Chapter One

Introduction

Expressions of German-American culture in Indianapolis reached a high point in the first decade of the twentieth century. Social clubs such as the Socialer Turnverein and the Maennerchor enriched the city’s cultural life through musical performances and athletic classes and provided a social outlet for their members.¹ During this decade, these clubs played a large role in organizing two national festivals held in Indianapolis: a Turnfest (gymnastics festival) in 1905 and a Saengerfest (singing festival) in 1908. Examining the planning and implementation of the Turnfest and Saengerfest sheds light on how club leaders responded to their social and political environment at the beginning of the twentieth century, how the respective clubs’ members conceived of their ethnic and club identities, and how they represented these identities in the festivals.

German Americans held and portrayed multiple identities, and this study specifically examines how club members conceived of their ethnic identities.² Their complex understanding of what it meant to be German and American depended on wider social and political contexts. Indianapolis club members also drew further distinctions within their ethnicity based on their local identification with Indianapolis and their club’s mission. Expressions of these identities emerged in festival events, including parades,

¹ Turnverein literally translates to gymnastics club, though gymnastics was only a part of the club’s mission. The Socialer Turnverein also appears in sources as the Sozialer or Social Turnverein. Maennerchor translates to men’s choir. For this thesis I will be converting all German umlauts to the English spelling (hence Männerchor becomes Maennerchor). German terms will be italicized. For a glossary of German terms used, refer to page 122.
² European political boundaries were in flux throughout the nineteenth century, with Germany unifying as a nation in 1871. In this study, “German Americans” refer to those who shared a similar cultural background, migrating from or having ancestors from German-speaking regions. Accordingly, German Americans often conceived of their ethnic identities on cultural terms based on a shared language and cultural traditions rather than on political boundaries. Giles R. Hoyt, “Germans” in Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience, ed. Robert M. Taylor, Jr. and Connie A. McBirney (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996), 147.
speeches, and concerts. The means of presentation aligned with the festival organizers’
goals for the festivals and the audiences they aimed to reach.

The lenses of cultural history and festival analysis provide new perspectives into
the dynamics of Indianapolis German-American life. The ability to create and send
messages through festivals makes them a worthwhile subject for studying cultural
identities. Festivals were a means through which the organizers could demonstrate how
they saw themselves and how they wanted others to see them. While festivals and
celebrations punctuated the calendar year of German-American clubs, national festivals
were less frequent and on a much larger scale. These national festivals brought in new
and broader audiences, which gave club members the opportunity to consider their public
image more thoroughly. The multiple public events of national festivals, from parades to
speeches, from sporting events to concerts, all demonstrated diversity in self-
representations.

The festivals’ importance also led to far more coverage in media outlets and the
publication of souvenir books, which make for a rich source base. Collections of the
American Turners, the Athenaeum Turners, and the Maennerchor provide more
information about the social clubs and hold memorabilia related to the festivals.3 Reports
in Indianapolis German and English newspapers covered the planning and the events of
the festivals, and supplied other social-political contexts.4

3 American Turners Records, 1853-2002; Athenaeum Turners Records, 1880-2001; Athenaeum
Damenverein & Women's Auxiliary Records, 1876-2002, Mss 039; Indianapolis Maennerchor Records,
1866-1990, Mss 040; All held at the Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library,
Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (hereafter: IUPUI Special Collections).
4 James P. Ziegler, comp., The German-language Press in Indiana: A Bibliography (Indianapolis: Max
Kade German-American Center, IUPUI, and Indiana German Heritage Society, Inc., 1994), 16-18;
“Indianapolis,” Printers’ Ink 22 (February 1898), 3-4; “Newspaper Notes,” Profitable Advertising 15 (June
1905), 1251. The Taeglicher Telegraph (hereafter: Telegraph) was the leading German-language
newspaper at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was an independent Democratic newspaper
Indianapolis, like many other Midwestern cities, was growing at the turn of the twentieth century. German-American residents played influential roles in the growth of the economic and cultural spheres of many of these cities. Indianapolis provides a worthwhile case study because its German-American population was sufficiently large to support national cultural endeavors such as the Turnfest and Saengerfest, but not so large to obscure or overly complicate the intricate and varied connections between people and organizations. The festivals also tell a story of Indianapolis; the infrastructure and financial support necessary to host and plan such national festivals reflect a city in the midst of urban development.

Since both national festivals took place within a few years of each other, this study focuses on the first decade of the twentieth century. During those years Indianapolis German-American clubs built on the cultural growth of the 1890s that included the construction and opening of the German House in 1898 and many musical concerts. The vibrant cultural scene continued into the 1900s with the opening of a new Maennerchor Hall in 1907 and the hosting of national festivals. German Americans asserted their culture and had reason to be optimistic about the state of their clubs, even though some worries about cultural maintenance remained. A study of the early 1900s allows for an exploration of German-American culture at its height, before World War One repressed and disrupted its assertions.

published by the Gutenberg Company, led by President Harry Thudium (until his death in 1907), followed by August Tamm. In 1907, it merged with the other main German-language newspaper, the Indiana Tribune to form the Telegraph und Tribuene. The Tribuene had essentially been publishing the same news as the Telegraph after its purchase by the Gutenberg Co. four years beforehand. Gutenberg Co. also published a Sunday paper, Spottvogel, with added literary and humor sections. The Indianapolis News (hereafter: News) was the leading daily in Indianapolis at the time. Politically independent, it had a solid reputation for fair reporting and the largest circulation in the city. The Indianapolis Star (hereafter: Star) was a new paper in the city whose prominence was quickly rising with its circulation numbers. It was also independent but tended to lean Republican.
Cultural Identities

Understanding identity is central when analyzing how club members wanted to represent themselves. Many different factors, including ethnicity, gender, and class, comprise one’s identity. This study concentrates on ethnic identities informed by national and local identities in the clubs. However, it cannot be forgotten that these identities intertwine with others; most of the organizers were men of the middle or upper classes. The German-American identities I explore apply specifically to club members with leadership roles.

Many scholars have attempted to define ethnicity, although no single definition is accepted due to the richness of the concept. Sociologist Milton Gordon offers a useable definition of ethnicity as a “sense of peoplehood.” Accordingly, the concept of ethnicity is comprised of many attributes that members of a certain group may share, including a common geographic origin and language as well as shared traditions and values. Ethnic identity also depends on internal and external perceptions of the group.

National identity, which typically links to citizenship in a country, can often, but not necessarily be the same as ethnic identity. Regional identity also factors into ethnic identity. Many Germans who immigrated in the nineteenth century grew up in a state rather than a unified nation and identified most closely with their region. They did not have the same sense of German nationality as later immigrants. Self-identification with and emotional connection to a culture are also part of identity. Most German Americans

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in the early twentieth century considered themselves ethnically and culturally German (or specifically members of their regions of origin) and, at the same time, nationally American. Their national identity as American allowed them to still retain their ethnic identity.

As German Americans acculturated in the United States, their identities changed as well. Based on the premise of ethnicity as a cultural construction, ethnic identities depend on internal and external influences and evolve over time. German Americans uniquely combined German and American cultures to construct new identities. Their identities as German Americans changed and differed according to each individual’s background and circumstances. Clubs, too, constructed identities congruent to that of their ethnic identity as well as their location. This exploration of communal identities examines how club leaders defined and presented their shared culture with regard to ethnicity and nation.

Opinions on the nature of immigrants’ incorporation into American culture have changed over time. The Anglo-conformity and melting pot theories both point to the assimilation of immigrants into American culture. In contrast, proponents of cultural pluralism affirm that immigrants maintain aspects of their ethnic culture within American society. Increasingly, scholars like John Higham and Kathleen Neils Conzen have shown the usefulness of the approach known as “pluralistic integration.” They demonstrate that assimilation and pluralism can coexist and that ethnic adaptation is a fluid and

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9 Werner Sollors, ed., The Invention of Ethnicity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), xiii. Sollors argues that “invention” is a fitting term to describe modern categories such as ethnicity and nationalism.
10 For descriptions of these theories, refer to Gordon, Assimilation in American Life, 85-159.
continuously changing process.\textsuperscript{11} This model most closely describes the situation of German Americans in Indianapolis.

**German Americans in Indianapolis**

In the nineteenth century, German immigration to Indiana centered around two waves, which peaked a generation apart in 1854 and 1882.\textsuperscript{12} Immigrants came for many reasons, including the search for religious or political freedom or economic betterment. Many of the German immigrants in Indiana settled in Indianapolis, where there was already a noticeable proportion of German speakers. In Indianapolis, Germans created a geographic community on the east side of the city.\textsuperscript{13} In 1850, around thirteen percent of Indianapolis residents were of German heritage. By 1890, this number had risen to around twenty-five percent.\textsuperscript{14} Most came from Prussia, followed by the states of Baden, Wuerttemberg, Bavaria and Hesse.\textsuperscript{15} Especially before German unification in 1871, most of the immigrants identified most closely with their region, rather than the more abstract category of “German.”

German Americans never comprised a large majority in the city, but they still played an influential role in its economic and cultural spheres.\textsuperscript{16} Many immigrants held skilled professions and founded businesses that also employed other Germans. After the

\textsuperscript{11} McDonald, *American Ethnic History*, 63.
\textsuperscript{12} Willi Paul Adams, *The German-Americans: An Ethnic Experience* (Indianapolis: Max Kade German-American Center, 1983), 3-4.
\textsuperscript{13} Hoyt, “Germans,” 158.
\textsuperscript{14} George Theodore Probst, *The Germans in Indianapolis, 1840-1918* (Indianapolis: German-American Center and Indiana German Heritage Society, Inc., 1989), 13, 90. This number includes those with parents who were German.
\textsuperscript{15} Probst, *The Germans in Indianapolis*, 82.
Civil War, ninety-one German-run businesses clustered along three blocks on Washington Street between Delaware and Illinois Streets. Business and banking success led a notable number of German Americans to prominent leadership positions in the city. To support their community, immigrants founded German-language newspapers and an independent German-English school. German Americans in Indianapolis also came from a variety of religious backgrounds, and by 1910, there were around twenty German-founded churches and a synagogue in the city.

Among Midwestern cities, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and St. Louis stood out as centers of German-American life in the United States. All three cities also witnessed large influxes of German immigrants during the 1850s and 1880s, aligning with national immigration trends. For example, many professionals and political refugees settled in Milwaukee after 1848. Its immigrant profile diversified in the 1880s as Germans from various regional backgrounds moved into the city. After the large immigration wave in the 1880s, people of German descent comprised almost seventy percent of all Milwaukee residents and more than half of all Cincinnati residents. In Milwaukee and Cincinnati, German Americans concentrated in large neighborhoods, while they spread out more in St. Louis. Many of Milwaukee’s most successful businessmen were German, and the German businesses remained prosperous into the twentieth century, despite declining immigration. Milwaukee also had several German mayors in the late nineteenth and

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17 Probst, *The Germans in Indianapolis*, 56. For further information on German businesses, see Probst 56-65 and 89-92.
20 Ortlepp, “Auf denn,” 13; Don Heinrich Tolzmann, *The Survival of an Ethnic Community: The Cincinnati Germans, 1918 through 1932* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1995) 47. These percentages are based on 1890 census data. These cities also had greater total populations than Indianapolis.
early twentieth centuries, in contrast to Indianapolis, where fewer German immigrants or their descendants entered politics.

Germans avidly founded clubs wherever they settled. These clubs ranged from mutual aid societies for those of similar regional backgrounds to social and cultural groups to Turnvereins. In cities with large German populations, such as Cincinnati and St. Louis, clubs numbered in the hundreds. In the early twentieth century, fifty-six clubs were members in Indianapolis’s Federation of German Clubs (Verband deutscher Vereine). Indianapolis’s many clubs included different demographics of Germans and served different purposes for their members. Some provided cultural outlets, others financial support, but all of them most likely served as a social community as well.

Most members of Indianapolis’s diverse German-American communities could be categorized according to their affiliations with either the church or secular cultural clubs. A division existed between these two populations of “church” and “club” Germans, but each created fulfilling, although separate, communities. Even within the categories of “church” and “club” Germans, members had diverse interests and divided along religious, political, class, and neighborhood lines. Labor unions also offered a form of solidarity for those in the working classes. While the Germans may have appeared as a monolithic group to outsiders, in reality they were a diverse group of people.

This study focuses on German Americans who were members of two of the most prominent cultural clubs in the city, namely the Socialer Turnverein and the

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24 Ibid., 43, 45; Probst, The Germans in Indianapolis, 95.
Maennerchor, and more specifically, the leaders of these clubs. Many of the leaders were well established within the larger Indianapolis business and cultural communities and therefore had the financial means and networks necessary to take leadership roles for organizing, financing, and presenting extravagant festivals. The interests of these leaders represented those of their clubs, but did not necessarily extend to the entire German-American population.

The Socialer Turnverein and Maennerchor were each founded in the early 1850s and became established institutions in Indianapolis. Among their members they counted some of the more prominent and well-to-do residents in the German-American community, in contrast to some of the city’s other clubs. Men also dominated the leadership of these clubs. Although a thorough study of gender issues lies outside of my scope, men and women played different, often separate roles in organizations. Only gradually did women find a place within them.

Turnverein can be translated as gymnastics club, but the Germans had a very specific concept of Turnen, meaning to do gymnastics. They understood Turnen literally, in terms of physical fitness, and figuratively, in terms of mental fitness, hence their motto: “A Sound Mind in a Sound Body.” Turners also supported progressive policies and celebrated values of freedom, well surmised by the quote “When performing the giant swing on the high bar, [a Turner] should not forget that huge swings of a high-spirited and honorable striving for freedom and human dignity are also expected of him.” Proponents of Turnen therefore saw athletics as a way to support the development of sound character in its students.

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25 Theodore Stempfel, *Fifty Years of Unrelenting German Aspirations in Indianapolis, 1848-1898* (1898; repr., Indianapolis: German-American Center and Indiana German Heritage Society, Inc., 1991), 75.
Turnen got its start in Germany as the creation of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, who supported physical training as an act of nationalism during Napoleon’s occupation of the German states. Turnvereins grew in the ensuing decades. The Turners, many of whom immigrated to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, held revolutionary ideas for that time. Not only did they support abolition and radical social reform, they were also at the forefront of the physical education movement.26

The Maennerchor, a men’s choir, celebrated German song in both informal and formal environments. German immigrants brought traditions of singing societies to the United States with them, where the choirs they established provided space for socializing and often filled the void of otherwise limited musical opportunities in the nineteenth century.27 By the late nineteenth century, the Maennerchor’s repertoire had expanded to include more elaborate classical music, and they became a cultural asset to the city’s developing music scene. Many credited the Germans with establishing high-quality musical performances in Indianapolis.28

Both the Socialer Turnverein and the Maennerchor were founded by men who had migrated to the United States in the early 1850s, often referred to as Forty-Eighters.29 Forty-Eighters immigrated to the United States following the failed Revolution of 1848.

During this uprising, revolutionaries called for civil liberties, economic relief, and a more

democratic form of government. These immigrants brought their political and social engagement to the United States, taking part in anti-slavery debates, furthering the spread of public education, and supporting women’s rights. The more radical Germans supported abolition, which disturbed some of the earlier German settlers. Many newcomers were well educated and also held rational freethought views.\textsuperscript{30} The influence of the Indianapolis Forty-Eighters extended into the twentieth century. Philip Rappaport, a member of the \textit{Socialer Turnverein} and a publisher writing in 1908, considered a large majority of the German Americans in Indianapolis to be liberal and progressive. The fact that many were educated also allowed them to more easily become community leaders in Indianapolis and have enough funds to devote to club activities.\textsuperscript{31}

The buildings of the German-American clubs and institutions had a visible presence in Indianapolis. The large number of club buildings stemmed partially from the affluence of their members, who could fundraise enough to build grand structures.\textsuperscript{32} However, it also points to the strength of the clubs’ communities and networks during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The \textit{Socialer Turnverein} dedicated the German House (\textit{Deutsche Haus}) in 1898, the Southside \textit{Turnverein} its hall in 1900, and the \textit{Maennerchor} its hall in 1907. These buildings, designed by prominent German-American architects, shared architectural splendor and projected an air of grandeur to passersby. The design and decorative elements of the buildings also reflected the clubs’ respective values.\textsuperscript{33}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Stempfel, \textit{Fifty Years}, 7; Hoyt, “Germans,” 160.
\item Rappaport, “Das Deutschthum,” 27.
\item Rappaport, “Das Deutschthum,” 27.
\item Christine M. Wahlstrom, “Vereinsleben in Indianapolis” (master’s thesis, Ball State University, 1999), 50-51, 65.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The German press also played an important role in representing and uniting its German-American readers. Newspapers provided readers with international and local news, literary stories, advertisements, editorials, and updates from the German-American communities. At the start of the twentieth century, the Gutenberg Company published three German-language newspapers in Indianapolis. Together, these newspapers furthered the interests of German Americans and often called the community together to unite against any particular attacks against them. The papers appeared to cater to an audience of club Germans and held a good reputation among German families.\(^{34}\)

Although some Indianapolis German-American community leaders and the press attempted to unite the city’s German Americans, some discord remained among the various groups. Rivalries existed between certain families, and class, political, and religious differences also divided the community.\(^{35}\) The *Socialer Turnverein* and *Maennerchor* shared several members; however, these organizations also had their private differences and rivalries. In 1898 the *Socialer Turnverein* failed to join in a *Maennerchor*-sponsored celebration of Otto von Bismarck because of political disagreements.\(^{36}\) The liberal views of many of this *Turnverein*’s members stood in contrast to the other two *Turnvereins* who participated. Although specifics remain unclear, the *Maennerchor* also turned down the *Socialer Turnverein*’s offer for inclusion in the new hall they were building. The *Maennerchor* eventually built its own hall, and the *Socialer Turnverein* formed its own musical group, the *Musikverein*, instead.\(^{37}\)

\(^{34}\) “Indianapolis,” *Printers’ Ink* 22 (February 1898), 9-10. The three papers were the *Taeglicher Telegraph*, the *Indiana Tribuene*, and the *Spottvogel*. The *Telegraph* and *Tribuene* merged to form the *Telegraph and the Tribuene* in 1907.


\(^{36}\) Josef Keller, *Festschrift zur Feier des Goldenen Jubiläums des Indianapolis Männerchor* (Indianapolis: Gutenberg Co., 1904), Oscar Frenzel Collection, Box 30, Folder 4, IUPUI Special Collections.

\(^{37}\) Stempfel, *Fifty Years*, 79.
Although these clubs often came together for public and large-scale events, the clubs, or at least their leaders, were not as unified as they attempted to appear to the general public.38

Immigrants from German-speaking countries made up the largest amount of foreign-born residents in Indianapolis by 1900.39 However, a majority of the Germans in Indianapolis had been living in the United States for over fifteen years. Due to new prosperity from industrialization in Germany, far fewer Germans were migrating to the United States. Yet the German American population in Indianapolis continued to grow as a new generation was born and raised by German-speaking parents. For the state of Indiana, about four times more residents had foreign parentage than were born abroad. Around the turn of the century, however, the percentage of Germans within Indianapolis and other Midwestern cities decreased even though the cities’ populations continued to grow—a trend that continued in the following decade.40

By the early twentieth century, German Americans in Indianapolis had grown acculturated to American life. The business connections and affiliations of club members in various civic and fraternal organizations point to networks extending beyond the German-American community. English became the first language of new generations and


39 Indianapolis had 169,164 residents in 1900. Anglo Americans comprised the majority of residents in Indianapolis at around 80%, while about 10% of the population was African American and about 10% were foreign born. Of these 17,122 immigrants, 9159 had been born in German-speaking countries (about 53.5% of foreign born, 5% of total population). Germans were the largest group of immigrants in Indianapolis, followed by the Irish. In the 1900s, new immigrants from eastern and southern Europe also arrived the city, though never in large numbers. Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900: Population (Washington D.C.: United States Census Office, 1900), 1:447, 653, 946-9; James Divita, “Demography and Ethnicity,” in The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, ed. David J. Bodenhamer and Robert G. Barrows (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 55.

youth played baseball in the German House gymnasium.\textsuperscript{41} Many in the second and third
generations felt more comfortable with American culture than did their parents and
grandparents.\textsuperscript{42} For those who placed high importance on cultural maintenance, the aging
and acculturating community was of concern. However, Indianapolis German Americans
also maintained cultural traditions across the generations. Philip Rappaport even
suggested that no other city might have had so many second and third generations still
bound to German culture.\textsuperscript{43} Many who had been born in America could speak German
learned at home or in school. German instruction in Indianapolis public schools and
other parochial and secular schools set up by German Americans helped to keep the
language alive.\textsuperscript{44} Social clubs also furthered German traditions.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Indianapolis residents were watching the
city change and grow around them. The capital of Indiana stood at the center of the
state’s commercial activity. Indianapolis had many factories and a booming retail trade.
A transportation network of railways and interurbans linked into a hub and connected the
state’s people and industries. City population reached 169,164 in 1900, compared to
105,436 the decade before, and continued to grow annually.\textsuperscript{45} Indianapolis’s citizens
found social outlets in clubs, from temperance organizations to literary clubs to fraternal

\begin{footnotes}
\item[42] Probst, \textit{The Germans in Indianapolis}, 121.
\end{footnotes}
orders.\textsuperscript{46} It was into this milieu that the city’s German Americans continued to maintain a strong cultural and social life through their own clubs.

