

*Mens Sana in Corpore Sano in Latere et Caemento*

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*Mens Sana in Corpore Sano* is the well-known motto from antiquity, “A Sound Mind in a Sound Body,” but *Mens Sana in Corpore Sano in Latere et Caemento*? A sound mind in a sound body in brick and mortar is perhaps the best way to describe the subject of this essay, the venerable Indianapolis landmark the Athenaeum, originally named Das Deutsche Haus, the German House.

The Athenaeum stands on East Michigan Street at the intersection of North New Jersey Street and Massachusetts Avenue. It stands in good company as its neighbors are the Murat Shrine, St. Mary Catholic Church, and Lockerbie Square, the city’s oldest and most famous neighborhood. The Athenaeum was constructed in two phases, the East Wing in 1893-94 and the West Wing in 1897-98.

Since its construction, the Athenaeum has been a landmark in Indianapolis. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, three times, but it is more than a local landmark. It is a national

landmark for its role in the history of American education and architecture.

The Athenaeum is a national landmark, which is not just my opinion, but also that of the United States Department of Interior. On November 16, 2015, the National Historic Landmark Committee of the National Park Service agreed with me and voted unanimously to recognize the Athenaeum as a National Historic Landmark. The status will be finalized this spring with the signature of the Secretary of the Interior. This rare status is held by over 2,500 buildings, structures, sites, and districts across the country, including the U.S. Capitol, the White House, the U.S.S. Constitution, the Alamo, Alcatraz Island, and the Brooklyn Bridge. Currently there are eight National Historic Landmarks in Indianapolis, which include the Benjamin Harrison Home and the James Whitcomb Riley House, but also the Butler Fieldhouse, the Broad Ripple Park Carousel in the Children's Museum, and the Madame C.J. Walker Manufacturing Building.

So what is so special about the Athenaeum? The nomination argues the case that it is nationally significant for its role in the history of physical education and for its architectural merits as a monumental Turner hall and as an excellent example of the

German Renaissance Revival Style in America. It is the master work of the Indianapolis firm of Vonnegut & Bohn, specifically Bernard Vonnegut.

I first encountered the Athenaeum in August 1980 and marveled at its high integrity and the quality of the ornamentation. Initially I became more aware of it through the works of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., specifically his 1981 *Palm Sunday: An Autobiographical Collage*.

The Athenaeum is a Turner hall, which is a building constructed or remodeled to accommodate activities of a German Turnverein or Turner or gymnastic club. A Turner is a gymnast, a member of a Turnverein. As a Turner hall, it contains a gymnasium, lecture and concert halls, meeting rooms, a library, and a tavern. *Turnerbund* is the national union of Turnvereins. Its full name was *Nordamerikanischer Turnerbund* (North American Gymnastic Union), but in 1919 it became the American Turnerbund. The name changed again in 1938 to American Turners, the current name. The *Turnlehrer Seminar* or Normal College of the North American Gymnastic Union was founded in 1866 to train gymnastic teachers to provide instruction in Turnvereins and, later, public schools.

The Athenaeum in Indianapolis embodies the ideas and actions set in motion two centuries ago in French-occupied Germany. It expresses in brick and mortar, but also stone, terra cotta, and art glass, the Turner classical motto *Mens Sana in Corpore Sano*: A Sound Mind in a Sound Body. The ideal of combined soundness of mind and body is rooted in antiquity. It was revived, embraced, and activated in early nineteenth-century Germany, in particular by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn in Berlin, who ultimately developed modern gymnastics and gymnastic apparatus. He felt this holistic approach to education was necessary to shape the citizens who could build a new Germany on the principles of *Einigkeit, Recht, und Freiheit* or national unity, justice, and freedom. The idea of citizens, fully engaged in creating the new nation and fully participating in its democratic civil life, appealed to young university students and other progressive elements of German society. Turnvereins sprang up in cities and university towns throughout the German states in the first decades of the nineteenth century. These young Turners helped expel Napoleon from German soil in 1813. But after Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo and the machinations of the Congress of Vienna, the Turnvereins were later viewed with suspicion and suppressed by the restored autocratic German princely regimes. The Battle of Waterloo in 1815 was a year and a half before Indiana statehood.

