

THE VICTORIA THEATRE

“ The first of January, 1866, will **long be remembered** as a **most signal and interesting event** in the history of our city...

At an early hour last evening, the house was filled by a large and brilliant audience. The elite of the city were there...”

— The Daily Empire, 3 January 1866, reporting on the grand opening of the new Turner Opera House.



The original, six-story 1866 Turner Opera House, before the fire, in a cover illustration for the sheet music of a commemorative march celebrating Dayton's first grand performance hall. The auditorium, decorated in blue and gold, was located on the third floor and accessible via a winding staircase. The first three floors would be preserved in its 1871 reconstruction.

Image: DaytonDailyNews.org.



Only a charred exterior remains after the May, 1869 arson fire.

Image: DaytonMetroLibrary.org.



The rebuilt Music Hall in the 1870s, for the first time resembling the building seen today. The theatre was now accessible from the ground floor. Though stone sidewalks had been laid throughout the city since early in the century, Main Street, pictured here, is still a dirt roadway.

Image: DaytonDailyNews.org.



The Music Hall became the Grand Opera House in 1885, leading to a new pediment engraving. In 1899 it became the Victoria Opera House, and, after yet another adjustment, the Victoria Theatre in 1902. In this pre-1919 image, the last name change is visible on the haphazard signboard.

Image: DaytonDailyNews.org.



After yet another, though accidental fire in 1918, the auditorium is destroyed. As seen in this 1920s street scene, only the front two mansard towers remain intact.

Image: DaytonDailyNews.org.



Having been renamed the "Victory" in 1919 after the end of the First World War, the theatre had, by midcentury, lost most of its grandeur. In this 1964 shot, the dormers and porthole windows are sealed, and the entire street level has been buried in businesses and their cumbersome signage.

Image: DaytonDailyNews.org.



The theatre's marquee alerts Daytonians of the "Save the Victory" campaign, initiated in 1972 in response to proposals to demolish the edifice. Over the next two decades, the theatre would see a total restoration.

Image: DaytonDailyNews.org.



Its renovation nearly complete, including having one of its rear mansard towers fully reconstructed, the theatre formerly known as the Victory receives a recreated ornamental roof pediment in 1989 bearing a new name that was, fittingly, also old. It hadn't been known as the Victoria since the turn of the century, and it hadn't looked so polish since then. Here, the pediment is hoisted up past the 'M' of the Metropolitan Department Store that for decades neighbored the theatre.

Image: DaytonDailyNews.org.



Today, the Victoria exhibits theatre, dance, films, and other performances within its exquisitely restored interior.

Image: VictoriaTheatre.com.



The exterior as it looks today.

Image: HeritageOhio.org.

“ Cities like Dayton have **helped to shape** what is known as **the American theater.** The Victoria is a theater with a **great past** that deserves to have **a great future.**”

—Stage director John Sheehan in the Dayton Daily News on the opening of the remodeled Victoria, 11 January 1990.