The secondary literature about Indianapolis German Americans is limited in scope and depth. Useful overviews of German Americans in Indianapolis appear in \textit{Peopling Indiana} (1996) and \textit{The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis} (1994).\textsuperscript{47} George Theodore Probst wrote the most extensive history of German Americans in the city, \textit{The Germans in Indianapolis}. Originally published in 1951 as Probst’s master’s thesis, the book covers life in the city for Germans until World War One. Probst provides a through overview of German-American life, but he does not go into depth or analysis on specific topics. Probst breaks German-American society in the city into different eras, calling the 1880s to 1890s the heyday of culture and viewing the time afterwards as a struggle to preserve culture. Other scholarship on Indianapolis German Americans exists, but there is room for far more research on this diverse ethnic group.

In her thesis “\textit{Vereinsleben in Indianapolis},” Christine Wahlstrom researched German-American clubs in Indianapolis as reflected in the design of their community buildings.\textsuperscript{48} She points out that clubs were influential in the city, as illustrated by their grand buildings, and that they brought together the liberal German-American community, who filled the houses with activities. Prior to World War One, this was a strong community as evidenced by its financial ability to erect the buildings and sustain them.


\textsuperscript{48} Wahlstrom, “Vereinsleben in Indianapolis.”
Alisa Moonen studied the women’s club, the Damenverein, of the Socialer Turnverein in her master’s thesis “The Missing Half” in 1993. She utilizes a perspective informed by women’s history, and argues that a communal female consciousness existed among the women of the Damenverein and that they had their own organizational culture. However, she also provides some larger statements on the city’s German Americans, including that associations such as the Turnverein were sites for German Americans to “simultaneously preserve and share their heritage in and with America.”

Within both the larger Indianapolis and German-American community, the Turners formed a “distinct cultural community,” which made them slightly insular but fulfilling to its members. Erin Kelley also affirms the internal culture and community shared by the Damenverein in her 2003 master’s thesis on Indianapolis women’s clubs, “A Worthwhile Existence.”

Larger national organizations united the country’s Turneins and singing societies. The national organization of the Turners, the North American Turnerbund, published an official history of their organization in 1911 by Albert Metzner. The latest edition of this text from 1989, which includes a revised version of the original text, presents a chronological history of the organization with an internal bias. Horst Ueberhorst and Annette Hofmann have both produced scholarly studies on the North American Turnerbund. Ueberhorst charts the political changes of the Turnvereins from the early years to around World War One as they grew progressively less radical.

Turners distinguished themselves from the majority of German immigrants in their

49 Alida Joyce Moonen, “The Missing Half: The Experience of Women in the Indianapolis Athenaeum Turnverein Women’s Auxiliary, 1876-1919” (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 1993), 90.
50 Ibid., 91.
53 Ueberhorst, Turner Unterm Sternenbanner.
politics and resistance to cultural assimilation. In *The American Turner Movement*, Hofmann examines how Turners underwent the process of Americanization continuing to 2000. In particular, she considers the clubs’ cultural offerings for how they expressed German-American ethnic identity.

Most of the scholarship on German singing societies lays out club histories and music activities without extensive interpretation aside from the argument that musical life in America owes much to German Americans. In the nineteenth century, German singing societies filled the void of music-making in many American cities and provided high-quality performances, as explained by Mary Jane Corry in “The Role of German Singing Societies in Nineteenth-Century America.”

In Suzanne Snyder’s 1991 dissertation, *The Männerchor Tradition in the United States*, she explores the contributions of German Americans to American music. Her larger survey of the history of *Maennerchors* elaborates that these choirs functioned as places for socializing and fellowship as well as music. Singing festivals were important for the advancement and dissemination of music. Music also became a link between German Americans and Anglo Americans; by the twentieth century, these festivals were celebrated not only by German residents of the towns where they were held, but by many non-Germans as well. In a separate article, Snyder also recounts the history of the Indianapolis *Maennerchor* and believes that German immigrants contributed to the musical life of Indianapolis.

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55 Snyder, “The Indianapolis Männerchor.”
German Americans within American Society

Most of the scholarship on German Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries addresses the concerns and culture of German-American communities at the time. Scholars bring out dynamics of assimilation, ethnic chauvinism, and nativism in the time prior to World War One, when Americans attacked German-American culture with vitriol.

Around the turn of the century, German Americans lived fairly comfortably within the dominant society of Anglo Americans. Many Anglo Americans held a positive view of German Americans. They stereotyped them as honest, hard-working, industrious, and efficient, although many often looked down upon German drinking and festivities. If anything, as Jorg Nägler suggests, Anglo Americans were ambivalent towards the Germans.\(^\text{56}\)

According to John Higham, there was less nativism directed towards German Americans by the late nineteenth century.\(^\text{57}\) Nativism, a hostile form of nationalism, mainly flourished when the United States felt outwardly threatened or was wracked by internal toil, as Higham explains. In the early twentieth century, Americans, confident from their success in the Spanish-American War, greeted newcomers with less hostility than during the depression from 1893 to 1897.\(^\text{58}\) Many in the Progressive Era believed that they could shape incoming immigrants into good Americans.\(^\text{59}\)


\(^{58}\) Higham, Strangers in the Land, 68, 107-8.

\(^{59}\) Higham, Strangers in the Land, 119.
Germans in Indianapolis apparently faced less nativism than in other cities. That is not to say that discrimination did not exist. Some German Americans in the United States may have remembered nativist attacks against them in the 1850s. There were also some accusations that the Germans were not patriotic following the Spanish-American War. By the early 1900s, Indianapolis Germans perceived discrimination against them in the form of prohibition, which was growing at the beginning of the century. Due to efforts by organizations such as the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, the Indiana General Assembly had already passed a law in 1895 that gave the citizens of a town the power to deny alcohol licenses to pub owners. To Germans, whose consumption of alcohol was an important cultural element of socializing, this movement was difficult to understand and they saw it as against individual liberties.

In response to prohibition and declining immigration rates, Indianapolis German-American leaders tried to unify their community around a German-American identity. The Indianapolis members understood “German” to mean the German culture shaped by poets and thinkers, and cultural values such as socializing. German immigrants did have regional differences and identities, but music and language were shared reference points. In the United States, where Americans saw immigrants from the German states as “Germans” rather than Bavarians or Saxons, German immigrants could be a stronger force when united. That idea, at least, was the message of the play performed at the completion of the German House, which hoped for all “that with combined power a

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60 Stempfel, *Fifty Years*, 21; Frederick Doyle Kershner Jr., “A Social and Cultural History of Indianapolis” (PhD diss., The University of Wisconsin, 1950), 160-161.
61 "Deutsche heraus!!" *Taeglicher Telegraph*, January 21, 1905.
62 Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 27-28. Many of these leaders were those that Luebke refers to as “soul Germans”—those who consciously articulated cultural ideas—in contrast to “stomach Germans”—those who simply acted within cultural frameworks.
unified Germanity is able to do." 63 Leaders pushed this goal, even while acknowledging that unity remained an aspiration rather than a reality. 64 German chauvinism also grew among certain German residents of Indianapolis. Founded in 1901, the National German-American Alliance (NGAA) aimed to promote unity and represented German-American interests against both prohibition and nativism. The organization’s rhetoric praised German values and accomplishments in cultural and commercial life. Its leaders, mainly of the middle and upper classes, worried about how best to preserve and spread their culture, as they feared assimilation and other tensions between them and other Americans. As German Americans felt the effects of prohibition, many turned to the NGAA as a “last line of defense” against Anglo American pressures, although fewer than ten percent of German Americans in the country actually joined the organization. 65

Jorg Nägler writes that German-American chauvinism reflected the “crisis of identity” of German Americans, who were divided between those backing assimilation and those who maintained a strong loyalty to Germany and the higher culture they thought it represented. 66 Historian G. A. Dobbert also attributes chauvinism to declining immigration numbers and declining urban density, based on census records, meaning that nationalistic organizations created ideological communities to take the place of physical

63 “was mit vereinter Kraft, ein einig Deutschthum hier vermag zu schaffen.” Konrad Nies, Deutsche Gaben: Festspiel zur Einweihung des Deutschen Hauses in Indianapolis, 14, Athenaeum Turners Collection, Box 11, Folder 10, IUPUI Special Collections. For an analysis of this play, see Ueberhorst, Turner Unterm Sternenbanner, 147-148.
65 Charles Thomas Johnson, Culture at Twilight. The National German-American Alliance, 1901-1918 (New York: Peter Lang, 1999) 29, 60.
66 Nägler, “From Culture to Kultur,” 149.
ones. Many Anglo Americans, who were creating their own chauvinistic ideas of ethnicity, would not recognize German Americans as their equals, frustrating Germans who did not want to be second-class citizens.

American confidence began to erode around 1905 as strong prejudice against immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and Asia began to grow. Although anti-foreigner sentiment existed prior to World War One, for German Americans specifically, John Higham believes that the war “represented the most spectacular reversal of judgment in the history of American nativism.” Yet other scholars see the roots of the anti-German sentiment that fully emerged during World War One as having taken root, albeit in lesser form, prior to the war. Frederick Luebke claims that the war only turned “latent tensions into manifest hostility.” Also playing a role was the reaction to growing chauvinism among many German Americans who asserted their culture, which was a “dangerous course in a period of resurgent nativism.”

This tension was also partially due to American distrust of Germany. Americans began to grow wary of Germany, whose militarism in the late nineteenth century appeared overtly aggressive. Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century was a modernizing country trying to politically adapt to changes caused by industrialization. It was a time of economic growth and political turmoil. Emperor William II and other

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68 Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 77-88; Kershner 175.
69 Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 158.
70 Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, xiii.
71 Ibid., 77.
72 Nägler, “From Culture to *Kultur*,” 135; Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty*, 70-71.
German leaders also dreamed up ambitious imperialistic plans that included naval expansion, which Americans viewed with concern.

It appears that German Americans in Indianapolis maintained good relations with friends and families in Germany and their Anglo American neighbors. In turn, many in Indianapolis acknowledged the accomplishments of the city’s Germans, including Jacob Dunn, who recognized Germans as having the largest influence as a nationality on the city in his 1910 history of Indianapolis. Yet it is clear that the German Americans still felt the need to assert themselves, as multiple articles in the German newspapers suggest. They continued to suffer from some criticisms in the English media, especially concerning prohibition, and responded to these attacks with chauvinism stressing the importance of their culture. The NGAA found many sympathetic ears among club leaders. Many club German Americans believed in the supremacy of their culture and still remained optimistic about where they were headed and what they could offer to America.

**Festivals**

People celebrate at different times, in different places, and under different circumstances. Religious rituals, the turn of the seasons, and rites of passage all inspire people to take time from daily life to celebrate or commemorate. I conceive of festivals broadly, following anthropologist Alessandro Falassi’s definition of them as a series of events, or “rites,” that bring together a community and during which celebrants “do something they normally do not.” The few historical monographs on American

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75 Alessandro Falassi, “Festival: Definition and Morphology,” in *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival*,
festivals mainly analyze political festivals and the American mainstream. A rich number of articles and essays on ethnic festivals also exist and are relevant to this study.

Festival studies as a history discipline grew alongside cultural studies starting in the late 1980s, and the field continues to develop. Scholars of festivals draw their methodologies from sources including anthropology, postmodernism, and visual culture. Despite the diversity of festival types, festivals share the ability to illuminate a culture’s values, often by reflecting social orders or by actively constructing identities. By studying festivals, historians gain greater insight into political identities, social structures, identities of a place, and/or ethnic identities.

Parades often asserted the identities of their marchers or their location. For example, Thomas Spencer’s study on the St. Louis Veiled Prophet Celebration reveals that St. Louis’s elite used public spaces to reinforce the social hierarchy by establishing historical legitimacy and support of high culture through parades in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.76 Similarly, Benedicte Duschamps writes that “minority groups have always used celebrations as a means of communication with American society” and expands on the ability for festivals to communicate an identity to audiences both outside and within a community.77

Most recent scholars of ethnic studies take the position that ethnicity is something created, and that festivals are one of its generators. As Geneviève Fabre and Jürgen Heideking write, “public celebrations do not just ‘reflect’ social practices and reality, but

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they possess the power to ‘construct’ political concepts and create cultural meaning.”

Ellen Litwicki finds that in ethnic celebrations, immigrants constructed both their ethnic and American identities in a dialogue of interpreting each through the perspective of the other. German-American festival scholarship has particularly highlighted this generative aspect of festivals.

There are three main works of cultural history scholarship that analyze exclusively German-American festivals. Kathleen Neils Conzen wrote the first analysis of German-American festivals in 1989. Conzen claims that German-American festivals constructed ethnicity by creating communal rituals. Festivals united German Americans, demonstrated ethnic pride, and provided connections to the homeland. After creating a positive self-image of themselves, Germans also sought to maintain and spread this image to Anglo Americans. Conzen analyzes the symbolic vocabulary and other components of the festivals to establish how German Americans communicated their identity. However, the harmony found in festivals did not continue into daily life.

Conzen further argues that as American festive and popular culture changed to more closely align with elements of German culture, many Germans no longer stayed within their own community as their distinctiveness declined. Ironically, Germans’ success at spreading some of their cultural norms caused their own “festive glue” to dissolve.

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Heike Bungert adds to Conzen’s research in an essay about German-American festivals in Milwaukee.\(^81\) She asserts that festivals “served as the primary vehicle to create a specific German-American identity.”\(^82\) The identity German Americans created merged their ideas of the best traits of both Germans and Americans. Bungert identifies themes in the festivals, such as unity and pride of accomplishments, which remained as ideals rather than reality. The confidence of the immigrants in their identity also increased over time as German Americans grew more assertive and stressed their contributions to American culture in festivals.

Barbara Lorenzkowski also studies how immigrants created their ethnicity, but takes a different perspective by analyzing the importance of sound and music in German-American life.\(^83\) She bases her research on the idea that groups enact their ethnicities and follows Fredrik Barth’s ideas on demarcating ethnic groups by boundaries.\(^84\) Lorenzkowski analyzes the multiple meanings of music present at festivals and finds that the practice of music-making changed as German Americans sought to balance their traditions with the rise of high music culture.

German Americans in Indianapolis created their own ethnicity out of a diverse blend of influences. During the Turnfest and Saengerfest, they drew off of pre-conceived ideas about their identities. Festivals affirmed and enacted these ethnic identities, while

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\(^82\) Ibid., 184.

\(^83\) Barbara Lorenzkowski, Sounds of Ethnicity: Listening to German America 1850-1914 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010).

\(^84\) According to Fredrik Barth, ethnic groups are social organizations consistently demarcated by a boundary with certain characteristics, though the cultural features of that boundary may change over time. In other words, the boundary, not the culture it encloses, defines the group. Fredrik Barth, Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Differences (Excerpt, 1969), in Theories of Ethnicity: A Classical Reader, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 300.
giving the community the chance to articulate them. Yet amid traditional frameworks, festivals still took on new meanings to participants and changed subtly with the times. The purposes of festivals to unite the German Americans and communicate a public image, which Conzen and Bungert found, were also present in the Indianapolis festivals. However, I identify more distinctions within the German-American communities in my examination of specific clubs. These clubs shared ideas of what it meant to be a German American, but expressed their beliefs in different ways and held differing communal identities based around each club’s mission.

When organizing their festivals in the mid-1900s, German Americans had many traditions on which to draw. These included both German and American, as well as German-American, forms of public celebration and ritual. In nineteenth-century German states, where the freedom to assemble politically was forbidden, civic clubs and societies formed as a way for Germans to communicate their political views. Seemingly apolitical groups such as the Turners and singing societies were in reality spaces for the opposition to the governing monarchies to congregate.\textsuperscript{85} Many members supported freedom of speech and German unity. Together, they held festivals that had the appearance of simple celebrations, when really there were underlying political themes to them, as in national festivals such as the Wartburg Festival of 1817 and the Hambach Festival of 1832, which expressed anti-monarchical sentiments.\textsuperscript{86}


\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 167.
In the nineteenth century, German festivals had a strong aesthetic component that combined historical myths, symbols, and emotions. Friedrich Ludwig Jahn contributed to shaping the vocabulary of German festivals. An educator, nationalist, and founder of Turnen, Jahn created festivals on his understanding of German history, which was merged with Germanic myths. The progression of the festivals mirrored Christian liturgical services, with hymns and speeches. Although Jahn maintained the ancient Greek idea of ideal beauty in these rituals, he incorporated German symbols like a sacred flame, the black-red-gold flag, and oak leaves, as witnessed in the Wartburg Festival. The flag and the song “What is the German Fatherland?” (Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland?) became symbols of the opposition. By the 1840s, such festivals grew in size and moved to urban locations. Festivals served as a way to bring Germans from all regions together. Coming together in a unity not politically manifested, festival participants welcomed each other as German brothers.

After stagnation and suppression around the Revolution of 1848, nationalist festivals in Germany picked up renewed steam in the 1860s. Schiller festivals also grew in popularity during this time. These local festivals involved all members of the community and local groups such as male choirs and shooting societies. The festivals involved processions, sometimes with floats, flags, torchlight parades, tableaux vivantes, and music. Nationalism also became a part of German bourgeois festivals following 1848, inspired by Richard Wagner and his ideas of the mythic German Volk. Turnfests

88 Ibid., 75, 79, 43, 77.
and *Saengerfests* continued in Germany through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. German Americans brought their celebrations, such as Schiller festivals, to America. In the United States, a different social and political atmosphere meant that festivals took on new meanings, while often utilizing traditional festive vocabulary. Waves of incoming immigrants renewed and upheld these traditions.

The United States had its own traditions of celebrating. In the early nineteenth century, parades unified local citizens in a showing of democracy and patriotism. By the late nineteenth century, parades involved a diverse mix of ethnic groups. According to Mary Ryan, these divisions along ethnic lines caused the earlier inclusivity of parades to diminish. Men also dominated parades, with women present primarily in symbolic impersonations and as allegorical figures.

The early twentieth century witnessed a boom in historical pageants, many organized by city elites. According to David Glassberg, pageant organizers believed that “history could be made into a dramatic public ritual through which the residents of a town, by acting out the right vision of their past, could bring about some kind of future social and political transformation.” Organizers therefore had a clear outcome in mind, and presentations of the history of a place or group of people were a means to an end such as bringing a community together by presenting a shared history of place. These pageants drew from a variety of historical sources. Oriental and classical references were common, as well as local and national presentations of history. Pageants and festivals

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92 Ibid., 145, 147-149.
94 Ibid., 282.
95 Ibid., 27.
also expressed a strong assertion of American patriotism common at the turn of the twentieth century. Although different ethnic groups sometimes participated in these festivals, many pageants drew from the dominant Anglo cultural traditions and celebrated their notions of progress.

Germans mainly contrasted their festivals to those of the dominant Anglo Americans and believed that their festive attitude and common Sunday celebrations (met with disdain from many Anglo Americans) set them apart. Yet German Americans were not alone in their ethnic celebrations; other ethnic groups also expressed themselves through festivals. For example, the Irish held parades for St. Patrick’s Day with gathering and entertainment in the evening. Ethnic groups were also not oblivious to the frameworks of American festivals. They borrowed from the vocabulary of pageants and patriotism popular at the time when planning their own events. Festivals planned by German Americans allowed them to organize their festive representations on their own terms, demonstrating their loyalty to the United States through acts of patriotism and the use of American patriotic symbols. German festivals therefore blended together multiple cultural traditions.

Exhibitions were another source of visual representation and ostentation. In 1904, the international Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis (the St. Louis Fair) drew visitors from across the country. Visitors included Germans Americans, who held a German Day complete with a parade. St. Louis also became the backdrop for the 1903 Saengerfest, the 1904 International Turnfest, and the 1904 Olympic Games. While all

96 Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture,” 52-54.
participating cultures had their own agendas, the St. Louis Fair was significant for German Americans in that they presented themselves as an “intercultural force that stood both for German and American cultural values,” according to Paul Michael Lützeler.99 The world’s fair provided an opportunity for national German-American groups to represent themselves on an international scale. German Day at the fair demonstrated their dual identity and their loyalty to the United States. Yet despite talk about unity, the German-American population was not actually as united as members hoped.100

In Indianapolis, which had a long tradition of festivities, large-scale festivals either affirmed patriotic sentiment or mourned fallen soldiers.101 For example, a grand city celebration accompanied the opening of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument on May 14, 1902. This monument, which honored the states’ veterans and celebrated the Union victory in the Civil War, rose to a prominent place in the center of the city. The city was decorated with the stars and stripes, garlands, and tropical plants for the occasion. Government officials held an official opening ceremony in the morning, and in the afternoon military members and veterans paraded by the monument. It was not only a festival of memory and honor for Indiana’s war contributions, but also a celebration of the strength of the Union and an expression of pride for the monument. German Americans also participated; veterans marched and a mass choir from the singing societies performed. That evening, a torchlight parade organized by forty German-Americans clubs marched past the monument. They took pleasure in the fact that a

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100 Ibid., 80.
German architect, Bruno Schmitz, had designed it. In coming years, the plaza around the Soldiers and Sailors Monument became the center of city celebrations.

The Indianapolis German Americans had pride for their city that they also showcased through their festivals. Festival organizers were not alone in wanting to boost Indianapolis’s image. City leaders—some of whom were German—saw in festivals the chance to promote Indianapolis as a cultured place and supported the organizers’ efforts. Many Midwestern cities at the time believed cultural events such as concerts were a way to increase culture in the Midwest while likewise demonstrating that they were just as civilized as easterners. The national festivals therefore were bound up with a local identity and pride that also found expression through the promotion and organization of the festivals.