When revolution erupted in 1848, Turners were active participants in the pitched street battles and the revolutionary assembly in Frankfurt. The liberal revolution failed to produce a new, unified, democratic Germany; so the revolutionaries, the “Forty-eighters,” fled, bringing with them their ideas and energy to the United States. These political refugees were enthusiastic founders and members of the Turnvereins here. While keeping an eye on the political scene of the homeland, Turners became very engaged in American social and political issues. The Turners in America formed a national organization as they had done in Germany and channeled their revolutionary energy to improve America through the cultivation of the mind and body and political engagement. They were early supporters of the new Republican Party and the cause of Abolition. Turners built their Turner halls throughout the country, especially in the cities and towns of the Midwest and Northeast. In 1861 they heeded Lincoln’s call for volunteers and eagerly served in the Union Army. They viewed the issues of the Civil War as analogous to those of Revolution of 1848: national unity, justice, and freedom. After the Civil War, the Turnverein movement in America continued to grow with the expanding German urban neighborhoods of American cities and towns. Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, the Turnvereins remained politically active and focused on improving

American society through political reform and education, especially physical education. To that end they lobbied for physical education in local public schools and in 1866 established their Normal College for the formal training of physical education teachers for their Turnvereins and later for public schools.

The accomplishments of the Turners at a national level are numerous and include the founding of their own Normal College, which continues today as the physical education department of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis; the inclusion of physical education into the public school curriculum; the promotion of the playground movement in school yards and public parks; and in general enriching American culture and urban life with their political, intellectual, and cultural activities. Thanks to the Turners and the Athenaeum, IUPUI has the bragging rights to having the oldest school of physical education in the nation.

The steady flow of German immigrants to the United States throughout the nineteenth century ensured the growth of the Turner movement. In contrast to the majority of German nineteenth-century immigrants, who were peasants and artisans seeking economic opportunities in the cities, towns, and farmland of the United States, the Turner immigrants tended to be urban, middle

class, educated, and some were professionals. Dedicated to the ideals of the Revolution of 1848/49, these political refugees did not abandon their idealism, but channeled it into the Turner movement in the United States. The first Turnverein founded in the United States was the Cincinnati Turngemeinde (gymnastic community), on November 21, 1848. It was followed in rapid succession by the founding of Turnvereins in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Louisville, and throughout the country.

The Turners were skilled organizers; in 1850 they formed a national organization, the *Nordamerikanischer Turnerbund* (North American Gymnastic Union), which called a national convention in Philadelphia in 1850. The following year that same city hosted the first national Turnfest (gymnastic festival) and the second national convention. Organized and committed, the Turner movement grew where Germans settled throughout the United States, especially in the cities of the Northeast and Midwest. The Turnerbund strove to unify the growing Turner movement, “to protect the common interests, and to furnish a basis for mutual cooperation.”

The city’s first Turnverein, the Indianapolis Turngemeinde, was founded in 1851, three years after the first Turnverein in America

formed in Cincinnati. The local founders were all German immigrants: August Hoffmeister, Jacob and Alexander Metzger, John Ott, Karl Hill, and Clemens Vonnegut, Sr. The infant organization met across the street from the Statehouse, at John Ott's furniture factory, 215 West Washington Street, where the front yard functioned as the *Turnplatz* (exercise yard) for drills on the horizontal and parallel bars. The Turngemeinde immediately joined the Turnerbund. By January 1853 the Turngemeinde met at a fire-damaged hotel five blocks to the east at 225 East Washington Street, opposite the Marion County Courthouse. Later that year the Turngemeinde constructed the city's first purpose-built Turner hall, a modest, one-story frame, gable-roofed building at 117 Noble Street, now College Avenue, about six blocks southeast of where the Athenaeum stands.

In ante-bellum Indianapolis, the near eastside of the growing city was known as "Germantown." German immigrants built modest frame houses and churches. The Turner hall and its *Sommergarten* was a part of the streetscape of Germantown and the Turner activities a part of life in the neighborhood. The Turner hall was a convivial meeting place for socializing and also for serious debate on the national topic of slavery. When the Civil War erupted in 1861, members of the Turngemeinde closed their hall and



responded immediately to President Lincoln's call to arms. Organized Turner activities in Indianapolis were suspended for the duration of the war. The property, including the library and gymnastic apparatus, was entrusted to Turner Herman Lieber.

Shortly before the end of the war, the Turners of Indianapolis lost no time in reviving the Turnverein. In early 1865 the Indianapolis Turnverein was formed from the membership of the ante-bellum Turngemeinde along with new members. In two years' time a new, two-story, brick Turner hall was constructed in the heart of the German business district at 230 East Maryland Street where the Marion County Jail stands.

