harnett to be erected in the city.

It seemed the ladies of Wilmington would have a hard time topping these performances, but they did. In February 1897 the Westminster League of the First Presbyterian Church gave two performances of the *Life of John Knox or the Scottish Reformation*, which ended with the execution of the Queen which was “touching.” Miss Keenan and Miss Calder sang, and the *Reformation March* was composed by Prof. J. G. Russell of Wilmington. The next year the Hospital Circle of the King’s Daughters gave three performances of *Aben Ali*. A director came from Chicago to rehearse the participants three weeks in advance, and James K. Collier of this city was librettist. The production enchanted the large audience, but the proceeds for the benefit of the Shelter of the Silver Cross were severely diminished by Prof. Baker’s $145 fee.

Wilmingtonians had always gathered in great numbers for very solemn occasions. At noon on October 15, 1870, they assembled to express their sorrow over the death of Robert E. Lee. The meeting was one “of the largest ever witnessed,” and eloquent remarks were delivered by Judge R. S. French, George Davis, Robert H. Cowan and Robert Strange. Upon the death of President Garfield in 1881 many gathered in Thalian Hall in the afternoon. “Col. J. G. Burr spoke of the probable effect of the great calamity in bringing about a restoration of peace and good will between the sections.” Speeches were also delivered by Col. D. K. McRae and W. P. Canaday, Collector of the Port. An assembly was also held upon the death of Jefferson Davis in 1889. After services at St. John’s Church, the military units of the city and the Ladies Memorial Association marched to the Opera House. “Over 2000 people jammed every inch of space. The aisles and steps were filled... a most profound silence reigned along the vast audience.” Long streamers of black and grey hung from the ceiling and fell in festoons on each side of the stage. A portrait of the late President of the Confederacy was surrounded with purple silk and flowers and flanked by portraits of R. E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson draped in Spanish moss and Confederate flags. After the ceremonies in the hall, “the Wilmington Light Infantry drew up before City Hall and fired three ringing volleys that echoed and reechoed through the city.” Memorial services for the late German Kaiser in 1888 drew a tremendous crowd, many of whom were turned away. Much of the service was in German, and music was played by the Germania Concert Band.

In 1898 a dramatic political campaign drew a very large crowd to Thalian Hall. A parade led by the Wilmington Brass Band wound through thronged streets to the Opera House. The hall was packed, mostly by men. Col. R. B. Glenn of Winston was introduced by Iredell Meares and delivered a great oration, holding the audience spellbound for over an hour and a half. In December of that same year Wilmingtonians had a chance to show their admiration and pride in a local hero of the Spanish-American War. On December 15 two Spanish prize ships were brought into Wilmington under the command of Lieut. E. A. Anderson of Wilmington and Lieut. Victor Blue of Laurinburg. Over a thousand people gathered at Thalian Hall that night to greet the men. Chairs had to be placed in the aisles to seat the crowd. The hall was decorated by two long strings of flags of different nations and large United States flags under the boxes and across the top of the proscenium arch. On the stage were palm trees and two polished brass howitzers belonging to the Naval Reserve. Between these guns stood the two gun trophies brought back by Lieut. Anderson. The 2nd Regiment Band played, and the Lieutenants were given a “thunderous ovation.”

Thalian Hall ended the century a focal point of Wilmington life, as it had been when it opened in 1858.