German-American club members found many reasons to celebrate, and customs of celebration and presentation were well established by the twentieth century. German Americans festive gatherings were welcome occurrences that brought their communities together for socializing and entertainment. German festivities in Indianapolis began as early as 1854, as Turnvereins from the region gathered in Indianapolis to celebrate the consecration of the new Socialer Turnverein flag. Holidays, such as the Fourth of July and George Washington’s birthday, and social events, such as the Maennerchor’s well-known masked ball, punctuated the year. Most of these were exclusive affairs,

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104 Stempfel, Fifty Years, 10, 15; “Mummenschanz im Indianapolis Maennerchor,” Taeglicher Telegraph, February 13, 1904; Programs in Oscar Frenzel Collection, Box 30, Folders 1 and 2, IUPUI Special Collections.
requiring invitations. Members also celebrated the opening of new halls and the anniversaries of club foundings, as well as German Day, a day to push for ethnic pride. Celebrations contained some similar components, including food, drink, speeches, and dances. Music also played a very large part in these German festivities with informal singing and formal concerts.

The following chapters delve further into how Indianapolis’s club German Americans represented themselves in festivals. Chapter Two profiles the Socialer Turnverein, its relation to the National Turner organization, and the 1905 National Turnfest. Chapter Three concentrates on the Maennerchor and the 1908 National Saengerfest. Finally, a conclusion presents the findings of this study.

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105 Invitations to Maennerchor Events, Maennerchor Collection, Box 1, Folder 40, IUPUI Special Collections.
106 Programs in the Athenaeum Turners Collection, the Indianapolis Maennerchor Collection, and the Oscar Frenzel Collection, IUPUI Special Collections.
Chapter Two

Poetry in Motion: The National Turnfest of 1905

“Gymnastic art is physical poetry” – J. C. Lion

The Twenty-Ninth National Turnfest provided an opportunity for the country’s Turners to come together in friendship and jovial celebration in Indianapolis from June 21 to June 25, 1905. It also provided the members of the Indianapolis Socialer Turnverein the opportunity to show off their city and the accomplishments of their club to visitors, and to introduce Turnen to their fellow citizens to whom their gymnastic activities still remained unfamiliar. The opening ceremony with torchlight parade, the main festival parade, the festival play The Glorious Three, and the mass gymnastic exercises represented the cultural and athletic highlights of the festival. Other individual performances and events were valued components of the festival, but the mass public events entertained the largest audiences and illuminate most clearly the multiple identities that the Socialer Turnverein presented. Through the festival, the Turners represented themselves as true American patriots who still embraced German culture, as well as skilled athletes and proud Indianapolis residents.

The Indianapolis Turners had multiple agendas for the festival that overlapped and served to reach different audiences. Their goals for the festival included presenting an aesthetically rich and sociable experience for their fellow Turners, showing off both the city of Indianapolis and American Turnen for visitors, and showcasing achievements and spreading knowledge of Turnen. The Turners planned to act as cultural missionaries

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107 J. C. Lion, “Why is the German System of Gymnastics Entitled to Recognition?” in Essays Concerning the German System of Gymnastics, published by the Executive Committee of the North-American Turnerbund (Milwaukee, Freidenker Publishing Co., n.d.), 6. This essay was one among several aimed to spread the ideas of Turnen.
to the larger general public, composed of people of German as well as non-German backgrounds. At a time when the national organization, the North American Turnerbund, was recognizing threats to the maintenance of its German character, the Indianapolis planners wanted to ensure a festival proving that Turnen was still active and relevant. They also wanted to assert the value of their German cultural traditions.

History of the Socialer Turnverein and the North American Gymnastic Union

The beginnings of Turnen in Indianapolis date back to 1851, when a group of Forty-Eighters founded the Indianapolis Turngemeinde. Two years later, the Turngemeinde merged with a second Turnverein to form the Socialistische Turngemeinde, and proudly opened their first gymnasium in 1853, later replacing it in 1867. The revolutionary and progressive ideals that these Forty-Eighters held transferred onto the American political scene and many club members were strong proponents of public education and secular freethought. During the Civil War, the Turners enthusiastically enlisted and served with Germans from across Indiana in the 32nd Regiment. The Civil War remained in the memory of the Turners as a true expression of their patriotism and loyalty to the United States and its ideals.

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109 Stempfel, Fifty Years, 5.

110 Ibid., 6, 8, 37.

111 Ibid., 15.

112 Ibid., 23-4.
However, not all of the Turners held similar political convictions, and political arguments fractured the Turners after the Civil War. The club expelled members who did not believe in the national Turner platform that supported the voting rights of African Americans. Debates about whether to join the national Turner organization, the North American Turnerbund (NATB), and whether women should have the right to vote also split the membership. The more radical minority left and created the Socialer Turnverein, but in 1872 the NATB ordered the two clubs to merge, and together they formed the Indianapolis Socialer Turnverein. Yet political disputes continued between conservative and progressive factions, which reached a peak when thirty-three conservative members resigned to form the Independent Turnverein. This Turnverein did not affiliate with the NATB.  

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During the 1880s, the Indianapolis Turnvereins grew, perhaps due to new immigration to the city. The South Side (Suedseite) Turnverein came into being in 1893 in order to serve members living in the city’s South Side neighborhoods and quickly gained new members. Despite national trends of declining membership in Turnvereins, the Indianapolis Turnvereins continued to increase in members through the 1890s so that by 1903, the Socialer Turnverein was the thirty-eighth largest in the country and the South Side Turnverein the forty-eighth largest.  

114 The construction of grand new homes for both of these organizations also attracted new members.

In 1891 the Socialer Turnverein had outgrown its facilities and approved building a new hall. They wanted this building to serve as a center for German cultural life in

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113 Ibid., 36-40, 46-47.
114 NATB, Jahresbericht 1902-1903, xl. These rankings are based on the Turnvereins who were members in the NATB.
Indianapolis. A grand brick building in German Renaissance Revival style with gables, spires, and limestone detailing, the German House (Deutsche Haus) stood out as a unique building in the city. The first part of the building, containing the gymnasium and a gathering space unaffiliated with the Socialer Turnverein, opened to fanfare in 1894. Hermann Lieber, one of the Verein’s most prominent members, expressed the idea that the German House was for all Germans and affirmed a wish for unity among the community. He also defined some aspects of being German in a speech, saying,

We want to establish a center for all those interested in such German aspirations as are legitimate on this American soil….Every educated person, no matter where he hails from, is welcome here. Be he Jewish or Christian, Democrat or Republican, progressive or conservative, Turner or singer – if he loves music and singing, if he prefers cheerfulness and the German love of life to hypocrisy and gloominess, then he will find a home here.116

With the future on his mind, Lieber felt confident that a younger generation would continue to promote “education, health and humanity” from this home on Michigan Street.117 Other speakers focused on the notion of progress and the true progressive spirit of the Turners, furthering “more light, more life, higher manhood… and more genuine enjoyment.”118 The Socialer Turnverein believed that it had a cultural mission to fulfill and that it was on a bright path to the future, which they reinforced with the opening of the second part of the German House in 1898.119 The Turners, with specialized interests in physicality and politics, remained the most progressive of the German House inhabitants, as opposed to the more social German Club that also took up residency inside.

115 Stempfel, Fifty Years, 66.
116 Ibid., 72. Lieber’s words were not entirely taken up; the Maennerchor had chosen not to join the hall.
117 Ibid., 72.
118 Ibid., 73.
119 Ibid., 100-105.
Soon the German House was full of activity. Gymnastics was of course a large component of the building’s liveliness. In the gymnasium and the outdoor area, Turners swung clubs, lifted weights and jumped over apparatuses. In 1900, about 40 gymnasts participated in the club’s squad and around 180 children were enrolled in gymnastics classes. Those numbers grew in 1903 to 60 “actives” (referring to the active squad) and around 240 children. The supporting members (“passives”), who enjoyed the social aspects of club membership, grew as well. Social and intellectual events also shaped the annual calendar, and speeches, celebrations, concerts, and outings were important parts of club life. The Turners also offered a secular Sunday school to teach cultural traditions and the German language.

The leaders of the Socialer Turnverein included some of the best-known and influential German Americans in Indianapolis such as Hermann Lieber, Albert Metzger, Henry Severin, C. E. Emmerich, and Bernard Vonnegut. Many were businessmen with connections to the Commercial Club, a predecessor to the city’s Chamber of Commerce. Others were involved in education or in the cultural life of the city. They supported the club not only through their active engagement, but also through financial means. Although some like Lieber, “the father of the German House,” were deeply involved with the club, for many, the club was only one of various organizational memberships. As the Telegraph reported, the club was also popular “among all societal

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120 NATB, Jahresbericht 1899-1900, 4-5; NATB, Jahresbericht 1902-1903, 4-5.
121 “Die freisinnige Sonntagsschule,” Der Fortschritt 1 (December 1887), 4.
122 Lieber owned an “art emporium” and was a patron of the arts. Metzger was a banker who directed American National Bank and Merchants’ National Bank. Henry Severin was a wholesale grocer. C. E. Emmerich was Principal of Manual Training High School. Bernard Vonnegut was an architect and his relatives also owned a hardware store.
123 Donations to the Festkasse included 119 members of the Socialer Turnverein who donated a total of $5149. Most of the leaders, about thirty people, donated between $50 and $300 each, an impressive sum for that time. The majority donated between $5 and $25. Finance Records of the 1905 Turnfest, American Turners Collection, Box 19, Folder 6, IUPUI Special Collections.
classes of the citizenry.” Therefore, the Turnverein was not exclusive, but offered different opportunities and levels of engagement for its members.

Male Turners did not allow women to have full membership in the Turnverein, but women could still participate in the club through the women’s section called the Damenverein. In 1876, facing increasing organizational needs, Socialer Turnverein members called on women to found a Damenverein, and the auxiliary grew rapidly. The women supported sick members, organized events, raised funds, and taught classes. Girls and young women also took gymnastics classes. In 1905, the Damenverein grew in members and was in good financial standing.

In 1898, the leadership of the national Turner organization, the North American Turnerbund (NATB), also transferred to Indianapolis. Some of the most prominent men in the Socialer Turnverein served on the executive board, including Franklin Vonnegut as president, with Hermann Lieber succeeding him in the position in 1901. The NATB had been founded in 1851 and by 1900 consisted of 258 clubs with almost 34,000 members. Its board set the political tenor for the organization, and so national policies shed light into the beliefs of its Indianapolis leaders.

In its “Principles and Demands” passed in 1900, the NATB affirmed its goals to educate and stimulate the mental and physical capabilities of its members and called for progressive political policies. Education was essential, and Turners called for a reform of public schools in order to stimulate independent and rational students and to offer classes

124 “Socialer Turnverein,” Taeglicher Telegraph, October 6, 1904.
126 Anna Sieboldt, “Bericht der Präsidentin an der Sozialen Turnvereins,” May 7, 1905, Damenverein Records, Box 1, Folder 5, IUPUI Special Collections.
127 NATB, Jahresbericht 1898-1899, 65.
128 NATB, Jahresbericht 1899-1900, xv.
including music, foreign languages, and physical education. Other demands included reforming the U.S. election system, supporting workers’ rights, eliminating monopolies, refraining from involvement in imperialist wars, and upholding the separation of church and state. Into the twentieth century, issues concerning immigration and prohibition also grew in importance. The NATB actively worked against immigration limits and prohibition laws by petitioning, writing editorials, and protesting. Finally, an internal goal of the association was the maintenance of German traditions and the German language.\textsuperscript{129}

On an ideological level, the Turners believed that physicality and intellectual activity went hand in hand; both furthered a whole person. Each month a NATB committee determined topics of debate for engaging the mind. These topics ranged from procedural issues to organizational structure to larger political questions, and represented some of the main concerns of the organization at the time. In practice it appears that the physical training took precedence over these intellectual activities. Apathy generally reigned among clubs across the country. However, Indianapolis’s \textit{Socialer Turnverein} was actually among the most active clubs to partake in intellectual activities. In a given year, it might hold a few speeches, declamations, theater shows, or concerts, although it did not debate all suggested topics.\textsuperscript{130} Some questions, however, did provoke a larger debate across the organization. Chief among these questions was whether women should be members.\textsuperscript{131} In Indianapolis, a political difference existed between the more liberal

\textsuperscript{129} Grundsätze und Forderungen des Nordamerikanischen Turnerbundes (Milwaukee: Freidenker Publishing Co, 1900), American Turner Collection, Box 6, Folder 27, IUPUI Special Collections.
\textsuperscript{130} NATB, \textit{Jahresbericht 1899-1900}, xxv.
\textsuperscript{131} NATB, \textit{Jahresberichte 1894-1895, 1895-1896, 1904-1905, 1905-1906}. 
Socialer Turnverein, where most members were for equal rights for women, and the South Side Turners, who were largely against it.

The 1890s were challenging times for the NATB as its membership and finances declined. The executive committee pointed to the national depression as the root of the cause, as hard times hurt the many working-class members and German immigration levels fell. However, as American prosperity rebounded near the turn of the century without a corresponding improvement in club growth, the NATB did some soul searching. The board cited a lack of maintaining German culture by younger generations and a lack of interest in political goals and cultural activities (especially those aimed to engage the mind) as damaging to the organization.

Around the turn of the century, the executive board and others Turner leaders often criticized the failure of their members to “Germanicize” the youth. Parents did not bring their children to class or speak German to them. All efforts of the Turnvereins would be in vain if parents did not continue their mission to further German culture. Americanization had caught up with the clubs and could not be stopped. Cultural acculturation itself was not negative, as Germans celebrated many aspects of their American culture and were often integrated into the larger society. Rather, it was the loss of German culture that they bemoaned. Older leaders, often born in Germany, embraced their hyphenated identity as German-American citizens. In Indianapolis, however, it

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132 NATB, Jahresbericht 1896-1897, iii.
133 NATB, Jahresbericht 1899-1900, iv.
134 NATB, Jahresbericht 1899-1900, iii-iv.
appeared that there were fewer worries as many in the younger generation also
maintained German connections and club membership stayed high.\textsuperscript{135}

Concerns about cultural maintenance were bound up in the fact that members
perceived the \textit{Turnverein} as a German institution, even if the members felt more
American as individuals. \textit{Turnvereins} provided safe places for German Americans to
gather, speak in German, and discuss politics. Yet the language barrier and the
progressive politics of the \textit{Socialer Turnverein} also acted to keep out non-Germans.\textsuperscript{136}
Although the \textit{Turnvereins} always wanted new members, it is unclear how much they
hoped for non-Germans to join or whether they wanted only to spread their ideas within
Anglo-American circles. While the \textit{Socialer Turnverein}'s members primarily consisted of
German Americans, there were many non-German children enrolled in classes of the
gymnastics school. In 1904 almost half of the children were not German.\textsuperscript{137} This shows
that while the \textit{Socialer Turnverein} had a good reputation among city residents, many
adults still perceived it as insular and too German to consider membership.\textsuperscript{138}

The German language factored into the club’s identity, as demonstrated by a
misunderstanding in St. Louis. After reports came out that a \textit{Turnverein} there had
decided to speak only English, the Indianapolis \textit{Telegraph} retorted in indignation that it
was like a punch to the board of the NATB, which had been trying to preserve the use of
the German language.\textsuperscript{139} Although later reported to be a false report, German Americans

\textsuperscript{135} Phil. Rappaport, “Das Deutschthum von Indianapolis,” \textit{Thirty-second National Saengerfest des Nord-
Amerikanischen Saengerbundes, Indianapolis, June 17-20, 1908: Official Souvenir} (Indianapolis: Aetna
Press, 1908), 27.
\textsuperscript{136} Hofmann, \textit{The American Turner Movement}, 92.
\textsuperscript{137} NATB, \textit{Jahresbericht 1903-1904}, 4-5.
\textsuperscript{138} However, the German Club, a social club housed within the German House, sought to gain “desirable
members” for their club and happily accepted Anglo-American members. Program of the Mikado, 1905,
Athenaeum Turners Collection, Box 11, Folder 30, IUPUI Special Collections.
\textsuperscript{139} “Eine Verwirrung,” \textit{Taeglicher Telegraph}, March 18, 1905.
across the country expressed protestation. To them, Turnvereins were one of the cultural preservers of German in America. Knowledge of German was an unofficial condition for club membership, as meetings and classes were conducted in German, even if broken. The German language expressed the German spirit and its “treasures which the German mind incessantly has collected for millennia in literature, in the arts and the sciences,” according to Theodore Stempfel, a banker, writer, and member of the Socialer Turnverein. However, considerations about whether or not to allow classes in English also arose, especially as younger generations grew up speaking English. Aspirations did not always keep up with reality.

Although Turners were reluctant to Americanize themselves in the realms of their gymnasiums, Turnvereins required American citizenship for membership and members regarded their citizenship with pride. The Turners believed that democracy was the highest political form and the United States as a democratic country was a place in which they could believe. Like other Americans, they celebrated holidays such as George Washington’s Birthday and Thanksgiving. Their critiques of American politics stemmed from a love for the country and their own idealistic views.

The paradox of Turner identity was that only by preserving German traditions could they contribute to American culture. Many of the more chauvinistic and progressive Turners believed that mixing the best traits of German culture together with American culture would strengthen the United States. An NATB monthly question for debate in 1900 posed this directly, asking how the Turners should try to influence

140 “Stimmen aus der Tagespresse,” Taeglicher Telegraph, March 22, 1905; Vorort des Nordamerikansichen Turnerbundes, “Protokollbuch (Minutes),” April 15, 1905, American Turners Collection, Box 3, Folder 2, IUPUI Special Collections.
141 Stempfel, Fifty Years, 103.
142 NATB, Jahresbericht 1900-1901, xviii.
American culture. Without any thoughts of cultural relativism, the leaders of the Socialer Turnverein believed in the superiority of German-American culture with its happier way of life and appreciation for the arts and education.

Gymnastics of the body and mind also had their value, helping to teach discipline, order, health, happiness, and a sense of that which was “pretty and noble.” The NATB actively promoted its version of physical education through marketing materials such as an English gymnastics manual and the newsletter Mind and Body. In particular, the NATB targeted schools, publishing essays in English about how the German system of gymnastics helped to educate a well-rounded person and how to teach it in schools. Across the country, Turners succeeded in implementing physical education classes in schools amidst a growing physical education movement in America. In 1895, schools in twenty-six cities, including Indianapolis, offered these classes. Wilhelm Stecher, a member of the Socialer Turnverein, served as the supervisor of physical training for Indianapolis Public Schools, showing the close connection of the Turners to physical education in Indianapolis.

By 1901, individual membership in the NATB was finally on the rise again. Although there were fewer member clubs than earlier, national membership grew continually in the first decade of the 1900s. While school enrollment did not necessarily correspond in growth, in general, improved finances and growth led the NATB to take a

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143 NATB, Jahresbericht 1899-1900, xxiv.
144 “schön und edel.” NATB, Jahresbericht 1897-1898, xxi.
145 Essays Concerning the German System of Gymnastics (Milwaukee: Freidenker Publishing Co., n.d.), American Turners Collection, Box 22, Folder 67, IUPUI Special Collections.
147 NATB, Jahresbericht, 1894-1895, viii.
better outlook on the future. Socialer Turnverein membership also continued to increase. This optimism accompanied the members as they planned the Bundesturnfest, the national Turner festival.

Planning the National Turnfest

High expectations met those who planned a Bundesturnfest. These festivals were major events for the Turners and put them in the public spotlight like no other event. About every four years, Turners from all ends of the country streamed into the host cities, ready to do gymnastics and socialize in a festive atmosphere. The main component of the festival was the display of gymnastic exercises, both as competition and exhibition. Although Turners competed in the different exercises and on different apparatuses, the achievements of the group were always held in higher regard than those of the individual. Just as important was a social, gemuetliche atmosphere to establish friendships and networks among German Americans. Parades, special feasts, and other social events contributed to the jovial spirit.

By 1905, festivals had standard features, such as the gymnastics events and an opening ceremony. Indianapolis planners built on these traditions and learned from the successes and failures of the previous Bundesturnfests. Reports and experiences from other festivals, such as the 1904 international Turnfest in St. Louis or the 1903 German Turnfest in Nuremberg, may have also proven influential in planning. At the most recent Bundesturnfest in Philadelphia, the festival debuted a play, Gut heil, Columbia (Hail, Columbia), and other gymnastic presentations that many Turners viewed with success.

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148 NATB, Jahresbericht, 1902-1903, iii.
149 Hofmann, The American Turner Movement, 144.
and wanted to continue. The festival also included concerts, speeches, and a parade. However, the observation committee, invited to critique the festival, wrote mixed reviews. Although Dr. Karl Zapp wrote that the festival was a “highlight,” others criticized that there was not enough time for socializing.150 Similarly the board of the NATB complained that a real festive spirit never emerged.151 This idea of Gemuetlichkeit was very important to the Germans and was one way in which they defined their own celebrations in contrast to those of Anglo Americans.

Members of the Socialer Turnverein were experienced when it came to fundraising and planning festivals. For the construction of the German House, the Socialer Turnverein Stock Association had raised $100,000 from community members across Indianapolis. Besides many events and celebrations held throughout the year, events of larger significance had also taken place in Indianapolis. In 1884 the statewide Turnfest of the Indiana Turner District took place in Indianapolis and Hermann Lieber, Armin Bohn, and George Vonnegut (all still engaged members in 1905) were involved with the planning. In 1891 a regional Turnfest with thirty-five clubs also took place in the city. Viewing the schedule of the 1891 festival, many components of the 1905 Bundesturnfest, such as a parade and mass gymnastic exercises, were already established, although at a smaller level.152 The 1891 festival had made a profit and created an overall positive experience for the planning committee.153 It surely left behind good memories and probably demonstrated that it would be possible to host an even greater festival.