The post-bellum history of the Turners in Indianapolis is rife with discord and disunion. Political disputes over Reconstruction and the status of former slaves in 1868 resulted in the expulsion of some members, who formed a rival second club, Socialer Turnverein, to be "independent from all political currents." The Socialer Turnverein built its own gymnasium in 1872 across the street from its rival's hall. But upon the orders of the Turnerbund, the national body, both clubs merged later that year under the name Indianapolis Socialer Turnverein. Continued political disagreements in the 1870s resulted in the resignation of 33

members in 1879. They immediately formed the apolitical Unabhängiger (independent) Turnverein. The Independent Turners eventually built their own monumental Turner hall in 1913-14, which stands today at 9th and Meridian streets, but the club itself disbanded in the 1930s. The hall is now the Turnverein Apartments. By 1914, Indianapolis had three Turnervereins, each with its own hall, including the Southside Turner Hall on Prospect Avenue. All three are extant.

After this period of discord, the Socialer Turnverein, which would build the Athenaeum in the 1890s, grew and prospered. In 1886 it leased the vacant schoolhouse of the German-English Independent School next door. The Turnverein remodeled and enlarged the schoolhouse in 1887 with a substantial annex on the north (rear) end of the building. Architects Bernard Vonnegut and Arthur Bohn designed the annex, a “model hall” built in a modest version of the German Renaissance Revival Style, included a gymnasium and a basement bowling alley. It fronted on to an alley at 231 East Pearl Street, where the Marion County Jail is today.

The idea of a German House for Turners, singers, musicians, and other liberal-minded German groups all under one roof dated to 1886 when the Turners invited the Maennerchor and other German

societies to join them in planning and building a German House to accommodate them all under one roof. The partnership did not happen, but the idea persisted and grew into the “beautiful dream, a big hall in the northern part of the city.” By 1891 the Turners had outgrown their facilities and the beautiful dream had become a plan “to build a suitable hall which should serve as a center not only for the [Turn]verein, but for the city’s entire liberal German population.”

The Socialer Turnverein Aktien-Gesellschaft (stock association) incorporated in 1892. Its Articles of Incorporation stated the purpose “to raise funds to purchase real estate and add to the same, and to erect a building to be known as ‘Das Deutsche Haus,’ to manage, remodel, complete, equip, furnish, add to and pay for same with a view of furnishing a home for the Socialer Turnverein of Indianapolis and other organizations devoted to the furtherance of education, music, art and social life.” The Stock Association elected the following directors: Herman Lieber, Albrecht Kipp, Wilhelm Haueisen, Henry Schnull, and Clemens Vonnegut, Jr. As president of the Stock Association, Lieber would earn the title “Father of the German House” for his vision, leadership, and tireless efforts to build the monument to German culture and Turnerism. Lieber was a German immigrant, as were the other

Stock Association directors. The exception was Indianapolis-born Vonnegut, brother of the building's architect, Bernard, and son of the founding Turner, Clemens, Sr.

The Stock Association commissioned the Indianapolis architectural firm of Vonnegut and Bohn, founded in 1888, to design the new Das Deutsche Haus. This firm was well-suited for the task, as it had designed the previous Turner hall for the Sozialer Turnverein. Both Bernard Vonnegut and Arthur Bohn were American-born of German immigrant parents and received their professional architectural training in Germany.

Bernard Vonnegut (1855-1908) was born in Indianapolis, the son of Clemens and Katrina (née Blank) Vonnegut. He was educated at the German-English Independent School of Indianapolis and the Indianapolis High School. He later studied architecture at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Polytechnic Institute of Hanover, Germany (now Leibniz Universität Hannover). After his studies he worked for New York architect George B. Post before returning to Indianapolis in 1883. Vonnegut married Nanette Schnull, the daughter of Henry Schnull, a Turner and treasurer of the Stock Association, which built the Athenaeum. Vonnegut's father, Clemens, was prominent in business and the

intellectual life in Indianapolis in the nineteenth century. He was a native of Münster and the founder of the multi-generational Vonnegut Hardware Company, which supplied the hardware for the Athenaeum. The elder Vonnegut's namesake and son, Clemens Vonnegut, Jr., was the financial secretary of the Stock Association. Another son, Franklin, was president of the North American Gymnastic Union in 1900. Clemens' fourth son, George, was an instructor of gymnastics at the Normal College from 1889-1891. The Vonnegut name is intertwined throughout the Turner history of Indianapolis and the Athenaeum.

