

The Barton Organ

The organ that was original to the Fischer theatre was a 2/4 Robert Morton organ, originally installed in 1929. When the theatre was closed, Kerasotes sold it and everything else that they could from the building. The last knowledge of the original organ was that it was sitting unassembled in a garage in suburban Chicago.

This organ before you was originally installed in the Uptown Theater in Milwaukee, WI in 1927. When that theatre was closed and subsequently torn down in the 1980's, the organ was painstakingly salvaged by David Wallaeger, a theatre organ buff, with some help from friends. Over many years he restored and enhanced the organ, installing it in his home in Raleigh, NC. Mr. Wallaeger added to the organ and expanded its capabilities far beyond what it was at the Uptown. Upon completion he had added additional voices, toys, and could even play both the piano and harpsichord in the



photo below directly from the organ console.

Before selling his home in 1997, Mr. Wallaeger initiated a careful search to find his organ a new home. Then Vermilion Heritage Foundation board member David Schroeder caught wind of the availability of the instrument and thought the organ would be a perfect fit for the theatre.

Mr. Schroeder, along with Warren York, led a team that travelled to North Carolina and carefully disassembled and packed the organ and moved it back to Danville.

After being stored off site for years, all of the pipes, traps and



toys are temporarily back in the theatre. The organ is a 3/10, with all original traps and toys including xylophone, glock, chrysoglott, and marimba still playing. The organ has been retrofitted with a New solid state (parallel technology) relay. Stop rails were expanded and considerably more unification and couplers were added, Keyboards rebushed and rewired, etc. The instrument is powered by a Spencer 7-1/2 H.P. blower motor rebuilt with new bearings and phase shifter.

The organ has been recently evaluated by the Buzard Organ company of Champaign and deemed to be a perfect fit for a restored Fischer Theatre. They have been contracted to provide a detailed inventory of the instrument and will work with architects prior to renovation to ensure that the mighty Barton will be right at home in the restored Fischer Theatre.