150 Berichte des Beobachtungs-Ausschusses (Milwaukee, WS: Freidenker Publishing Co., 1900), American Turners Collection, Box 19, Folder 4, IUPUI Special Collections.
151 NATB, Jahresbericht 1900-1901, iv.
152 Stempfel, Fifty Years, 65-66.
153 Ibid., 65-66.
However, when certain delegates at the 1902 national conference first suggested holding the next Bundesturnfest in Indianapolis, the delegates of the Socialer Turnverein turned the offer down. The reasons behind this decision remain unclear, but perhaps the large amount of work and financial risk caused by such a festival induced hesitation. Indianapolis was also a smaller city than previous host cities. Delegates selected Newark, New Jersey, as the location for 1905 instead, yet ultimately Newark could not meet its obligations. In the meantime, members of the Socialer Turnverein declared that they would be ready to take over the festival. It was only when they were sure that they would receive support from the entire German-American community that they acquiesced and voted to take on the Bundesturnfest.\(^{154}\)

The Indianapolis Bundesturnfest was planned on both a local and national level. The 1905 Bundesturnfest was distinctive, however, in that members of the national board were also local members. Indianapolis Turners enthusiastically greeted the work ahead of them. On the same day they approved hosting the festival, members donated $6,015 for a guarantee fund.\(^{155}\) Over the coming months, they organized themselves into committees and drew up a working program.

At the beginning of 1904, the Socialer Turnverein formed a local festival board divided into different committees to plan the Turnfest. Robert Nix, William Stecher, George Vonnegut, Otto Lieber, and Theodore Stempfel, all “energetic and honorable truly-German-spirited men” according to the Telegraph, sat on the executive


\(^{155}\) “Das Bundes-Turnfest in 1905 wird hier abgehalten,” Taeglicher Telegraph, April 23, 1903.
committee.\textsuperscript{156} Thirty subcommittees took care of organizing specific duties and events.\textsuperscript{157} By February, they had secured the Indiana State Fairgrounds for the festival. In June 1904 the local committees began having monthly meetings. The organizers had plans to involve about 5,000 local school children and wanted to hold an “impressive” torchlight parade and a cheery \textit{Volksfest} at the end. The shape of the festival started to emerge in July, with a provisional program laid out, and by October the dates were set.\textsuperscript{158} While local Turners made arrangements within the city, the national board took care of some other matters. It announced a competition for a play and song and also sent out invitations to international Turner organizations.\textsuperscript{159} With plans going well, the Turners stayed optimistic that as long as the weather behaved, the festival would be a success.\textsuperscript{160} Although central committees organized the \textit{Turnfests}, the NATB tried to remain democratic in how it ran festivals by collecting opinions of members. In earlier years, selected topics for the mental fitness debates asked member opinions on topics such as whether mass gymnastic displays were good or bad (participating organizations were in favor).\textsuperscript{161} They also asked what meaning the festivals had for Germans generally and, in particular, the Turners. Respondents answered that the \textit{Turnfests} were the best way to popularize Turnen among Americans, awake more interest in Turnen, and also centralize

\textsuperscript{157} A list of all committees in NATB, \textit{Jahresbericht}, 1905-1906, l-li.
\textsuperscript{160} “Das 29. Bundes-Turnfest,” \textit{Taeglicher Telegraph}, October 25, 1904.
\textsuperscript{161} NATB, \textit{Jahresbericht}, 1896-1897, xv.
the Turners.162 These philosophies continued to guide the leaders as they planned the festival.

The Socialer Turnverein planned to throw a festival to go down in the memories of all attendees. The Telegraph constantly mentioned the great amount of work the planning required and how every member of the club was urged to “active work and sacrifice for the good cause.”163 Indianapolis’s good national reputation among Turners meant that expectations were high, and the Turners believed that the twenty-ninth national festival would be the most attended German festival ever held in the United States.164 This created some pressure for the local organizers, who wanted the support of all Germans in the city to be able to fulfill, if not surpass expectations. They called on Indianapolis residents, especially the Germans of the city, to support them in their endeavor.165 The organizers pleaded the case that “next year the [Germans of Indianapolis] have the opportunity to prove their enviable reputation anew.”166 By involving other German Americans (although mainly the “club” Germans), the festival also took on greater importance for the ethnic community as a whole.

The Socialer Turnverein depended on its connections outside of the German community as well. In order to host such a large-scale event, members needed to secure accommodations and public transportation. The Turners met with city authorities and commercial associations to inform them about the festival. In order to draw support, the Socialer Turnverein demonstrated that the entire organization was strongly united behind

162 “…Sympathie für die Turnerei immer mehr zu erwecken, auch das Deutschthum in den Turnvereinen immer mehr zu centralisieren.” NATB, Jahresbericht, 1897-1898, xxi.
163 “Socialer Turnverein,” Taeglicher Telegraph, May 5, 1904
164 “Auf Ruf an die Deutsche Bevölkerung der Stadt Indianapolis,” Spottvogel, July 24, 1904.
the success of the festival. The Bundesturnfest was a very expensive festival to produce, but the high esteem for the Socialer Turnverein, the organization’s well-laid plans, and the honor the festival would give Indianapolis prompted donations from outside individuals and businesses.

The Indianapolis German Americans were not alone in wanting to also show off their city in the Bundesturnfest. Indianapolis’s business community welcomed the Turnfest, seeing it as an honor and profit-making opportunity. The president of the city’s Commercial Club urged its members to support the festival and its organizers by buying tickets, and decided to hold a party in the grandstand of the main day of exercises. Stores, many run by Germans, planned to sell souvenirs of Indianapolis or advertise lunch specials.

The Socialer Turnverein wanted to make the festival not for the Turnvereins alone but for the whole city. Although they needed to appeal to their own membership, they also wanted to create interest among all German Americans, as well as non-Germans and hoped that all would enthusiastically join in the celebrations. The Turners advertised the festival for Turners and Indianapolis residents alike and also hoped for international attendance from European gymnastic teams.

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167 “Erst wenn die Thatsache festgestellt ist, wie kräftig und glaubensvoll der Verein für sein Turnfest eintritt, wird das Finanz-Comite sich an die Kaufmannschaft der Stadt und an das Publikum im Allgemeinen wegen Contributionen melden.” “Socialer Turnverein,” Taeglicher Telegraph, November 18, 1904.
168 Finance Records of the 1905 Turnfest, American Turners Collection, IUPUI Special Collections. Donations to the Festkasse included members of the German House, corporations including the Indianapolis Brewing Company, the Indianapolis Clearing House Association, the Indianapolis Merchant’s Association, and local businesses.
170 NATB, Jahresbericht, 1905-1906, lii; “Das Turnfest,” Taeglicher Telegraph, April 2, 1905.
The *Socialer Turnverein* first advertised amongst their ranks at the NATB conference in Pittsburgh and the international gymnastics competition in St. Louis. It also invited those Turners traveling back east from St. Louis to have a pleasant stopover in Indianapolis. \(^{171}\) Rather than write a festival newspaper, which organizers deemed to be too taxing of time and money, they sent out circulars to the country’s Turnvereins and German newspapers to inform them of the latest updates. The planners’ updates, Indianapolis’s renown for hosting memorable festivals, and the news that a team from Germany would attend all encouraged Turners to come to Indianapolis.

In the English papers, media coverage also led up to the event and provided a major way for the *Socialer Turnverein* to represent itself and the festival to the larger public. The *Turnverein* hired an agent to send illustrated press releases to the newspapers during the time leading up to the *Turnfest*. The work of this agent is clearly visible in the pages of the *News* and the *Star*. In the weeks before the festival, these English newspapers printed articles detailing preparations, the work of the committees, the camp housing the Turners, the German squad, and the arrival of the delegations. Photographs of Turners from across the country in gallant poses also graced the pages. In these reports, local planners depicted their organizational expertise. For the first time ever, the Turners would house the athletes in a camp. They created a whole village of tents for the athletes with barbers, a telegraph office, and enforced sanitary conditions. The central kitchen expected to serve at least 1,500 men. \(^{172}\) By pulling off such an endeavor and

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\(^{172}\) “Turners Will be Cared For In Style,” *Indianapolis Star*, June 13, 1905.
having the media cover it, the Socialer Turnverein gained a positive reputation and drummed up interest for the festival.\footnote{NATB, \textit{Jahresbericht}, 1905-1906, liii.}

The Turners also received editorial support from the Indianapolis media. The \textit{Telegraph}, sharing the interests of the Turners, continually expressed how much it believed in the festival’s potential for great success and how it would bring glory to the Turners and the city.\footnote{“Das Turnfest,” \textit{Taeglicher Telegraph}, April 2, 1905.} The editors called on all German Americans, reminding them that they had to ensure Indianapolis’ good reputation and carry out German ideals by supporting the festival.\footnote{“Und nun das Turnfest,” \textit{Taeglicher Telegraph}, May 13, 1905.} Although “church” Germans were not involved with the planning of the festivals and religious leaders may have discouraged them from attending, they were surely aware of the event and may have joined their neighbors in the public celebrations. Likewise, the \textit{Star} said that the city was honored to hold the festival and wanted to ensure a friendly welcome.\footnote{Editorial, \textit{Indianapolis Star}, June 19, 1905.}

The \textit{Turnfest} Draws Near

Finally, the week of the \textit{Turnfest} arrived and the German House bustled with festivity. Already a beautiful building, for the festival it took on a new sense of grandeur with flowers bursting from the windows, garlands of green, and flying American and German flags. Palms and plants also decorated the inside. Before the event, the house had been cleaned and spruced up and the Damenverein had led a renovation of the parlors.\footnote{Minutes of the Damenverein, March 3, 1905, May 7, 1905, Damenverein Collection, Box 1, Folder 5, IUPUI Special Collections.} Across the street the Turnverein had erected a large shrine to Friedrich Ludwig
Jahn, founder of the Turner movement. As Turners arrived, they were shown through the house. Theodor Stempfel had once announced that the German House was a “German feat!” and the Socialer Turnverein wanted to draw attention to it. The organization regarded it as the center of German life in Indianapolis and a unique building in the country that increased the Socialer Turnverein’s prominence among German Americans.

Over the coming days, the Socialer Turnverein expected to show off other parts of Indianapolis as well, thereby demonstrating that its members were proud residents of the city. The local festival committee had also planned a concluding tour around Indianapolis for visitors that highlighted the city’s “business industries, pleasure grounds, and beautiful residence sections.” This tour was an important way to boost Indianapolis’s reputation and convey that Germans were well integrated into and contributed to Indianapolis life. The media also promoted Indianapolis and the Turnfest. The Telegraph, expecting that during the week of June 19th its readership would grow to include German visitors, printed photos with lengthy captions in praise of special sites in Indianapolis, from the German House to important public buildings and parks.

Over the span of the Turnfest, the Turners remained in the public eye. Not only did the German and English newspapers extensively cover the festival, but the Turners also paraded through the streets multiple times. The first parading began as members

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178 “Athletes are now Pouring Into City,” Indianapolis Star, June 21, 1905.
179 “deutscher That!” Stempfel, Fifty Years, 1.
180 “Visitors Depart Praising City,” Indianapolis Star, June 27, 1905. Unfortunately for the Turners and participating businesses, as this tour would take place on the day after the concluding event, by that point the visitors were ready to leave and this tour never took place.
182 The newspapers printed the daily programs, photographs, reports of the events, and human interest stories. The News even set up a tent at the Fairgrounds with water, postcards, stamps, and a telephone.
of the Socialer Turnverein welcomed delegations of Turners arriving at the Indianapolis train station and led them on a one-and-a-half mile route through downtown to the German House with musical fanfare.\textsuperscript{183} Altogether, about 15,000 visitors came to Indianapolis for the festival.\textsuperscript{184} People going about their daily business could not miss that the Turners were in town before the official events had even begun.

The city had also been decorated in preparation for the festival. Flying banners in the Turner colors of red and white and the stars and stripes hung on strands spanning the streets of downtown. Decoration committee leader Robert Kipp encouraged those living along the parade route and the route to the fairgrounds to decorate their homes and for businesses to display flags and bunting.\textsuperscript{185} Decorations would impress the visiting Turners and demonstrate a city standing behind the Germans, even if this did not fully correspond to reality. Decorations also created a visual splendor that would only boost the spectacle of the ensuing parades. The most exciting decorations for the Turners were four heroic statues of athletes: a runner, a hurdler, a shot-putter, and a weight lifter. These statues, created by local sculptor Rudolf Schwarz, were placed on the four streets that entered into Monument Circle. Aesthetically, they accomplished more than the standard victory arch.\textsuperscript{186} The statues displayed a physicality and athleticism with which the Turners wanted to be identified.

\textsuperscript{183} “Day for the Coming of Many Turners,” Indianapolis News, June 21, 1905.
\textsuperscript{184} “Great Week for German Athletes,” Indianapolis, June 18, 1905.
\textsuperscript{185} “Committees Will Inspect Festival,” Indianapolis Star, June 15, 1905; “Four Giants to Guard Monument Approaches, Indianapolis News, June 12, 1905.
Opening Ceremonies

The evening of Wednesday, June 21st, 1905, the Turnfest officially opened with a torchlight parade and ceremonial speeches on the foot of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument. The opening of the Turnfest took place outside and publically, as Carl Lieber, a member of the decoration committee, decided, rather than indoors as had been the standard at prior festivals. Lieber’s decision demonstrates the Socialer Turnverein’s intention for the festival to incorporate the whole city, not only the Turners and German-American spaces. Although the torchlight parade and opening ceremonies could be witnessed by a larger public, this parade held particular importance for the Turners. It was an event to rally and unify them.

Torches flickered in the darkening evening and reflected off of the silken banners as the marchers made their way from the German House to Monument Circle. Representatives of Indianapolis clubs, the visiting Turnvereins, and the Turner pioneers and veterans, numbering around 2,000 to 2,500, all took part, and bands and drum corps provided lively accompaniment. Large crowds gathered on the sidewalks and Turners met their applause with calls of “Gut Heil.” The procession reached the Soldiers and Sailors Monument, where everyone took their places. The pioneers and veterans were given the honor of standing on the first terrace, while the flags and musicians stood on the steps. Above them rose the monument, which had special significance to the German Americans because it was designed and built by German artisans.

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187 Stempfel, Artist’s Life, 14; “Twenty-ninth National Gymnastic Festival of the North American Gymnastic Union at Indianapolis, Indiana, June 21-25, 1905,” Program, American Turners Collection, Box 19, Folder 5, IUPUI Special Collections. Although Stempfel refers to Lieber as the chair of the decoration committee, the Turnfest program lists Robert Kipp as the chair and Lieber as a member of the committee.

188 NATB, Jahresbericht, 1905-1906, lii.

189 I have reconstructed events of this evening from the following articles: “Großer Enthusiasmus,” Taeglicher Telegraph, June 22, 1905; “Brilliant Night Scenes of Festival’s Opening,” Indianapolis News, June 22, 1905; “Grand Procession Opens Festival,” Indianapolis Star, June 22, 1905.
The monument also provided a reminder of German-American participation in American wars, and was therefore meaningful to those veterans in attendance.190

On the steps of the monument, members of the *Musikverein, Maennerchor*, and *Liederkranz* joined together in song. During the ceremony they sang German and American patriotic songs in German and English. Patriotic songs such as “Die Wacht am Rhein” (The Watch on the Rhine) were well known by the Turners and reflected a connection to Germany. While any parade observers could appreciate the music, for the Germans it carried a special meaning of tribute to their old homeland. The bright firework show that accompanied “The Star Spangled Banner” also demonstrated patriotism. These songs affirmed and presented the Turners’ identity as both German and American.

Hermann Lieber spoke to the crowd in his role as President of the NATB and expressed some of the dominant themes that the *Turnverein* wanted to represent throughout the festival. As the speech was given in German, it clearly had a specific audience: all the Turners and other German Americans. Lieber made it clear that the *Turnfest* had two important goals: enjoyment and spreading Turnen in schools. He continued by highlighting some of the key components of the Turner identity.

> There is no organization that has rendered … more valuable services to our country in its time of need than our union. There is no organization that comprehends within its membership truer republicans and better Americans, or one that adheres more firmly to the doctrines of the Declaration of Independence than the Gymnastic Union.191

Again, the dual identities of Germans and Americans emerged. Lieber was proud that it was his organization that, in his opinion, had stayed the most culturally German in

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190 “Indiana’s stummen Sieg.” *Taeglicher Telegraph*, May 15, 1902.
its members’ love of the German traditions and people. Lieber’s self-celebratory speech served to honor those present, both German Americans and Germans. It represented the NATB as a strong organization with an honorable past and present.

City attorney Henry Warrum also spoke at the festival, representing the mayor who had become ill. Speaking in English, he welcomed the Turners to Indianapolis. He went on to praise the Indianapolis Germans for all of their contributions to the development of the city and their patriotism. His speech was one of unity between German Americans and Anglo Americans and demonstrated the friendliness that many Germans experienced in Indianapolis. Hearing such a speech would provide an outside affirmation for what the Turners strove for.

The participation of the German squad also brought a new dimension to this Turnfest: furthering the relationship between Germany and America. With the attendance of a squad of Turners from Germany, the festival took on an international significance that also helped to draw spectators.\(^{192}\) The team, comprised of the best German athletes, was the first one from Germany to ever compete in an American Turnfest. Prior to arriving in Indianapolis, they had toured through some of the United States and even met with President Theodore Roosevelt. The team from Germany received a particularly special welcome to Indianapolis, and throughout the festival, the German team earned special treatment and recognition for their athletic skill.

Lieber stressed that a relationship of valuable cultural exchange existed between the American and German people of the middle classes who comprised the Turnvereins.

Yet while American Turners valued German songs and traditions as part of their own cultural heritage, they did not identify with the political nation of Germany. Hanging the German flag (at that time red, white, and black) on the German House was a way to welcome the German team, but did not express political support for Germany. The presence of the German team led to strengthened personal and cultural connections to the old homeland, but it also created a division between being German American and being German. The German Americans communicated that they had not lost their German character, but also had to convey that they were Americans now, and prove that American Turners could also hold impressive festivals.

The celebratory aspect of this opening parade sprang from its inclusion of all Turners, from the young athletes to the old “pioneers,” as well as the female athletes. All were a part of the spectacles of that night and what was to come, creating a unifying experience. After all, the Turnfest was not just about the competing squads, but about sociability and the enjoyment that Lieber had spoken of. After the “Star Spangled Banner” finale, the Turners returned to the German House to continue celebrating at an after party with drinking, dancing, and singing. Other events during the week, such as the closing fair, also provided necessary amusement. Besides providing an enjoyable experience for the Turners and other Germans, the organizers also showed their ranks (and the visiting German Turners) that they had not lost their German sociability in America.

Although not explicitly stated in the sources, the NATB surely meant this Turnfest to appeal to the younger generation of Turners. The active Turner squads were young and probably quite Americanized. It makes sense that in a time of worries about

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193 The Socialer Turnverein did not agree with the imperialistic policies of Germany.
the future, the older planners would want to show the appeal of German festivity and *Gemuetlichkeit*. Social events reconnected those raised in Germany to the culture of their homeland.\textsuperscript{194} Joined together with those in the older generations, the “actives”’ sense of Germanness could be affirmed and supported. For the German Americans not involved with Turnen, this festival could serve as publicity to interest them in it.

The *Telegraph*, ever supportive of the *Turnfest*, praised the opening highly and interpreted it as a triumphal and self-celebratory victory parade. To the *Telegraph*, the success of Turnen also meant “the triumph of German ideals, German values, and German festivity in our new Heimat.”\textsuperscript{195} The English papers also praised the opening and particularly took note of the twenty or so women Turners who also took part in uniform, suggesting that their presence must have been a novelty to them. For the most part, however, men dominated the public side of the festival and its planning.

**The Festival Parade**

Early in the morning of Thursday, June 22\textsuperscript{nd}, participants in the festival parade gathered at the German House and finally got underway at 9:50. From the German House, the parade moved towards the downtown center of Indianapolis, marching along Washington Street and then backtracking to Monument Circle before heading northwards again. The sun shown brightly as some 6,000 Turners, costumed figures, musicians, esteemed men, and troops marched by, while crowds lining the downtown streets threw flowers and shouted “Gut Heil” to them. Colorful floats captured the attention of the

\textsuperscript{194} Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture,” 54.
\textsuperscript{195} “Gut Heil! Bahn Frei!” *Taeglicher Telegraph*, June 22, 1905.
crowds, and the flags and bunting[s] streaming from windows and awnings lent the whole downtown a festive atmosphere.

The parade, a free public event, was the chance for the Turners to shine in front of the whole city’s population, not only other Germans. Thousands had come out for the parade, drawn in by promises of a spectacle. The mayor had ordered all businesses closed from nine to eleven a.m. so that all could take in the event.196 While the parade the night before had served to unify and celebrate the Turner audience, this festival parade had different aims and was intended to speak to a broader audience. The Socialer Turnverein had a clear message it wished to send through the parade about the history of the organization, and the visual splendor would create an unforgettable experience. By placing this parade at the beginning of the festival, rather than at the end as had been the case until Philadelphia, the Turners could also pique interest among city residents to attend more of the events.197

The Turners expected this parade to draw an audience from the city and across the state. They knew that the average citizen of Indianapolis would know little of their history and attempted to rectify that so that the audience would be able to understand the floats. The English newspapers prepared viewers for the floats by describing them and giving historical background. Most importantly, the Turnverein printed out 30,000 circulars describing the historical background to distribute in the public schools. They

196 “Proklamation!” Taeglicher Telegraph, June 20, 1905.
197 Official Programme and Guide for the 28th National Festival and Golden Jubilee of the North American Gymnastic Union to be held in Philadelphia, PA, June 18-23, 1900, American Turners Collection, Box 19, Folder 4, IUPUI Special Collections.
hoped that students would also share this information with their families. Appealing to schools was clearly on the planners’ minds.