Architect Arthur Bohn (1861-1949) was born in Louisville and was also a graduate of the Indianapolis German-English Independent School and the public high school. Bohn's father, Gustavus, was a native of Karlsruhe and a Forty-eighter, having participated in the 1848-49 Revolution. Arthur Bohn studied architecture at the Polytechnische Hochschule of Karlsruhe, Germany under Professor Josef Durm. Returning to Indianapolis he practiced architecture and founded the *Gewerbeschule* (vocational training school). Bohn returned to Germany and also traveled to France and Italy to continue his architectural studies.

Vonnegut & Bohn was a major and prolific Indianapolis architectural firm from its founding in 1888 until its dissolution in 1943, ultimately a victim of the Great Depression. This firm designed three Turner halls, the city's two prominent department store buildings (L.S. Ayres & Co. and the William H. Block Co.), banks, schools, smaller commercial buildings, industrial buildings, houses, and three known religious buildings. The firm used the distinctive German Renaissance Revival Style in the design of a number of buildings for German-American clients. But, as did their contemporaries of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Vonnegut & Bohn designed in a variety of styles including Neoclassicism, Beaux Art Classicism, Chicago Commercial Style, Arts and Crafts, and others.

Bernard's son, Kurt Sr. joined the firm in 1910, two years after his father's death. He graduated from the American College Gymnasium in Strasburg (then a German city), MIT, and pursued post-graduate work at the Berlin Royal Polytechnic University. Kurt's son, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., the celebrated novelist, speculated in his 1981 book, *Palm Sunday*, that had it not been for the Great Depression he would have continued in the family business of architecture. *Palm Sunday* contains references to the Athenaeum.

The Stock Association decided to build Das Deutsche Haus at the corner of Michigan and New Jersey streets. The new site, a quarter of a city block, allowed for a larger, more ambitious building closer to the homes of the members living in what is now the Old Northside. The Stock Association purchased the site in 1892. The area was residential, but was in transition to commercial use as Massachusetts Avenue was extending the central business district to the northeast.

The Stock Association published its manifesto declaring its intentions “to construct a building not for the special interests of the Turnverein alone...[but wished] to extend the building and provide rooms also for an organization which is interested in fostering German music and singing...[and also] the free-thinking Sunday school, the Trade School Society and the German Ladies Aid Society.” Construction began in May of 1893 and the East Wing was completed and dedicated on George Washington’s Birthday, February 22, 1894.

The East Wing with gymnasium, locker rooms, bowling alley, tavern, library, and meeting rooms, was a success, and the Stock Association resolved in January of 1896 to construct the West Wing and complete the project. It commissioned Vonnegut &

Bohn to draw up the plans for the West Wing and construction began in 1897.

When the West Wing was completed and dedicated in June of 1898 all of the city's newspapers, both German- and English-language, published vivid descriptions of the building and its many features. The West Wing included the second-floor Ball & Concert Hall, the first-floor Auditorium with terraced fixed seating for 400, and the Lobby and monumental staircase connecting the floors. The Musikverein and Deutscher Klub rooms featured built-in music cabinets. The basement included a four-lane bowling alley (10 pin) and a greatly expanded Rathskeller. The Sommergarten with a bandstand and shading vines provided an inviting summer respite. The up-to-date West Wing was wired for electricity and accommodated bicycle traffic with ramps and a bicycle storage room. The surviving bicycle ramp along the lower run of the Keller stairs is a rare architectural expression of the bicycle craze of the 1890s. The exterior of the West Wing featured a distinctive shape, massing, and details strongly expressing the German Renaissance Revival Style, which was initiated in the design of the East Wing. The two flagpoles proudly flew the Stars and Stripes, and at least one time in 1905, flew the black-white-and-red tricolor of the German Reich during the first International Turnfest in America



that welcomed a team of Turners from Germany. This was the city's first international athletic event.

The attractive building with its distinctive roof, bays, towers, gables, and spacious, well-appointed rooms attracted German-Americans and non-Germans alike. The Stock Association had planned the Athenaeum to be a leasable public hall for conventions and conferences with its variety of meeting halls and rooms. Members of the Socialer Turnverein and the other organizations used the facility for their meetings, classes, banquets, concerts, lectures, parties, and socializing. The planning of the Athenaeum took into consideration creating a building that could also be a source of revenue. The Stock Association published a booklet in 1898 to promote its new building. It stated that "the Concert Hall (capacity 1,000), the Auditorium (capacity 350), the Dining Hall (capacity 200) are open for rental to reputable organizations for dramatic performances, concerts, receptions, dinners, etc. The House Committee may rent any other part of the house for entertainment or exhibitions when more room is required than is afforded by the parts specified above." The Annual Report of the Directors of the Stock Association of 1897 predicted that the halls and space would be much sought after "and that the Stock

Association would count on large rental incomes to contribute to the amortization of the capital expenditure.”