The choice of the route through the heart of downtown Indianapolis was somewhat standard as Monument Circle and Washington Street had been the center of other civic celebrations. Yet for the Germans, this route also took on a greater significance, presenting Indianapolis and its German Americans to visitors. Washington Street was a center of commerce in the city and home to many German businesses, including those of Charles Mayer, Hermann Lieber, and Clemens Vonnegut. These storefronts displayed the business success of the city’s Germans to visitors and residents alike. As expressed the previous evening, the monument also had special meaning to the Turners. The parade would continue northwards up Delaware Street until Sixteenth Street, so that the visiting athletes would “see one of the finest residence districts in Indiana,” as the News reported. This route was a way for the Socialer Turnverein to show off some of the grandest parts of the city, including the home of former President Benjamin Harrison.

The parade was divided into several marching divisions. Richard Lieber, the parade chairman, and the police superintendent led the way, followed by musicians and an American flag. The German Turners and representatives of Indianapolis’s German clubs came along next, followed by Turners from St. Louis and Chicago. The importance given to the German Turners and representatives of Indianapolis’s German club community was shown through their prominent placement at the start of the parade. The

198 “Turners’ Pageant to be Described to Children,” Indianapolis News, June 15, 1905.
rest of the parade consisted of five floats divided up by Turner squads and other musicians and marchers. Floats made their Turnfest debut in the Indianapolis parade.

The five floats showcased the history of the NATB and its influence on the United States. They presented the commonly reiterated high points of Turner history and linked the gymnasts to a glorious past to give them a stronger legitimacy. The floats depicted Turner history through allegorical terms and mainly appeared in chronological order. Referred to as a “historical pageant” by the English newspapers, the floats drew on the contemporary performative trend of pageantry. As the festival’s largest public event, the parade was the best vehicle to entertain the city while educating its residents.

The Turners revered their history and viewed their accomplishments in education and religion during the nineteenth century with pride. An appreciation for history expressed itself in many ways. The national board gave certificates to those who had been members of Turnvereins for fifty years. This certificate both listed some of the key dates of the NATB’s history and connected the organization to an ancient past and myths in order to give itself greater significance. A play during the 1900 Philadelphia Turnfest repeated these themes, featuring tableaux of Grecian and medieval gymnastics, Jahn, the Forty-Eighters, the founders of the NATB, the Civil War, and Turnen in the present.

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200 “Nordamerikanischer Turner-Bund,” Taeglicher Telegraph, March 27, 1905.
201 See Glassberg, American Historical Pageantry.
203 NATB, Jahresbericht 1902-1903, xv. Key dates listed were the 1848-49 Völkerfrühling (Spring of Nations) in reference to the Revolution, the foundation of the NATB in 1850, the U.S. Civil War, the 1878 convention when the principle resolutions were adopted, and the 1900 anniversary. Ancient and mythic elements included the Grecian area of Olympia, Germanic characters of the Nibelungenlied, medieval German knight fights, and the Hasenheide in Berlin, where Jahn founded the first open-air gymnasium.
204 Official Programme and Guide for the 28th National Festival, IUPUI Special Collections.
Illustration 2.1. “The Republic” float
American Turners Collection, IUPUI University Library Special Collections and Archives.

Illustration 2.2. “The Turners in the Civil War” float
American Turners Collection, IUPUI University Library Special Collections and Archives.
The *Socialer Turnverein* continued these historical themes in its parade. The first float portrayed “The Republic,” meaning the United States (see Illustration 2.1). In planning stages, this float was meant to show the “ideals of freedom espoused by the young Union.”

Preceding the float were members of the Indiana National Guard dressed as Continental Army soldiers and characters dressed as George Washington and Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben. Horses pulled the float, which was constructed with a bald eagle with outstretched wings perched in front and guarding the U.S. shield. In back, a woman dressed as Columbia sat on a garland-bedecked throne. Joining her were allegorical figures representing the Goddess of Liberty “directing Columbia to the path of free and just government,” agriculture, industry, science, and the arts.

Although the Forty-Eighters and their descendants obviously had not participated in the American Revolution, they admired the ideals of freedom expressed by the Revolution that accomplished what they had not achieved in Germany. Principles of freedom and democracy continued to inform the Turners’ policies, and in that sense they wanted to represent themselves as true American patriots.

The next float depicted the German immigration after the Revolution of 1848, showing the German roots of the American Turners. The aim expressed for this float was to show “the growth of desirable German elements” and the gifts, such as music, singing, and Christmas traditions, which the new immigrants had brought with them. The float was two sided, with the front designed as a ship with the masthead of Liberty guiding...

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immigrants to America and a sail. In the boat, men wore “threadbare costumes, faded in color, with all their worldly goods tied up in bandanas,” while women wore traditional German costumes. The back side was a castle tower, with soldiers and revolutionaries preparing to immigrate. This float made the connection of the Turners to Germany, but also alluded that freedom was to be found only in America.

The third float illustrated settlement in Northwest with a log cabin, referencing the town of New Ulm that Turners had founded in Minnesota. Although the Dakota Sioux had launched a series of attacks near the village in the 1860s and both sides had suffered casualties, the Germans in the early twentieth century celebrated that they had ultimately managed to repel their attackers. Colonists gathered inside the wooden walls, and white men dressed like Indians (from the city’s Order of Red Men, a fraternal club) rode the horses pulling the float. The Turners showed that they, too, took part in the settlement of the West in the era of Manifest Destiny.

The Turners in the Civil War float aimed to convey that the Turners were prepared to fight for the freedom of their country and to remind those watching of the contributions of the Germans during the Civil War. It consisted of a sculpted Goddess of War rising above men dressed as soldiers (see Illustration 2.2). Alongside the float marched members of the Indiana National Guard, Turner pioneers, and Turner veterans. The Civil War remained an important memory into the twentieth century as veterans, both German and American, continued to commemorate the war through veterans organizations. Turners referenced their active participation in the war as the key example to demonstrate their loyalty to America and contributions to the country. A print series

on the Civil War printed in the *Spottvogel* gave large credit to German Americans for, among other things, promoting anti-slavery ideas, keeping Missouri in the Union, and spreading technical knowledge, seemingly suggesting that the war’s victory was largely due to the German Americans.\(^\text{210}\) Ethnic pride and chauvinistic assertion were bound up in this float on the Civil War.

The final float presented *Turnen* itself within a larger history of physical culture. A giant bust of Friederich Ludwig Jahn sat on the wagon, behind him the goddess of victory crowning him with a laurel wreath, the same prize that winning Turners received. Surrounding him were Olympic athletes (the Olympic games were just restarting in their modern form), medieval hunters, and knights. The Turners did not make reference to other schools of physical culture, but rather promoted their own by linking it to a victorious past.

Together, these floats presented a German Turner view of history, as interpreted by Richard Lieber, who was in charge of the parade and spent months preparing for it.\(^\text{211}\) In nineteenth-century America, Anglo-American scholars wrote the main historical texts, and German Americans believed that they had been left out of many narratives.\(^\text{212}\) In the late nineteenth century German-American historians reflected the chauvinism of many German Americans as they tried to reclaim a part of the American historical narrative. For example, historian Julius Goebel claimed that without the help of the Forty-Eighters, Abraham Lincoln would not have been elected and that slavery would not have been

\(^\text{210}\) “*Die Deutschen im Bürgerkriege,*” *Spottvogel*, June 14, 1908, June 21, 1908.

\(^\text{211}\) Richard Lieber worked for a liquor dealer and later became a leading conservationist in Indiana. “*Historical Street Pageant of Germans in America,*” *Indianapolis News*, June 21, 1905.

abolished.\textsuperscript{213} These historians used history to point to the importance of maintaining their ethnic identities. Among the Turners, proponents charted a history of Turners leading the way in freedom and independence, and who continued to further progressive reforms.\textsuperscript{214}

By referencing the American Revolution and even ancient Greece, the Turners demonstrated that they found a historical legitimacy in their present-day focus on athleticism and ideals of freedom. The floats proclaimed the presence of Germans in important national events such as the Civil War and the settling of the West. Throughout the parade, the organizers stressed their German heritage and their American patriotism, corresponding to the ethnic identity of the \textit{Socialer Turnverein}'s leaders.

The organizers intended to give the parade “an artistic character.”\textsuperscript{215} They sought to add artistic touches to create a spectacle and impress the entire audience. This goal was reflected in the members of the parade committee, a majority of whom had artistic occupations, including sculptors, lithographers, and a draftsman.\textsuperscript{216} While planning in March, the committee recommended hiring an artist to assist them with the floats. They chose Rudolf Schwarz, who sculpted the goddesses and Jahn. The committee planned these floats in the visual conventions of the period that relied on allegorical figures to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{213} Ibid., 59.
\item \textsuperscript{215} “ein künstlerisches Gepräge.” “Großartige Veranstaltungen zum kommenden Bundes-Turnfeste,” \textit{Taeglicher Telegraph}, March 14, 1905.
\item \textsuperscript{216} List of the festival parade committee members in “Twenty-ninth National Gymnastic Festival of the North American Gymnastic Union,” IUPUI Special Collections; \textit{R. L. Polk & Co.'s Indianapolis City Directory for 1905} (Indianapolis: R. L. Polk & Co: 1905).
\end{itemize}
impart meaning. No funds were spared to create this visual spectacle. The parade cost a little over $3,000, worth around twenty times as much in 2013.²¹⁷

Besides the floats, around 3,000 Turners marched in the parade with their local Turnvereins. In their matching gray uniforms, black stockings, neckerchiefs and jaunty hats, they made a united impression as they marched in even lines. Some also carried barbells and clubs. There was little to distinguish between different clubs, which also emphasized that at Turnfests the Turners belonged to a greater whole. The parade was a chance for onlookers to cheer them on and assess the athletes before they performed. At the Fairgrounds, the athletes’ full skills would be revealed.

Illustration 2.3. Turners in the festival parade march around one of Rudolf Schwarz’s heroic athlete sculptures. American Turners Collection, IUPUI University Library Special Collections and Archives.

Turners and other city residents deemed the parade a magnificent sight and a great success. The *Telegraph* believed that the festive spirit, which passed on to the welcoming crowd, “let hearts beat with joy and increased the already present exuberance of the festival.”\(^{218}\) The *News* called it “one of the most elaborate and beautiful street pageants ever seen in Indianapolis.”\(^{219}\) Although the parade clearly focused on the Turners, it also celebrated all club German Americans, many of whom had contributed to the success of the parade. The German community’s affluence was on display through the elaborate floats and the many German businesses lining the route. Even more broadly, the Turners drew on assistance from other groups such as the Indiana National Guard (dressed as Continental Army soldiers) and the *Indianapolis News* Newsboys’ Band to include the whole city in their German-American celebrations.

**The Festival Play: The Glorious Three**

The unifying ideas found in the opening ceremony and the historical elements in the festival parade combined in the *Festspiel*, the festival play. *The Glorious Three* had been chosen by the national board in a nation-wide competition for a suitable play for the *Turnfest*.\(^{220}\) The *Festspiel* was written in German by author Konrad Nies of St. Louis and was mainly meant to play to an audience of Turners.\(^{221}\) Members of the city’s *Turnvereins* and the *Musikverein* acted and played, while Philip Rappaport, who had been the former editor of the *Indiana Tribuene*, directed. The first showing on the Tuesday

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\(^{221}\) However, play director Philip Rappaport mentioned to the *News* that this play would be understandable even for those who did not speak German, showing that it was open to anyone. “Bands to Meet Every Delegation of Nation’s Visiting Turners,” *Indianapolis News*, June 20, 1905.
before the festival’s official begin was meant for a local audience as not to crowd out the visiting Turners who attended the second showing on Friday. Prices stayed low in the hopes that the house would be full. On Tuesday, prior to the start of the play, the Damenverein presented a golden eagle for the top of the flagpole of the official flag of the NATB.\textsuperscript{222} This act gave the women a role in the festival and deemed the NATB a clearly American organization, especially in the presence of the German squad in attendance that night.

The curtain rose on a mythical setting framed by trees and branches (see Illustration 2.4). Women allegorically played the celebrated “glorious three”: Strength, Grace, and Liberty. Speaking in German verse, the main character Athos sought to find a leader amongst these three values, who presented themselves to him in allegorical scenes. Strength showed off early athletics and Turner exercises, Grace displayed dancing and graceful exercises, and Liberty (portrayed as Columbia) spoke of America and the Turners. Columbia told how the Turners aided her country and showed four tableaux that once again created a Turner identity around a common history. These tableaux were “German poetry,” “Jahn and his Turners,” “Emigrant Forty-Eighters,” and “Turners in the Civil War.” After the visits, Athos decided to become a Turner and reappeared in uniform. He chose Liberty to a rousing rendition of “The Star Spangled Banner.” The play concluded with Germania and Columbia taking hands and the singing of an altered version of “Hail, Columbia,” in praise of and swearing allegiance to both America and \textit{Turnen}.\textsuperscript{223}

\textsuperscript{222} “aus feinstem Metall.” Anna Sieboldt, “Bericht der Präsidentin,” IUPUI Special Collections; “Heute die Fest-Vorstellung,” \textit{Taeglicher Telegraph}, June 20, 1905
\textsuperscript{223} Konrad Nies, \textit{Die herrlichen Drei: Ein turnerisches Festspiel in drei Scenen} (Indianapolis: Gutenberg Co., 1905), American Turner Collection, Box 19, Folder 5, IUPUI Special Collections.
Illustration 2.4. Cast of the festival play with Columbia and Germania in the center. American Turners Collection, IUPUI University Library Special Collections and Archives.

In the repetition of the themes of liberty, the Turners stressed their interpretation of being German Americans. This identity was built around the value of the German arts, the German system of athletics, and the political ideals of the Forty-Eighters that contributed to the growth of the United States. The Turners also affirmed their identity as Americans by “choosing” Columbia as Athos had. These themes created a shared identity that helped to unify the Turners, despite their geographic dispersal and generational differences. As in the festival parade, the history and skills they presented gave them validity and a claim to importance.

The Socialer Turnverein’s main contribution to the play was the artistry that contributed to its effect. The ever-flowery Telegraph wrote that “like a highly poetic
painting in a valuable frame, the noble principle that wafts through Turnen will enfold before the audience and delight the senses in its artistic beauty.”²²⁴ Benjamin Schmidt, who played Athos, also said that more than anything, the play would “delight the eye and rest the mind.”²²⁵ The Turners hired companies in Chicago to create a set of an idyllic landscape and supply the costumes. To onlookers, the scenery and costumes ended up being the highlights of the performance.²²⁶ Like the parade, it was an expensive production, but planners hoped that the delights of the presentation would both impress and prove memorable for the audience while reiterating the history and identity of being a Turner in America.

The Socialer Turnverein showed that it was willing to take on risk in order to make its Turnfest the best one yet. This play was one of the first plays ever to be performed at a Turnfest. According to Schmidt, The Glorious Three was such a large production that very few German clubs would be able to stage it. He told the News that “no production of the scale and quality of ‘The Glorious Three’ has ever been attempted by a German theatrical organization in America.”²²⁷ The Socialer Turnverein could enhance its reputation by producing a show-stopper.

The Mass Exercises

On June 24th the athletes readied themselves for the main day of the Turnfest. While the more artistic sides of the festival all had their purpose, Turnen would not be

²²⁶ “Festival Play is Given by Turners,” Indianapolis Star, June 21, 1905; Hartung, “Bericht von Dr. Heinrich Hartung,” 156. According to Heinrich Hartung, a doctor from Chicago who complained about the amateur production, it was the fine scenery and costumes that managed to make the play decent.
what it was without its physical component. On that sunny Saturday, packed streetcars carried spectators to the State Fairgrounds. The Indianapolis public, consisting of many more than its German-American population, swarmed to the fairgrounds en masse. Holding the main events on a Saturday meant that many more spectators would be able to witness the events, and the grandstand filled to standing room only. The audience watched the Turners perform on events such as the parallel and horizontal bars, the long horse, and the track. Women Turners and children of the Turner schools also presented exhibitions such as drills and dance routines. It was a festive atmosphere, with accompanying music, colorful flags, and hearty applause.

The gymnastic exercises were a predominant way to expose professionals to German gymnastics. The NATB invited school and university officials to attend in order to receive greater public recognition and encourage implementation of German gymnastics in schools. The Turners were disappointed that the guests that they most hoped would attend—the superintendents of some of the country’s largest cities—did not. They also marketed to the parents of school children, “that they may see the value of physical training as the Germans follow it.” In order to impress the public and special guests, the Turners knew that they had to create a great showing, and based on precedent, the finale of mass exercises would surely leave them with good memories of the day.

For the crowning event of the day, around 2,000 male Turners gathered along the field to perform a mass drill in unison. Half held yellow dumbbells, the other half metal wands. After emerging from behind a canvas curtain, the athletes took their places to

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great cheers. On the field, their similar gray uniforms gave the Turners a united appearance. The band began to play while Hugo Fischer, the festival director and a teacher of gymnastics at the Socialer Turnverein, called out some of the drills and the Turners followed. In the light of the setting sun “the movements of hundreds of glittering wands resembled a field of tall grass swept over by the wind.” The desired effect of the mass exercises was to be a rousing visual spectacle of grace and discipline in movement.

Illustration 2.5. The right half of the mass exercises. American Turners Collection, IUPUI University Library Special Collections and Archives.

230 After the 1885 Bundesturnfest in Newark, different uniforms led to a report that they caused distraction and that similar uniforms would lead to a more impressive and effective impression, even if in 1905 these uniforms were not the most flattering. “Bericht über das 24. Bundesturnfest in Newark, 1885,” 7, American Turners Collection, Box 19, Folder 1, IUPUI Special Collections; Kindervater, “Bericht von A. E. Kindervater,” 163.
According to reporters, the Turners conveyed this effect to a great extent. The News reporter quoted above was highly impressed at the beautiful sight. Clearly the audience was enraptured as well, some cheering and throwing their hats, others sitting “in their chairs as if spellbound.”\footnote{Ibid.} The whole event did not go off without a hitch, for there were problems with the music and the synchronization of the performers. Among the Turners, there was some disagreement about the success of the mass exercises.\footnote{Hartung, “Bericht von Dr. Heinrich Hartung” 160.} Yet in outside reports, the unforgettable experience the Turners intended to create still emerged.\footnote{“Ein übervältigender Anblick,” Spottvogel, June 25, 1905; “Festival Climax is the Mass Drill, Indianapolis Star, June 25, 1905.}

The athleticism of the Turners was most likely better expressed in the individual exercises earlier in the day. However, the Turners had reasons to present such a visual spectacle to the crowds: entertainment and public relations. They wanted to show their audience (including any critics) the beauty and superiority of the German system of gymnastics, and specifically demonstrate the appeal of mass physical training.\footnote{“The National Festival of the North American Gymnastic Union,” Mind and Body 12 (July 1905), 146.}

Through the mass exercises, they represented themselves as skilled, with a uniform power and grace that was attainable by anyone.

The mass exercises showed the democratic principles of the Turners in action. Turners stressed the accomplishments of a group as a whole rather than an individual. Mass exercises lessened competition and showed a fair representation of standard gymnastic accomplishments. William Stecher, who chaired the gymnastics committee of the festival, wanted education officials to see that mass competitions could be successfully carried out and see “how the weak man can, proportionately, do as much for
the success of his college or school as can the strong man.” The mass exercises and the *Turnfest* were still unique events in American physical culture for which the Turners hoped to receive more recognition.

At the *Twenty-Ninth Bundesturnfest*, the physical was elevated to art. The statues of the four athletes on Monument Circle captured strength and action. The mass exercises showed beauty in motion. As athletes, the Turners showed themselves to the public as disciplined and graceful. They created a mix of the physical and aesthetic by creating visual spectacles of art and movement. Since physicality in itself cannot always express messages, the Turners loaded cultural meaning onto events such as the parade and the *Festspiel*, for which they spared no expense. They hoped that this artistry would demonstrate the appeal of *Turnen* to their members and to new audiences.

During the duration of the 1905 *Turnfest*, the leaders of the *Socialer Turnverein* represented themselves in different capacities based partially upon their audience and what they wished to communicate. To themselves, they were German Americans, enjoying the benefits of two cultures. They tried to build unity among Turners around this identity by declaring its merits, and also conveyed it to Anglo Americans with the desire to receive more recognition for their culture. The participation of the German squad also created the opportunity to build stronger ties between Germany and America, especially through the fraternization of Turners. Perhaps it also led the *Socialer Turnverein* to further reflection on the American side of its identity; to its guests from Germany, the *Socialer Turnverein* wanted to prove that Americans were just as capable of putting on splendid festivals.

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The *Socialer Turnverein*’s leaders also wanted to uphold their reputation as good planners and dynamic actors in the German and Indianapolis communities by putting on a memorable festival. They were capable and cultured, providing socialization, entertainment, and a festival full of appreciation for the visual and the musical. The *Socialer Turnverein*, which was experiencing a thriving club life, could rightly express optimism about the vitality of *Turnen* and proclaim that it was relevant and important. Among visitors to the city, the club represented itself as a proud member of the Indianapolis community. Indianapolis the city had made quite an impression on visiting Turners and its citizens had treated all visitors with great hospitality.²³⁷ The city’s Germans had offered their time and homes. Everyone had crowded to the parade where people of all backgrounds called out and waved to the Turners.²³⁸ Through its presence in the city’s public spaces, the *Turnverein* made the *Bundesturnfest* a celebration for the whole city. In that way the club also depicted Indianapolis as a model city where Germans played prominent roles and worked well with other citizens.

²³⁷ Hartung, “Bericht von Dr. Heinrich Hartung,” 158
Chapter Three

Singing and Socializing: The National Saengerfest of 1908

“In a musical and ethical way such a festival as this is an enlightenment. It will have in Indianapolis its greatest influence on culture in general and will generate better and higher ideals of life.” – Joseph Keller

Three years after the Turnfest, three Indianapolis singing societies, the Maennerchor, the Liederkranz, and the Musikverein, hosted the Thirty-Second National Saengerfest. Of these singing societies, the Maennerchor held an especially prominent role in planning the festival because of the leadership roles of its members in planning committees and its high reputation in the city. For this reason and because of preserved records, the Maennerchor serves as a representative of the Indianapolis singing societies in this inquiry. Planning the festival presented its challenges and forced the festival to be pushed back from 1907 to 1908. However, by its conclusion, the festival had clearly succeeded musically, financially, and socially.

The Indianapolis choirs shared and implemented the musical, social, and political agenda of the national singers association, the North American Saengerbund, but the locals set the tone and setting of the singing festival. Their effective organizing and hospitality reflected well on them and maintained Indianapolis’s positive reputation for hosting festivals. They also wanted to suggest a strong support of German song and German Americans in the city by attracting crowds, decorating the city, collaborating with other German-American clubs, and presenting impressive performances by the local groups. Some of the most pronounced areas of local self-representation found expression in the souvenir publication, the welcoming parade, and the speeches and musical choices of the first concert of the series.

239 “Predict Revival of May Music Festival,” Indianapolis Star, June 20, 1908.
The History of the Indianapolis Maennerchor

The Maennerchor started around 1854 as an ad-hoc group of German immigrants who wanted to sing together and find community with other Germans. These immigrants most likely had encountered singing societies in Germany, where they were quite popular. A year later the Maennerchor began to perform in public. Although they began under modest circumstances, the Maennerchor’s membership grew and rebounded from tumultuous years during the Civil War to host the national Saengerfest in 1867.

Music was at the center of the Maennerchor’s mission. In singing, members found a joy and a love of life that brightened the everyday, and which stirred the senses with its “refined” power. The Maennerchor celebrated these emotional effects as characteristic of their German culture and sensibilities. Song was a cultural aspect of identity that held a deep meaning for the singers because singing was a way for them to enact their conception of what it meant to be German American. They aimed to preserve this part of their culture through their club and also spread the joys of music among other Americans.

Socializing equaled music in its importance to club members. Music sprang forth and gained value from people gathering together. Concerts were not complete without the meals and dancing afterwards. The Maennerchor organized social events, large

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concerts, and celebrations to mark special times, such as their major anniversaries. They were also well known for their masked ball and New Year’s Eve festivals, which were members-only events and costly affairs. The social opportunities and networks with other Germans were attractive elements of singing societies that led many people to join the Maennerchor as supporting “passive” members, who enjoyed the side benefits of club membership without taking part in the music making.

Two Maennerchor anniversary celebrations demonstrate the way that music and socializing joined together. In honor of the Maennerchor’s fortieth anniversary in 1894, a large festival choir and several other singing societies performed in Indianapolis’s Tomlinson Hall. A social event that followed also blended toasts and informal singing. The anniversary week continued with visits around Indianapolis, a festival at German Park, and a summer night festival with drinking, fireworks, singing, and speeches.243

The Maennerchor’s fiftieth anniversary celebration brought in local dignitaries and choirs from other Midwestern cities. A concert with a three-hundred-person men’s choir and five hundred mixed voices performed German songs for an audience of the city’s elite.244 Well wishes came from near—the Indianapolis Turnvereins and other singing societies—and from afar, with German Emperor Wilhelm II sending a gold medallion in their honor. To conclude the celebration, the Maennerchor held a Waldfest (forest festival) at German Park with tableaux such as “Spring on the Rhine” appearing to

243 Kenneth C. Duncan, “40th Anniversary,” Indianapolis Maennerchor Records, Box 1, Folder 53, IUPUI Special Collections.
244 “Goldenes Jubilaeum,” Spottvogel, April 17, 1904; “Das Fest Concert,” Taeglicher Telegraph, June 24, 1904.
fitting musical accompaniment. The club’s financial means allowed them to organize these festivities despite the cost.245

Music transcended ethnic boundaries and political affiliations for singing societies, which was evident in the Maennerchor’s membership. The Maennerchor had no requirements for nationality or language in their bylaws, allowing for supporting members from different backgrounds to join the club.246 Yet German Americans still shaped the organization from the leadership positions, and German remained a primary language, with conducting and singing in German. C. E. Emmerich’s speech for the club’s fiftieth anniversary celebration looked forward to a respectable future if “as before, song and music, the German language and German ways, short, everything that fosters and furthers what is good and praiseworthy in German nature and character” continued.247 That did not mean that members were not patriotic Americans. Emmerich also stressed how important it was for the Germans to contribute the best aspects of their culture to America. It was through the preservation of their German culture that they could be patriotic Americans, helping to improve the country. The club’s leaders felt culturally German and nationally American, although whether younger generations shared the attachment to German culture is unclear. Still, the club presented itself with a hyphenated identity—being both German and American. Stationery showed shields with

245 “Praechtig Ausgeklungen,” Spottvogel, June 19, 1904. “Kostenpunkt Nebensache” (expenses are a minor matter) was the motto for festival.
246 “Constitution und Nebengesetze des Indianapolis Männerchor,” 1897, Maennerchor Collection, Box 1, Folder 1; “Haus-Regeln und Mitglieder-Liste des Indianapolis Männerchor,” (Indianapolis: Gutenberg Co., 1903), Box 1, Folder 40, Maennerchor Collection, IUPUI Special Collections. Many Anglo American names appear on a membership roster from 1903.
247 “…wie bisher, Gesang und Musik, deutsche Sprache und deutsche Art, kurz, alles das pflegt und fördert, was im deutschen Wesen und Charakter gut und lobenswert ist.” “Der Ehrentag des Indpls. Männerchor,” Taeglicher Telegraph, June 24, 1904.
both the American and the German flags, as well as a lyre-playing goddess and a beer stein.\textsuperscript{248}

Maennerchor members were not the only ones who presented themselves with this merged identity. The self-presentation as both German and American fit into the contemporary rhetoric of other German-American organizations, such as the National German-American Alliance. They shared these ideas with the Turners as well. Many leading club Germans wanted to maintain their home culture in order to enrich American culture. Sometimes these beliefs took on missionizing terms, as German Americans believed in the superiority of their social lifestyle and their cultural values that appreciated music and education. Yet the Maennerchor held fewer staunchly progressive political aims than the Turners and it also supported imperial Germany, as evidenced by the commemoration for Bismarck it held in 1898. Its members probably viewed the economic growth of early-twentieth-century Germany with pride and had fewer concerns about the imperialistic policies that troubled some of the other German Americans.\textsuperscript{249} However, the singers’ realm of interest and larger agendas mainly restricted themselves to their mission: furthering music and socializing.

Performing Music in Indianapolis

A love for music pervaded the Maennerchor, and the late nineteenth century represented a time of growth for the club and music in the United States. In this period, musical life in Indianapolis increased and grew more professionalized as more musicians

\textsuperscript{248} Maennerchor stationery made by John Ulrich, Maennerchor Collection, Box 1, Folder 24, IUPUI Special Collections.
\textsuperscript{249} “Bismarck-Gedenkfeier,” Taeglicher Telegraph, September 3, 1898; Dobbert, “German-Americans Between New and Old Fatherland,” 667, 674-5; Luebke, Bonds of Loyalty, 48.
moved to the city and ensembles formed. The sounds of operas, choral works, and symphonies emanated from stages and churches.\textsuperscript{250} Although the city did not yet have its own symphony orchestra, other orchestras, many consisting of German musicians, performed at the beginning of the twentieth century. Organizations, such as the People’s Concert Association, filled the demand for high-quality music in Indianapolis by bringing in acclaimed musicians.\textsuperscript{251} Music making in the city also took other forms, from festive brass bands to vaudeville acts to intimate parlor gatherings. While classical music had increasingly become a designated higher art form, German songs were not only sung on the concert stage but also around the bar table. Sheet music and concert reviews printed every week in the \textit{Spottvogel} attest to a citizenry that had interest in music.

Some successful citywide music festivals in the 1870s and 1880s led to the establishment of the Indianapolis May Music Festivals, modeled after those in Cincinnati.\textsuperscript{252} These public festivals exposed Indianapolis residents to high-quality music and gained support from those within and outside of the German music community. Taking place all but one year between 1889 and 1898, organizers brought in a guest orchestra, such as the Chicago Orchestra, and esteemed soloists. While Indianapolis’s musical scene was growing, its patrons still relied on visiting artists for a more professional musical culture. The shift towards outside stars grew throughout the run of the May Music Festivals, but local talent continued to participate, including a chorus of

\textsuperscript{251} Martha F. Bellinger, “Music in Indianapolis: 1900-1944,” \textit{Indiana Magazine of History} 42 (March 1946), 61, 47.
eight hundred Indianapolis children in 1898. Such musical events built an audience of music patrons that would look forward to the offerings of the *Sängerfeste*.

Germans contributed significantly to vocal music in Indianapolis. The *Maennerchor* was the first choir in the city and led the way in musical achievement, although Anglo-American choirs had also formed in the mid-nineteenth century. When Karl Barus became director of the *Maennerchor* in 1882, he actively shaped the musical development of the organization and took its accomplishments to new levels by staging more complex musical works such as light operas. Franz Bellinger continued the musical development as conductor from 1897 to 1907. In 1908 Louis Ehrgott, leader of several choirs in Cincinnati, filled in as a temporary conductor of the *Maennerchor* and also accepted the role of festival conductor of the *Sängerfeste*. The conductors of the *Maennerchor* held multiple positions and had experiences that allowed them to push the choir’s accomplishments. Guest soloists and visiting singing societies also led to musical exchange and wider and stronger social networks across the country.

Although the *Maennerchor* especially promoted German songs, they remained open to other cultural influences from the larger music scene. In concerts held in the first decade of the twentieth century, they performed German songs celebrating nature or the old homeland by composers such as Karl Attenhofer. The choir and guest soloists also performed works by popular composers from different European backgrounds such as Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Edvard Grieg, and Richard Wagner. Yet they could just as

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256 Programs in Maennerchor Collection, Box 2, Folders 31 and 32, IUPUI Special Collections.
easily switch to American popular music, as evidenced in a minstrels program where decisively non-German songs included “A Picnic for Two” and “Livin’ Easy.”

High Times for Singing Societies

By the first decade of the twentieth century, the Maennerchor was experiencing a golden era with over four hundred active and supporting members. Similarly to the Socialer Turnverein, its leaders were mainly prominent men who helped to ensure that Maennerchor festivities would be grand affairs. Most notable was John Frenzel, who became president of the Maennerchor in 1906. A leading banker also involved in education and politics, Frenzel had high standing in the community. Over the following decades he actively led the Maennerchor and served as the main patron of the organization, funding visiting soloists. The group as a whole reflected a mixture of German-American society in Indianapolis where “the rich merchant sings next to his young assistant, the industrialist next to the worker.” Still, an annual membership of $18 may have limited some from joining (in contrast, the Liederkranz only asked $4 a year and the Musikverein $6). Not all of the members were German, either. The Maennerchor also drew many Anglo-American music lovers, who were supportive members. The fact that admission to Maennerchor concerts was limited to members

257 Indianapolis Maennerchor Minstrels Program, June 1, 1906, Maennerchor Collection, Box 2, Folder 32, IUPUI Special Collections.
only also likely spurred memberships. Together, these demographics point to the positive repute of the *Maennerchor*, which clearly had much to offer both musically and socially to the greater community.

The club’s women’s auxiliary, the *Damenverein*, (organized in 1897) also supported the duties of the *Maennerchor* and served as a social gathering for women. While women could join the mixed choir, they remained separated from other social aspects of the club. The women organized musical programs, events such as the Easter ball, and lectures on artists such as Schumann, Schubert, and Wagner. They also made the first financial contribution to building a new *Maennerchor* Hall.

The *Maennerchor* made its home in the old City Hall on East Washington Street from 1878 until 1907, when the club moved into the completed *Maennerchor* Hall on Illinois and Michigan streets in downtown Indianapolis, not far from the German House. This elegant building boasted a rehearsal space, a bar, and a large hall for concerts and balls. The choir celebrated the opening with concerts and a feast with prominent guests including United States Vice President Charles Fairbanks (a Hoosier and supporting member of the *Maennerchor*) and beloved poet James Whitcomb Riley. The hall allowed the *Maennerchor* to claim a prominent space in the city’s landscape.

Besides the *Maennerchor*, two other German singing societies, the *Liederkranz* and the *Musikverein*, were prominent in 1908. Another German choir, the *Socialistischer Saengerbund*, also existed with the mission to further the labor movement through song. It appeared to perform in different circles than the other choirs, perhaps

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264 Programs in Maennerchor Collection, Box 3, Folder 18, IUPUI Special Collections.
266 Bellinger, “Music 1821-1900,” 352.
because of its political agenda.267 Other societies had also existed in the nineteenth century. These earlier groups had formed and disbanded arising from disputes or unification, as in the case of the Lyra, which had formed from disgruntled members of the Maennerchor and later dissolved.268 Yet it appears as though the choirs primarily maintained friendly relations and supported one another, or at least they intended to during large-scale events where any impeding rivalries that may have existed seem to have been set aside.269

The Liederkranz, a men’s choir formed out of other choirs in 1872, joined the North American Saengerbund in 1874. They, too, held annual celebrations and took part in concerts locally and nationally, where they enjoyed a good reputation. After weathering some disagreements and membership loss during the 1880s, the choir was in a stable phase by 1908 with 60 active members and 250 supporting members, primarily of German background.270

The Musikverein was part of the German Club formed within the German House in 1897. The German Club’s members included many of those in the Socialer Turnverein, although some Turners joined the Maennerchor as well. By 1908, the Musikverein had about sixty singers in the men’s choir, one hundred in the women’s choir, a fifty-five-person orchestra, as well as over six hundred supporting members.271 Under conductor Alexander Ernestinoff, they staged large musical numbers like

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269 “Das Maennerchor-Fest,” *Taeglicher Telegraph*, June 27, 1904.
Giuseppe Verdi’s Requiem, and Georges Bizet’s Carmen and Charles Gounod’s Faust in concert form.\(^{272}\)

**National Celebrations of Song**

All three of the main Indianapolis singing societies were members of the North American Saengerbund (NASB). Midwestern singing societies formed the NASB in 1849 in Cincinnati with the main purpose of organizing singing festivals. Many other regional associations also arose which allowed for easier communication and transportation for regional festivals.\(^{273}\) Although a looser organization at its start, by 1899 the Saengerbund’s aims had expanded to being a “lasting national association for the collective cultivation of German songs, German customs, and the German language, as well as for motivating the patriotism, unification, and fraternization of America’s Germans.”\(^{274}\) Singers from across the country made up the Association’s board. In 1908, President Hanno Deiler lived in New Orleans, whereas other board members lived in cities such as St. Louis or Chicago.\(^{275}\) Indianapolis had representation as well: John Frenzel was treasurer.

Singing festivals furthered the purposes of the NASB and by the twentieth century, these festivals had a clear structure. As written in the organizations’s constitution, every national Saengerfest was required to have two or three national concerts with


\(^{273}\) Snyder, The Männerchor Tradition, 140-142.

\(^{274}\) “dauernder Nationalverband…zur gemeinsamen Pflege des deutschen Liedes, deutscher Sitten und der deutschen Sprache, wie auch zur patriotischen Anregung, Vereinigung und Verbrüderung der Deutschen Amerikas.” Constitution des Nordamerikanischen Sängerbundes, 1899, Maennerchor Collection, Box 3, Folder 20, IUPUI Special Collections (hereafter NASB Constitution).

performances by a mass choir, a choir of the city’s clubs, and other select choirs. There would be no competitions or solo numbers. It was also standard for Saengerfests to have welcoming ceremonies, parades, evening parties, and a picnic.276 A national banquet (Kommers) proved important “for the purpose of social unity, patriotic motivation and fraternization.”277 The national organization, like the individual clubs, stressed music and socializing in an attempt to bring people together.

By 1908, singing society members in Indianapolis acted within a rich tradition of musical celebrations. The Maennerchor participated in Saengerfests at the state and national level beginning in the 1850s.278 Over time they had built connections across the country, traveling to other cities to sing or hosting other choirs in Indianapolis. Musical exchange created bonds and a social network between choirs in the Midwest, and singing festivals strengthened these bonds. In 1867, they also hosted the Fifteenth National Saengerfest. This profitable festival earned support from the whole city and brought in participants from thirty-six singing societies.279 A large, temporary hall with rich ornamentation was built for the performances and the city was likewise decorated.280 The Cincinnati Orchestra and one mass choir performed; otherwise individual choirs took the floor.281 Two decades later, the Indiana Singing Association held its state 1883 Saengerfest in Indianapolis. Organized by the Liederkranz, it featured other singing societies, guest soloists, and a united Indianapolis choir.282 The Maennerchor,

277 NASB Constitution, Article 4, IUPUI Special Collections.
278 Snyder, “The Indianapolis Männerchor,” 117.
279 Stempfel, *Unrelenting Aspirations*, 32, 35
281 Snyder, “The Indianapolis Männerchor,” 121.
Liederkranz, and Musikverein also took part in the Thirty-First National Saengerfest, held in St. Louis in 1903.

At the 1903 Saengerfest, the NASB chose Indianapolis to host the next national festival because its German-American community had a reputation as capable, devoted, and in good standing within the city, “as well as their love of Art and the far famed hospitality of all of the citizens of their beautiful city.”283 These reasons show the high regard given to Indianapolis clubs, as the local delegates actually opposed the selection due to worries about providing a hall for the singers, construction expenses, and the simultaneous work towards the Turnfest.284 But Indianapolis it was, and the local singers could only work to make the event a success despite obstacles. The Saengerfest also had its advantages: it boosted the local economy, provided cultural benefits to the city, and enhanced the city's reputation for hosting festivals.285

The planning of the Saengerfest took place on national and local levels. The national board and a music committee, consisting primarily of choir conductors, decided on the artistic numbers for the festival.286 They also chose the conductors for the festival and had the final say in other matters. A local committee consisted of twenty-five citizens of the hosting city elected by the local societies—in Indianapolis’s case, the Maennerchor, Musikverein, and Liederkranz.287 This committee directly reported to the national board. Some of the main roles of the local committee included managing

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284 "Did Not Want the Convention,” Indianapolis Star, June 22, 1903; “Vom Saengerfest in St. Louis,” Spottvogel, June 21, 1903.
286 NASB Constitution, article 4.
287 Members of the Socialistischer Saengerbund did not take part in organizing the festival, which points to differences among the German-American population.
finances, building or renting a hall for the concerts, organizing a festival orchestra, acquiring housing and transportation deals for visitors, and producing a souvenir book.\textsuperscript{288} Subcommittees divided up these duties and also brought in outside experts. Planning any other events not outlined in the NASB constitution was left up to the local committee. Although planning involved much extra work, it also rewarded the members with honor and respect in the community.\textsuperscript{289}

In mid-November 1905, the NASB held elections for the local committee. August Kuhn, a member of the Maennerchor and German Club who was a wholesale grocer and former president of the Consolidated Coal and Lime Company, was nominated and heartily voted in as president. Fred Mack of the Maennerchor and Joseph Behringer of the Liederkranz were elected vice presidents. Although all three societies had representation on the committee, Maennerchor members were in the majority. After elections “many a glass was emptied to the success of the festival” and few doubted that the festival would be anything less than a success.\textsuperscript{290}

With enthusiasm the music committee worked to put together programs for the concerts. Cincinnati resident and festival conductor Louis Ehrgott and Indianapolis residents John Frenzel, Franz Bellinger, and Alexander Ernestinoff sat on this committee. Since the first singing festival in 1849, the musical selections had evolved from a focus on folk songs sung by choirs to incorporating orchestras, soloists, and a more classical repertoire.\textsuperscript{291} In more recent Saengerfests, guest soloists took the spotlight in the evening.

\textsuperscript{288} NASB Constitution, article 8.
\textsuperscript{289} Snyder,\textit{ The Männerchor Tradition}, 189.
\textsuperscript{290} “manches Glas wurde auf das Gelingen des Festes geleert.” “Die Beamten erwählt,” \textit{Taeglicher Telegraph}, November 14, 1905.
\textsuperscript{291} Snyder,\textit{ The Männerchor Tradition}, 231.
concerts; choirs performed only in the matinees. Yet backlash to the professional and operatic nature of Saengerfests also emerged. Critics believed that these selections diluted the focus on German song. The new NASB constitution passed in 1899 aimed for “the restoration of the real character of these festivals of song and the securing for the mass chorus the prominent place it deserves,” and mandated that concerts must include choirs. The German choirs stood at the center of the concerts, and their training and musicality were to be celebrated.

The music committee reflected the shift back towards German choirs and recommended returning to folk songs for the upcoming Saengerfest. They addressed this consideration again when the national board visited Indianapolis in September 1906 to discuss the concerts. NASB president Hanno Deiler stressed that the primary goal of a singing festival was the cultivation of German folksong. Albrecht Kipp agreed, and believed that “art songs” (Kunstgesang) did not fit in the frameworks of a Saengerfest. Joseph Keller, who had strong connections to the National German-American Alliance, also brought up the topic of furthering German accomplishments. The committee ultimately decided on a mixture of songs, from traditional German songs to larger works with choirs and soloists, although choirs were consistently featured. Festival organizers also showed concern about showcasing the best performances possible from their own societies. The national board had approved John Frenzel’s suggestion of shortening the

292 Ibid., 247.
293 “Synopsis of the History,” 13; NASB Constitution, article 4.
previous program ideas to spare the singers some extra work and get a better performance out of them.\textsuperscript{296}

The committee also wanted truly professional musicians for the \textit{Saengerfest} and contacted different national orchestras and acclaimed soloists about performing.\textsuperscript{297} They finally booked the New York Symphony Orchestra, made up of around one hundred men under conductor Walter Damrosch, which excited many including the \textit{Telegraph} editors, who wrote that “such a large and dignified musical organization as this one has never before been heard in the western states. Damrosch and his huge orchestra of artists and soloists form a musical association that the \textit{Saengerfest} board views with all respect.”\textsuperscript{298}

Damrosch’s orchestra and opera company had appeared several times previously in Indianapolis, but his orchestra had apparently grown in size.\textsuperscript{299} The committee was also excited to get a positive response from the world-famous men’s choir the Vienna \textit{Maenner Gesangsverein}.\textsuperscript{300} The \textit{Telegraph} asserted that these two great musical institutions would provide for a very successful festival that surpassed any other festivals.\textsuperscript{301} Organizers aimed to use star power to create a draw for the festival, even looking beyond the borders of the United States for ensembles that would promise impressive performances.

\textsuperscript{296}“Nordamerikanischer Saengerbund,” \textit{Taeglicher Telegraph}, September 7, 1906.
\textsuperscript{297}“Sitzung der Saengerfestbehoerde,” \textit{Taeglicher Telegraph}, November 13, 1906.
\textsuperscript{301}“Saengerfest-Behoerde in Sitzung,” \textit{Taeglicher Telegraph}, December 11, 1906.
Planning the *Saengerfest*

By the end of 1906 plans seemed to be on target for the festival to take place in summer 1907. However, the construction of a hall for the concerts turned into a major problem for the committee. Building a hall was typical for *Saengerfest*, although they were often temporary structures. The *Saengerfest* committee decided to support the plan of the city administration to build a new city hall and auditorium on the site of the Indianapolis City Market. The committee would help pay for some of the construction costs, while the city and other citizens would cover the rest.\(^{302}\) In October 1906 the architects allayed any concerns that the hall would not be finished in time.\(^{303}\) However, three months later the planners came up against a wall as contractor bids and other litigation against the city complicated and slowed down the process. The hall would not be ready in time.

This delay was a debacle for the *Saengerfest* committee, and the planners debated whether they could build a temporary hall in time for the festival. This debate was of absolute importance, since over one hundred clubs had already confirmed their attendance. The worries of the club also reveal what was at stake for this festival, namely, its reputation.\(^{304}\) After debating with the mayor and other officials, it appeared that there would be no quick solution and building a temporary hall would be impossible. With no other way out, the committee asked the national board for a year’s postponement, and for the chance to continue planning the festival in Indianapolis, despite bids from Chicago.\(^{305}\)

\(^{302}\) “Coliseum This Year,” *Indianapolis Star*, April 18, 1906.


\(^{304}\) “Sitzung der Festbehoerde,” *Taeglicher Telegraph*, January 22, 1907.

\(^{305}\) “Change Saengerfest Date,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 20, 1907.
To their relief, the board granted their wishes. The main consequence was that the Viennese choir would no longer be able to attend.

With the hall’s future held up in court, the executive committee continued to deliberate on steps forward, including the possibility of a temporary hall. The Telegraph urged all Germans to come together to assist the singers in this daunting task, as there was no going back and the reputation of the city’s German Americans was on the line.³⁰⁶ Luckily for the committee and their pocketbooks, a solution soon presented itself in the form of the livestock pavilion on the State Fairgrounds. The festival committee contacted with the State Board of Agriculture to use the pavilion.³⁰⁷ Once the pavilion opened in the fall of 1907, it was one of the largest buildings in the state, with the ability to seat 5,000.³⁰⁸ The singers saw this contract as a boon and no longer had to worry about raising construction funds, although the State Board of Agriculture made sure that they too would profit from the event.³⁰⁹ The street car company promised to assist with transportation to the Fairgrounds, located to the north of the city, and the ride there would show off “the nicest neighborhoods of Indianapolis.”³¹⁰ Committee officials also negotiated with the mayor so that electrical wires would be extended up to the State Fairgrounds for the event.³¹¹ The festival committee turned the hall dilemma into a marketing advantage, extolling the features of the pavilion, called the Coliseum, and its superior acoustics.

³⁰⁶ “Ehrensache des hiesigen Deutschthums,” Telegraph und Tribuene, June 29, 1907.
³⁰⁷ “Saengerfestalle gesichert,” Telegraph und Tribuene, July 9, 1907.
³⁰⁸ “New Era to Dawn with State Fair,” Indianapolis Star, September 8, 1907.
³¹¹ “Hallen-Comite,” Taeglicher Telegraph und Tribuene, February 7, 1908
The dealings for securing a hall demonstrate the strong official support behind the *Saengerfest*. Indianapolis Mayor Charles A. Bookwalter wanted to guarantee a place for the singers because “the city can not afford to allow the opportunity to pass by of entertaining such a gathering of men.”\(^{312}\) Besides the honor of hosting, Indianapolis would commercially benefit from the estimated 25,000 to 30,000 incoming guests.\(^{313}\) The local committee reached out to and received support from many different organizations to ensure the proper infrastructure was in place. Their ability to act within the political structures of the city demonstrates the good standing the singing societies and their members had in the community at large.

The festival organizers also depended on the support of their own German community. The local committee visited the Indianapolis singing societies to drum up enthusiasm amongst the members and ensure that all were united behind the festival’s success. Richard Lieber, who worked for a liquor dealer and later became a leading conservationist, made reference to the *Turnfest*, which had boosted the public image of the Germans in the city. He wanted the *Saengerfest* to have a similar outcome and urged the singers to “hold a *Saengerfest* in which they would remain as a memory for all time in the hearts of music lovers of all nations, and which will redound to the honor of the Germans in the city and country.” Lieber also stressed that success depended on the support of the supporting and active members.\(^{314}\) Although the specific form that support

\(^{312}\) “Meeting is Assured,” *Indianapolis Star*, January 22, 1907; “Haus-Regeln und Mitglieder-Liste des Indianapolis Mâennerchor,” IUPUI Special Collections. In a 1903 list of Maennerchor members, Charles Bookwalter was recorded as a passive member of the Maennerchor and therefore may have been slightly biased on a personal level as well.

\(^{313}\) “Alle sind zufrieden,” *Telegraph und Tribuene*, June 18, 1908; “German Singers are Coming to Town,” *Indianapolis News*, June 16, 1908.

would take remains unclear, other club members surely aided the committee in carrying out their plans and several joined subcommittees.\textsuperscript{315}

While plans for the \textit{Saengerfest} were taking place, other current events also occupied the city’s German population. In particular, the strengthening prohibition movement, whose supporters had been growing more vocal throughout the decade, concerned them. The more progressive German clubs viewed prohibition as a limitation on their personal freedoms, as alcohol was an integral part of social functions, and the State Association of German Clubs called on citizens to use the voting booth to their advantage.\textsuperscript{316} In 1907 the reverend of a local church distributed a letter attacking German citizenship and morals, including their “beastly drinking” on German Day.\textsuperscript{317} This letter caused quite a stir among many Germans, who protested it. They did not appear to hide or alter their drinking habits, but instead pointed to the fact that their drinking did not lead to unruliness. Although not directly stated, preparing for the \textit{Saengerfest} also meant stocking up on alcoholic beverages. The singers did not plan to let prohibitionists alter their socialization in any way.\textsuperscript{318}

Work on the \textit{Saengerfest} continued into 1908, and by April plans were coming together. The newspapers promised “a Maennerchor of 2,500 singers, a strong mixed choir, a children’s chorus of 2,000 voices, the one hundred-man strong New York Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Walter Damrosch” and “many soloists of

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\textsuperscript{317} “Gebuehrende Abfertigung,” \textit{Telegraph und Tribuene}, August 14, 1907.

\textsuperscript{318} \textit{Das Deutsche Lied} 7 (April 1908), 9; “Dine at German House,” \textit{Indianapolis Star}, June 20, 1908. This statement is evidenced through the many advertisements for bars directed to visitors and reports of late-night socializing.

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international acclaim like Mrs. Schumann-Heink, Mrs. Marie Rappold, David Bispham and Adolf Muehlmann."319 Although choirs in Germany would be occupied with the German singing festival around the time of the American festival and unable to attend, singers from 122 singing societies in twenty-nine American cities planned to participate during the week of June 15, 1908.

Decorations and Publications

The Indianapolis Saengerfest was a musical event not only for the city, but also for the region. Music lovers from across Indiana and neighboring states expressed interest in the Saengerfest, which demonstrates the importance of the festival for advancing music in the Midwest.320 The organizers of the Saengerfest promoted the festival beyond Indianapolis’s borders with help from the local media. The Gutenberg Company, publisher of the Taeglicher Telegraph und Tribuene, produced a special festival issue that introduced Indianapolis’s German societies and illustrated some of the city’s prominent men and local attractions.321 This issue appeared several weeks before the festival as a form of publicity for Indianapolis residents to send to friends and family living elsewhere.322 Fittingly, the issue goes beyond praise for the musical offerings of the festival to illustrate the charms of the host city. Although the Gutenberg Company published it without sponsorship from the singers, the city’s German clubs participated in this effort, ordering copies to distribute amongst their members who might then pass

320 “West Will Come to Saengerfest,” Indianapolis Star, May 24, 1908.
321 “Sängerfest des Nord-Amerikanischen Sänger-bundes: Fest-Gruss von Telegraph und Tribüne, Indianapolis” Oscar F. Frenzel Collection, Mss 70, Box 30, Folder 6, IUPUI Special Collections.
them along.\textsuperscript{323} Besides the festival, the issue also publicized the various social clubs. It is unclear how many outside of Indianapolis actually read this issue, but its contents present Indianapolis to outside audiences as a destination full of stately buildings and home to lively German-American communities. Advertisements also appeared in the official newsletter of the NASB, \textit{Das Deutsche Lied}, among a smattering of advertisements from local bars and locales hoping to profit from the festival and revealing the social draw of the \textit{Saengerfest}.\textsuperscript{324} Local pride found many expressions in media around the \textit{Saengerfest}.

The organizers of the \textit{Saengerfest} charged all Indianapolis German-Americans with aiding them in promoting the festival. Nearing the concert, the Gutenberg Company drummed up interest for the festival among the local population in its newspapers. The \textit{Spottvogel} carried biographies of the conductors and soloists, and printed text of some of the songs featured on the concert programs.\textsuperscript{325} The festival committee also promoted the \textit{Saengerfest} in the local newspapers and printed flyers that advertised that the festival’s “greatness…will not be merely in size but in quality.”\textsuperscript{326} The English papers also covered the event, printed publicity shots of organizers, and followed the progress of the concert rehearsals.\textsuperscript{327} These English newspapers were vital in spreading the word, and the press committee included representatives from the \textit{Sun} and the \textit{News}. The singing societies wanted to bring in many Anglo-American audiences and appealed to them through promises of spectacle and musical excellence.

\textsuperscript{324} \textit{Das Deutsche Lied} 7 (April 1908), 9.
\textsuperscript{326} “Thirty-Second National Music Festival of the North American Saengerbund,” Maennerchor Collection, Box 3, Folder 21, IUPUI Special Collections.
\textsuperscript{327} “Training the Indianapolis Mixed Chorus,” “City’s Saengerfest Dress,” \textit{Indianapolis News}, June 10, 1908.
The Saengerfest was a highly anticipated event that drew interest from well beyond the German-American communities and from different social classes. Like the Turnfest, it is unclear what proportion of the “church” German population took part in the events, but music surely transcended social divisions. Tickets went on sale a week before the festival’s begin. On the first day of ticket sales, long lines stretched from the box office set up at the English Opera House, some even staking out spots before dawn.328 All the boxes, which for all five concerts cost between $75 and $100, sold out before the concerts. Fittingly, some of the top names of Indianapolis bought these seats, including Vice President Fairbanks, J. K. Lilly of Eli Lilly and Company, and plenty of the prominent club Germans, many directly involved with the festival committees.329 While the Saengerfest would take place at the same time as the Republican National Convention, which could have decreased the audience for the festival, there was still large enough demand for the best seats.330 On the other end of the spectrum, admission and a reserved seat for five concerts cost five or ten dollars; for one concert it cost one or two dollars or, for standing room only, fifty cents.331 Based on ticket sales, the concerts looked as though they would earn a profit.332 Ticket sales even broke the record for all previous shows in Indianapolis.333 The committee had hired Ona B. Talbot as the finance secretary to manage finances and ticket sales.334 Talbot had organized many other

329 “Alle Logen besetzt,” Spottvogel, June 14, 1908.
332 “Erfolg kann nicht fehlen,” Telegraph und Tribuene, June 16, 1908. “Grand Feature of Festival Revealed,” Indianapolis News, June 19, 1908. The festival did indeed earn a larger than normal profit. Early estimates ranged from between $10,000 to $15,000.
333 “Indianapolis Ready to Welcome Singers,” Indianapolis Star, June 16, 1908.
334 “Saengerfest Behoerde,” Telegraph und Tribuene, March 6, 1908.
musical events in the city, and her work shows the professionalization and organization behind the festival.

Once the week of the festival arrived, the committees met in order to confirm that everything was in order. They looked ahead to the arrival of the guests and were relieved that plans were secured to the finest detail and running smoothly.\footnote{335} During the week, the committee drummed up support for the festival and sought to involve the whole city in the celebrations. Paul Krauss, chairman of the entertainment committee, said that “the entire population of Indianapolis… will constitute one big entertainment committee,” referencing the hospitality to all visitors.\footnote{336} By hosting such a public festival, the planners also allowed to whole city to witness the strength of the German-American community.

Leading up to the festival, the city once again took on a festive appearance and the stars and stripes flew throughout downtown in “undulating streams of color.”\footnote{337} The decorations committee made a very thorough plan for the decoration of twenty-eight city blocks.\footnote{338} They called on citizens to decorate their homes and businesses, as Indianapolis needed to show off to its visitors, and decorations also appealed to local residents.\footnote{339} Stores like Kipp Brothers and Charles Mayer & Co. advertised official Saengerfest flags in red and white, as well as American and German flags.\footnote{340} These flags showed off the identities of the group as a club and an ethnicity. Members of the German House and the Maennerchor also worked to spruce up their halls, the German House even employing a
The work would pay off, as the *Telegraph* commented that guests appeared to be astounded at the extravagant amount of decorations.\(^\text{342}\) The organizers wanted to leave a memorable and impressive impression of their city and the festival to both residents and visitors.

In Monument Circle, the singers erected a welcome arch that also honored music. Designed by Rudolph Schwarz, the arch had four columns. On top stood Euterpe, the muse of music, who seemed to correspond with the figure of victory on the Soldiers and Sailors Monument behind her. Garlands decorated the arch’s curves, a welcome sign greeted the visitors, and electric lights illuminated it in the evenings.\(^\text{343}\) Its location in the heart of downtown Indianapolis surely represented the importance Indianapolis bestowed on the *Saengerfest* and also drew visitors to the monumental heart of the city.

The press and publishing committee, headed by Richard Lieber, also produced a colorful souvenir book for the festival. Lieber compiled the book as a keepsake that aimed to inform visitors about Indianapolis and provide memories of the festival. He most likely conceived the audience for this book to be the German guests, since most of the work is in German. With articles, programs, photographs of local club halls, reproductions of paintings by Hoosier artists, and muses of song illustrated by local high school students, the book was informative and artistically appealing. It showed off the artistic accomplishments of Indianapolis residents and celebrated singing, epitomized by the inclusion of an ode to music by James Whitcomb Riley.

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\(^\text{341}\) “Plenty of Welcome for Saengerfest Visitors,” *Indianapolis News*, June 12, 1908.
\(^\text{342}\) “Einzug der Saenger,” *Telegraph und Tribuene*, June 17, 1908.
\(^\text{343}\) “Triumphbogen fuer das Saengerfest,” *Spottvogel*, May 17, 1908.
Illustration 3.1. A postcard from the Saengerfest depicting Maennerchor Hall, the Coliseum (Fest-Halle), the German House, the Triumphal Arch, and the Soldiers and Sailors Monument.
Maennerchor Collection, IUPUI University Library Special Collections and Archives

In the souvenir book, Indianapolis German Americans represented themselves as an important part of their city’s cultural life. The German greeting from festival president August Kuhn reflected on the event and repeated the pride he and others had for German song and how it remained as an anchor for a good German-American citizen. Articles informed readers about the history of singing societies in Europe and America, the city of Indianapolis (written by the mayor), musical life in the city, the three hosting singing societies, and the three local Turnvereins. Ona Talbot’s history of musical life in Indianapolis credited the Germans with laying “the foundations of musical appreciation”
in the city.\textsuperscript{344} In a first-person essay on Germans in Indianapolis, Philip Rappaport praised the “social activity” that went into the building of many magnificent clubhouses and the hosting of large festivals.\textsuperscript{345} While Kuhn’s article expressed a unifying message for German-American singers, the other essays revealed the distinct characteristics of the Indianapolis Germans.

The Parade

On Wednesday, June 17, 1908, the festival opened with a homage to the flag of the North American \textit{Saengerbund} that included a parade and welcoming speeches. The organizers had decided against staging a full parade with all participating singing societies on the first day, as the visitors were surely tired from traveling. Instead, representative flags for societies would march in the “flag forest.” The parade was on a much smaller scale than that of the 1905 \textit{Turnfest}, with only two sections, but “it made up in splendor what it lacked in length.”\textsuperscript{346} The marchers aimed to inspire visual and musical delight, with two bands playing as well as the flags flying. In the morning, the reception committee and an accompanying band waiting at the train station met the incoming singers and escorted them to the headquarters at Tomlinson Hall, taking them through Monument Circle on the way there. If it was not yet clear, the city now knew that the singing festival was in town.

At 3:00 p.m., the marchers set out along Washington Street. They circled around the Indiana Statehouse and then retraced their steps until reaching Meridian Street and processing under the welcome arch into Monument Circle. The parade included a

\textsuperscript{344} Talbot, “A Sketch of Musical Life,” 54.
\textsuperscript{345} Rappaport, “Das Deutschthum von Indianapolis,” 27-29.
\textsuperscript{346} “Festival Opens in a Blaze of Glory,” \textit{Indianapolis Star}, June 18, 1908.
colorful swath of around 160 flags, with the flag bearers and their escorts wearing sashes in American and German colors. After the dignitaries at the head of the parade came the flags of Indianapolis’s singing societies followed by those of the out-of-town societies. With the waving of the large flags and the flittering of small flags hung overhead, German and English press reporters agreed “it was a sight that in its overwhelming power can barely be put to words” and “an inspiring spectacle.”

Next, pulled by several horses, came the float bearing the official flag of the National Saengerbund, accompanied by uniformed guards on horseback (refer to illustration 3.2). The float, designed by architect Anton Scherrer, consisted of a large raised platform that rose to a higher level in the back. Garlands and shields decorated the sides, and the edges burst with ferns, palms, and ivy. In the back, highest of all, stood a woman dressed as Germania holding the Saengerbund flag. Other young women portrayed figures from German folk songs, such as the lorelei, while young Turners wore the medieval costumes of meistersingers. Below girls in white dresses held palms as signs of peace and harmony and the songs of youth. The commanding float honored German song. The connection of these songs to Germany was not lost, as the figures and singers surrounded the central figure of Germania.

349 Ibid. (both articles)
In the parade’s second section, the flag of the North American *Turnerbund* (kept in Indianapolis) and the United German Clubs of Indianapolis appeared along with those of the other German clubs in Indianapolis. Indianapolis’s prominent Turner societies showed off for the visitors in their uniforms. For the first time ever, the Turner flag flew along with that of the singers.\(^{350}\) This special event points to the close connection of Turners and singers in Indianapolis and a striving to create greater unity and friendship between these two strong German institutions. Their inclusion made this parade more than a celebration of singing societies but that of German Americans. As Hanno Deiler emphasized in his speech that day, both organizations strove towards higher ideals for their ethnicity, and he offered cheers to them both. The State Association of German Clubs, of whom all three singing societies were members, had called for Germans to stick

together for strength in numbers. The *Saengerfest* served as a way to unify not only the singers, but the entire German-American club community.\(^{351}\)

The marchers arrived in Monument Circle to the accompaniment of “Die Wacht am Rhein” (The Watch on the Rhine), a German patriotic song, and joined the singers of the mass choir and other officials on the steps of the monument. Once the float parked in front of monument, all waved their flags while the music ensemble played a fanfare, followed by a singing of the “Bundeslied,” a song of brotherhood with “harmonies of friendship.”\(^{352}\) In German, Hanno Deiler spoke to the crowd, reaffirming the efforts of the singing societies to continue the bonds of Germans in America and further German music and language. He especially addressed the singers present, perhaps to remind them of these deeper reasons behind the entertainment and joy caused by the festival.\(^{353}\)

The event finished to the singing of “America” in English with musical accompaniment. The melody of “America” emanated through the city streets, although the event had already attracted a large crowd, estimated to be around 50,000 people.\(^{354}\) “America” was a song that everyone present could understand, showing the uniting force of music. Up until that point, the language of songs and speeches had been in German, but the singers wanted to finish by affirming their American identity not only to themselves but to those present.

\(^{351}\) “Aufruf an die Deutsch-Amerikanischen Bürger Indiana’s,” *Telegraph und Tribuene*, March 14, 1908.

\(^{352}\) “Unsrer Freundschaft Harmonien dauern ewig fest und schön.” *Liederbuch des Deutschen Sängerbundes* (Leipzig: C.G. Röder GmbH, n.d.). I have found two different versions of the “Bundeslied,” but believe it was the version scored by Mozart, as found in two songbooks held in the Maennerchor collection, Box 2, Folders 5 and 6, IUPUI Special Collections.


\(^{354}\) “Festival Opens in a Blaze of Glory,” *Indianapolis Star*, June 18, 1908.
The Saengerfest in Indianapolis went beyond a celebration of singing in an attempt to unify German Americans during a time when many Germans perceived threats to maintaining their cultural traditions. Festival organizers highlighted this effort of gaining strength through unity by including several of Indianapolis’s varied German clubs in its celebration. To the audience, the parade displayed a grandeur and unity that, while connecting to German culture, left the message that the singers were also very much patriotic Americans.

The Festival Concerts

The musical program of the Saengerfest consisted of five concerts: three major evening performances, and two matinees. All took place at the Coliseum at the State Fairgrounds. Most concerts followed a similar format, beginning with an orchestral interlude by the New York Symphony Orchestra, followed by the songs of a Maennerchor. Orchestral pieces were interspersed with choir pieces, and each concert showcased the talents of at least one soloist. The concerts differentiated in their performers and content. The evening concerts all featured major choral works accompanied by the orchestra. The most impressive mass choirs also sang in the evenings. These large choirs not only created impressive musical performances, but also allowed for many to partake the unifying and honorable experience. However, the matinees also promised to offer a high-quality musical experience with talented soloists.

The organizers could boast top talent for the Saengerfest and the chance to hear new artists. During the course of the concerts, four soloists performed: bass David Bispham, baritone Adolf Muehlmann, soprano Marie Rappold, and contralto Ernestine
Schumann-Heink. While Bispham and Schumann-Heink had sung before in Indianapolis, the other soloists made their first appearances in the city during the *Saengerfest*. Marie Rappold had the honor of performing in the first and last concerts. All of the soloists performed at the top of their profession, although Rappold was relatively new to the scene. Each soloist was either a current or former member of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, and Muehlmann and Schumann-Heink also had many European performances behind them.\(^355\) The soloists came from different backgrounds, but the *Saengerfest* committee apparently believed that first-class performances that could spread the German value for music were more important than the soloists’ ethnicities. The caliber of the soloists may be one reason that ticket sales exceeded expectations.

The musicians and their music were to be the main attractions of the festival and distracting visuals inside of the Coliseum were unneeded. The stage remained plain, with a white background.\(^356\) The decorators put up lights above the stage that cast the singers in a “halo of light,” while also providing shades so that “the audience would not be blinded by the dazzling brilliancy.”\(^357\) Although music was the main draw of the concerts, the audience would not forget the German-American nature of the event either. Around the wide space of the Coliseum hung shields with the names of participating cities and American and German flags. The visiting societies’ flags had also been moved to the hall after the parade. These flags added extra color to the otherwise sparse metal beams of the


\(^{356}\) Ibid.; “Indianapolis schmueckt sich,” *Spottvogel*, June 14, 1908.

\(^{357}\) “Illumination Tested at the Colosseum,” *Indianapolis News*, June 11, 1908.
interior. Together with the building’s other features and superb acoustic properties, organizers advertised that “no auditorium in the country surpasses its essential qualifications.” Offering a high quality setting could boost the esteem of the concert’s organizers, especially following the problems securing the hall.

The State Fairgrounds prepared itself for the audience of approximately 8,000 expected for each concert. Streetcars ran at a half-minute frequency and there was space for parking wagons and automobiles. The grounds offered telegraph wires and telephones for reporters, and the new electrical set up of the area was likely novel. The Fairgrounds also turned into a scene of socializing based on a model found in Germany. Pavilions provided food and rest for those who wished to remain between the matinee and evening performance. On hot summer days, cool drinks sold quickly. There was no special fee to visit the Fairgrounds, and it appears as if it simply became a destination for Indianapolis residents.

The first concert of the Saengerfest, on June 17th, was the welcoming concert, called the “Festival Concert of the City of Indianapolis.” This concert was the most important to the local singing societies because it was they who would be performing, and they intended to show the state of Indianapolis’s musical progress. Indianapolis, represented in full force by a large choir, would “have the opportunity to demonstrate the extent to which it embraces and supports the arts.”

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360 “Fuer das Saengerfest,” Telegraph und Tribuene, February 26, 1908.
competitive aspect of *Saengerfests*, the choirs expected to be well-rehearsed and professional sounding.

Alexander Ernestinoff conducted the Indianapolis choirs for the first concert. Ernestinoff had long been engaged with German singing societies. He had led the *Musikverein* since its beginning and had previously conducted the *Maennerchor* and *Liederkranz*. The *Saengerfest* program commented that “Ernestinoff’s strength lies in his universality. With equal ease he handles chorus or orchestra, concert or opera.” 362 Those who sang under Ernestinoff truly appreciated his leadership and musicality and it would be an honor for him to represent Indianapolis and conduct at the *Saengerfest*.

Rehearsals for the concert had begun in April. The mixed choir of several hundred singers drew from members of the *Maennerchor*, *Musikverein*, and *Liederkranz*. In order to fill all spots the organizers also sought out other singers in the German community, especially other women. Including women in *Saengerfest* concerts was relatively new, but allowed for the performance of more majestic numbers. 363 Ernestinoff and the organizers held high standards for the singers, who were not allowed to miss many of the weekly rehearsals and encouraged to put effort into learning their parts. 364 Those who participated had the honor of contributing to “Indianapolis’ fame as a city where song is highly cultivated.” 365 By dress rehearsals the conductor and singers alike were pleased; Indianapolis would be ready to sing at its best. 366

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364 “Proben fuer das Saengerfest,” *Spottvogel*, May 17, 1908.
Illustration 3.3, *Saengerfest* Matinee Concert

On that warm June evening, the large crowd dressed in their finery swarmed into the Coliseum, found their places, and waited in anticipation for Damrosch to raise his baton. The Coliseum’s prime acoustics meant that there was not a bad seat in the house.\(^{367}\) The concert began softly, with quiet timpani rolls and a marked rhythm in the low strings over which the violas introduced a somber, subdued Slavic melody. The melody passed through the orchestra, gradually building into a frenzied interplay between strings, winds, and percussion that ended with a bang. Tchaikovsky’s *Marche Slave*, a familiar piece to many, grandly opened the concert and roused the crowd.

The atmosphere changed for the next song, a lively ode to the woods sung a cappella by a choir of Indianapolis singers.\(^{368}\) Marie Rappold made her debut next in an aria from *Tannhauser*, by Richard Wagner. The New York Symphony continued with two songs from another Wagner opera, *Die Meistersinger*. The *Telegraph and Tribuene* noted that this opera was devoted to German song.\(^{369}\) The opera’s thematic content and the popularity of Wagner made it a solid choice for a *Saengerfest*, which also aimed to

\(^{367}\) “*Saengerfestwoche begonnen*,” *Telegraph und Tribuene*, June 14, 1908; “Seven Thousand at First Concert,” *Indianapolis Star*, June 18, 1908.


\(^{369}\) “Das erste Concert,” *Telegraph und Tribuene*, June 16, 1908.
celebrate German music. The United Singers of Cincinnati next came to the stage to perform another song dedicated to the woods, before the Symphony returned to finish the first half with *Les Preludes* by Liszt.\(^{370}\)

After the intermission, the mass choir of Indianapolis took its place to loud cheers. The men in their suits and women in their white dresses filled the space both visually and aurally. Together with three soloists they presented the highlight of the concert, *Das Feuerkreuz* (The Cross of Fire), by Max Bruch. The story of the Lady of the Lake, inspired by Bruch’s travels in Scotland, unfolded through the music.\(^{371}\) This performance made an impression on those listening; at its conclusion, the crowds applauded wildly for the choir and Alexander Ernestinoff, the celebrated local conductor.

Befitting a welcome concert, the ending featured speeches by dignitaries. After remarks by Vice President Fairbanks (in place of Mayor Bookwalter who was held up in Chicago), Hanno Deiler and August Kuhn spoke, both in German. Kuhn, as a representative of the Indianapolis German-American singers, welcomed guests, expressing his hope that they would leave the city with fond memories, and shared thanks for the locals who had worked so hard to make the festival a success. Song, he continued, would contribute to a higher culture and “resonate in the hearts of the entire local population….Even if our fellow Anglo-American citizens cannot speak German, we will be satisfied if they learn to feel German, and they learn that the best through German song, the language of the heart, that everyone understands.”\(^{372}\) The speeches reaffirmed

\(^{370}\) Ibid.
\(^{371}\) Ibid.
\(^{372}\) “Es ist uns dieses Entgegenkommen ein Beweis, daß unser Streben nach höheren Idealen, entrückt von der Prosa des Alltagslebens anerkannt wird und Widerhall findet in den Herzen der ganzen hiesigen Bevölkerung….Wenn unsere Anglo-Amerikanischen Mitbürger auch nicht Deutsch sprechen können; wir geben uns zufrieden, wenn sie deutsch fühlen lernen, und das lernen sie am besten durch das ‘Deutsche
the musical contributions of Germans to their “new home” in order to improve life for all Americans. Kuhn also reflected with pride that concerts showcased the striving towards “perfection in song…without leaving socialization out of the picture.” His speech shows that the Saengerfest not only celebrated music, but also the values of German-Americans singers and local citizens. A final salute to “German song,” and the handing over of the NASB flag from St. Louis to Indianapolis concluded the official part of the evening. Yet the night was still young. Although 11:30 p.m. by the time the speeches finished, singers and guests returned downtown for more music and socializing at the German House, Maennerchor Hall, and other venues.

The subsequent four concerts followed a similar framework to the opening concert. The mass male choir of 2,500 singers drawn from the nation’s singing societies, including about 250 from Indianapolis, performed major choral works on Thursday and Friday evenings. Louis Ehrgott served as conductor for the mass choir. These singers had also undergone rigorous rehearsals, as Ehrgott had traveled from city to city to rehearse participants. Even when the audience knew the songs performed, to hear them sung by so many voices created an emotional response for many. Thursday evening featured choral works, including “Mother Love,” by Voigt which “Mr. Ehrgott was forced to repeat” so “instantaneous and great was the applause.” The mass choir provided an auditory spectacle and a unifying experience for the singers.

Lied’, die Herzenssprache, die Jedermann versteht.” “Der erste Festtag,” Telegraph und Tribuene, June 18, 1908.
373 “die hoechste Spitze der Vollkommenheit im Gesang zu erreichen bestrebt ist, ohne jedoch die Geselligkeit aus dem Auge zu lassen.” Ibid.
During the day, singers who were not performing had time to socialize or sightsee around the city.\(^\text{375}\) However, the matinee concerts also proved to be popular. Ernestine Schumann-Heink was one of the most popular female soloists at the time, and her star power drew thousands of fans to the Thursday afternoon concert.\(^\text{376}\) On Friday a children’s choir of 1,600 Indianapolis students performed “Into the World” by Peter Benoit. This choir had been organized and rehearsed by Edward Bailey Birge, Director of Music in Indianapolis Public Schools. Children’s choirs were popular at the time and had also been introduced in the 1893 Saengerfest. However, this singing festival presented an accomplishment in that they sang a complicated piece rather than the standard patriotic song.\(^\text{377}\) Involving the city’s children was an effective means of public relations, because it would expose children and their families to music and the work of the German singing societies. Birge, Frenzel, and others hoped that the children’s chorus would continue after the festival.

On Friday evening, the singing of America with the mass choir, orchestra, and the largest audience yet concluded the last concert. “Like thunder that rolled over the pavilion the mighty sweep of the song seemed measureless in its strength, like the exultation of the storm,” wrote the Star.\(^\text{378}\) The crowd was already enthused from the earlier performances that evening, when they had demanded encores with fervent applause and ovations for several popular selections. The German Americans joined in

\(^{375}\) “Bring Money to Burn,” Indianapolis Star, June 19, 1908.
\(^{377}\) “Children’s Chorus Achieves Triumph,” Indianapolis Star, June 20, 1908; Snyder, The Männerchor Tradition, 254.
\(^{378}\) “Saengerfest Ends in Thunderous Tones,” Indianapolis Star, June 20, 1908.
the common patriotic sentiments of their time and affirmed the festival as being both German and American.

Throughout the Saengerfest concerts, the festival organizers found a balance of satisfying varying audiences, ensuring that the concerts proved highly enjoyable and financially successful for listeners and organizers. Serious works by the soloists and mass choirs provided star power and professionalism and popular classical tunes served as crowd pleasers. The organizers also built on traditions and more recent changes that had proven popular, such as the children’s choir. Most of the songs the choirs sang were found in compilations of German songs owned by clubs such as the Maennerchor. Old favorites like the “Loreley” or “Der Jaeger Abschied” would have a pleasant familiarity to the many Germans in the audience. Yet the setting and instrumentation of the songs would elevate them to new heights and affect those who heard them for the first time as well. If the Germans wanted to be cultural missionaries, as Kuhn had expressed, they had reached their goal. The choirs were well rehearsed and supported the belief that Germans helped to spread song. The festivals had also created a greater enthusiasm for music in the city that the German Americans hoped would continue.

As the festival drew to a close after the Waldfest (forest festival), visiting singers departed while Indianapolis residents returned to the rhythms of daily life. The Germans celebrated their success at creating a festival where a “harmony of sounds and festival joy ruled,” and, in their opinion, surpassed previous festivals. Masses of crowds had taken in the concerts and made the festival profitable financially and in the sense of boosting music appreciation in the city.

379 Songbooks held in the Maennerchor Collection, IUPUI Special Collections.
380 Editorial, Telegraph und Tribuene, June 22, 1908.
During the Saengerfest, leading members of the Maennerchor conveyed multiple identities as German Americans, singers, and Hoosiers. By proclaiming the importance of German culture to themselves and the public, they hoped to unify their own ranks and spread the importance of music to other audiences. Yet they also expressed patriotism, reiterating that the United States was their home now and that, by cultivating their German traditions of song, they contributed to its cultural development in significant ways. While the Saengerfest joined singing societies from across the country together to reaffirm shared aspirations, the Maennerchor still distinguished itself through local pride. Planners wanted to retain their nation-wide reputation for Hoosier hospitality and successful festivals. The Maennerchor also hoped to demonstrate that German-American culture was alive and well in Indianapolis by performing skillfully sung musical numbers and by creating a festive, social spirit.
Conclusion

This study set out to understand the ethnic identities of German Americans in Indianapolis by analyzing how they represented and expressed themselves in the planning of festivals. Festivals provide a valuable vehicle in which to examine ethnic self-representations. As spaces where diverse audiences come together, festivals provide insight into how people negotiate their identities through interactions and artistry. Planners transformed intentions and aspirations into creative and physical events, acts, and speeches.

During the 1905 Turnfest, the Socialer Turnverein’s leaders aimed to spread an interest for Turnen and physical education among German Americans and a wider public. They also wanted to create stronger bonds among their own ranks. The planners met these aims by presenting the Turners’ history and accomplishments, both in physical education and in upholding progressive ideals. Behind these presentations lay the idea of an ethnic identity that combined German culture and American freedoms. Parades, the festival play, and mass gymnastic exercises conveyed the Turners’ messages through a combination of traditions, shared experiences, and artistry.

Leaders of the Maennerchor planned the 1908 Saengerfest to celebrate music and provide ample time for socialization. They contributed to Indianapolis’s developing music scene by offering professional performances with broad appeal, while framing their concerts around German-American values and traditions of social music-making. A souvenir publication and parade reaffirmed their ideas for maintaining the German appreciation for music and spreading this appreciation to wider audiences.
Festival planners for both events took many aspects under consideration when shaping events for full effect. They considered the meaning of the physical spaces within the city and the impression created by the decorations’ visual splendor. They aimed for artistry, whether in floats, plays, sculptures, souvenir books, or concerts. They also understood the impact of spectacle, inviting the masses in attendance to participate in a unifying experience. As they planned, organizers relied on celebratory traditions to create connections across generations and among clubs in different locations. They also learned from earlier festivals in Indianapolis and elsewhere about what would be well received, but hoped to introduce new elements to surpass the success of previous festivals. Aside from their club- and ethnic-related agendas, the German Americans sought to entertain and impress, involving all in the joy of German festivities, which was also worth furthering among Anglo Americans, and making ample time for socialization and networking.

Throughout their weeks of planning and celebrating, Indianapolis German-American club leaders expressed multiple identities foregrounding any particular one dependent on the audience. Some of the main differences between the two festivals examined here, the Turnfest and the Saengerfest, stemmed from the clubs’ differing missions and appeals to those members of their national organizations. The Turners used parades, speeches, and a play to remind all Turners about the distinctiveness and honor of their progressive ideals. With less overt goals for physical and political reform than the Turners, the Maennerchor made use of music and socialization among and with musicians to further their values as singers. Both the Socialer Turnverein and the Maennerchor wanted to show off Indianapolis and the accomplishments of its German-
American club communities, such as the German House, to their compatriots from across the country. The Maennerchor promoted itself through the accomplished singing performances of its own members. When turning to other residents of Indianapolis, the two clubs hoped to gain recognition for their achievements, awake interest with the intention to gain new members, and, in general, demonstrate that German Americans deserved a good name.

In both the Turnfest and Saengerfest, festival planners sought to elevate the festivals beyond their membership to unify all the German-American communities around shared ideas of ethnic identity. The rhetoric of club leaders and their reliance on traditions affirmed an idea of German-American ethnic identity where Germans contributed to American culture based on the cultivation of German cultural traditions in the United States. Although the Socialer Turnverein and the Maennerchor had different club missions, for the festivals, planners expanded their presentations to include that of their ethnic group as a whole rather than specifically their respective clubs. As the twentieth century had progressed, German-American leaders viewed the strengthening prohibition movement, nationalist criticisms, and the challenges of cultural maintenance with some concern. Facing these challenges successfully required a united ethnic community, and they wanted to convey an appearance of accord to outside audiences. Through the inclusive events of the Indianapolis festivals, the organizers succeeded in representing themselves in this way. However, this model of harmony was aspirational; German-American communities were comprised of many interests and facing demographic changes that would alter their compositions.³⁸¹ The festival presentations

³⁸¹ These findings confirm those of Conzen and Bungert that festivals aimed to construct unity among German Americans, but that it was only aspirational.
also reflected the particular beliefs of the club planners, which were not shared by all
German Americans.

Although the *Socialer Turnverein* and the *Maennerchor* conveyed many similar
messages, they relied on different means of transmitting them based on their clubs’
respective missions and the traditional frameworks of their festivals. The merits of the
physical activity of the Turners spoke for itself based on impressive gymnastic displays.
Likewise, by planning concerts featuring talented performers and popular songs, the
*Maennerchor* sought to advance music through rousing performances. Both clubs hoped
to impress outside audiences with their accomplishments in order to spread physical
education or music, respectively.

Despite the differences between the *Turnfest* and *Saengerfest*, their Indianapolis
organizers represented their ethnic identities in similar ways. Perhaps this was due to the
fact that *Turnvereins* and singing societies emerged from similar traditions in Germany,
with many founding members sharing similar beliefs as they escaped political oppression
in Germany. By 1900, many leaders had a similar social standing in the city, although
their political affiliations differed. The organizing clubs had overlapping membership
and, importantly, their finances were healthy. They shared the experiences that came
from living in the same city and mainly had the same local resources available to them. A
shared history in Indianapolis meant that their festivals had similar profiles and directed
similar messages to the same local audiences.

Comparing the Turners and the singers has drawn out some of the differences and
similarities within the diverse German-American communities in Indianapolis. Exploring
the planning and presentation of the festivals of “church” Germans and other clubs,
perhaps without the strong financial basis of such groups as the *Socialer Turnverein* and the *Maennerchor*, would reveal other or more differentiated understandings of what the identity label “German-American” encompassed. It would also be worth looking into what roles the planning of festivals played as expressions and representations of ethnic identities in other cities with populations similar and different from Indianapolis. Such comparisons would make it possible to establish more firmly in which ways Indianapolis was unique and similar to other cities.

This case study depicts the German Americans at the height of their cultural expression in the United States. At the beginning of the twentieth century, they, as an ethnic group, had established themselves successfully in many parts of the country and had the means, connections, and traditions in place to plan, finance, and hold lavish festivals. Overall, club leaders tried to remain optimistic about the future and believed that staging festivals aided their mission to spread understanding about German culture. Many planners and attendees deemed the Indianapolis festivals to be major successes on multiple levels. What the German Americans could not foresee was the suppression of their culture a decade later as a result of America’s enmity with Germany in World War One. The war brought virulent hostility towards German Americans, and in response they abandoned open expressions of their German traditions. Further study of how self-identification and representation found expression in subsequent festivals, which took place in much different contexts, seems especially promising. The analysis of festival planning has proven to be a useful approach for the study of identities in and among ethnic groups and has provided new insight into the festive expressions of Indianapolis Germans Americans.
Glossary

Bund – association, alliance

Bundes- – used as prefix meaning national; ex: Bundesturnfest = National Turnfest

gemuetlich (adj), Gemuetlichkeit (noun) – a feeling of cosiness

Gut Heil – a traditional Turner greeting

Heimat – homeland

Lied, Lieder – literally, song (s), usually used as a reference to vocal music by German composers

Maennerchor – men’s choir

Saengerfest – Singing Festival

Turnen – to do gymnastics

Turnfest – Gymnastics Festival

Verein – club or organization

Volksfest – Public Fair

Waldfest – Forest Festival
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