The following are two examples of important events that took place in the building is its role as a popular hall for hire. In October 1900 at the 28<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the American Public Health Association, Major Walter Reed, M.D. first publicly announced his findings on the origins of yellow fever. He read his paper “Some Observations on Yellow Fever in Cuba” in the Ball and Concert Hall of the Athenaeum. Twelve years later in the basement Schlossgarten, Carl G. Fisher, a local pioneer automobile entrepreneur and co-founder of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, publicly announced his idea to form an organization to finance, plan, and build a trans-continental highway for automobiles. Ten months after the meeting, Fisher’s idea was formalized with the founding of the Lincoln Highway Association in Detroit in 1913.

Vonnegut & Bohn, and specifically, Bernard Vonnegut designed Das Deutsche Haus in the German Renaissance Revival style, a style that has not been well understood in America. In the past, examples of the style around the country have been labeled as “Queen Anne,” “Flemish Revival,” “Neo-Gothic,” “Romanesque Revival,” or oddly as “south German-Austrian Habsburg mode.”

The Athenaeum has been labeled as the latter. One of the problems has been the absence of the style from architectural style guidebooks and general architectural histories of the United States. In the absence of available information in English, observers and catalogers of American architecture have been left to their own devices to force these buildings into the available stylistic pigeonholes.

The revival style is linked to the ethnic identity of German Americans. Surviving buildings in the style indicates where Germans lived, worked, and socialized. Generally, they were the reason buildings were built in that style. Examples of the style can be found in Chicago, New York, St. Louis, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, and Cincinnati, all with sizable German-American populations.

The German Renaissance style was revived and extremely popular in Germany during the Wilhelmine Second Reich of 1871-1918. It was used for houses, clubhouses, apartment houses, schools, office, commercial, and municipal buildings. While studying in Germany, architects Bernard Vonnegut and Arthur Bohn observed authentic Renaissance buildings and the revival of the style in Germany and how it was applied to a variety of building types. The style struck a responsive cultural chord and allowed German-

Americans to express *Deutschtum*, or German-ness, in brick and mortar rather than just with ephemeral signs labeling buildings as Turnverein Halle or Musik Halle. These seemingly permanent ethnic markers were built, but urban renewal took its toll, as was the case of the Indianapolis Maennerchor Halle in the 1970s. It was a fine example of the style, one that rivaled the Athenaeum, the work of Swiss-born architect, Adolf Scherrer. While Germans in Germany's growing towns and cities searched for historic symbols in architecture, so were German-Americans at the same time, expressing their success and presence on the streetscapes of American cities before the collapse of the public German-American culture with the advent of Germany's role as enemy nation in 1917.

The Athenaeum is a rare example of an extant monumental Turner hall, an excellent example of German Renaissance Revival Style, and the masterpiece of the prolific Indianapolis architecture firm of Vonnegut and Bohn. After more than a century of continuous use, the Athenaeum possess high integrity and would be clearly recognizable by those who envisioned, built and used it as Das Deutsche Haus more than a century ago. The building retains its important and dramatic exterior elements and details in brick, stone, terra cotta, and art glass, including distinctive scrolled and

stepped gables, towers, shield-and-wreath motif ornamentation scheme; and the dramatic and highly ornamented vestibule, Rathskeller, gymnasium, ball and concert hall and Schlossgarten with their wood and plaster details.

In 1907, the Athenaeum became the home of the Normal College of the North American Gymnastic Union, founded in 1866 to train gymnastics teachers for the Turnvereins across the country. The Normal College had first opened in New York's Lower East Side Manhattan, then moved to Chicago, but was burned out by the Great Chicago Fire in 1871. From there it moved to Milwaukee, then to Indianapolis for a short time, and then back to Milwaukee. It returned to Indianapolis in 1970, where it has remained ever since.

The Normal College's move into the Athenaeum added great prestige to the building. It leased most of the East Wing, whereby the second-floor assembly room and library became classrooms and the West Wing bowling alley was remodeled to be a banquet hall, the Kellersaal. The cost for remodeling the building to accommodate the college was \$4,561.00.

By 1880 the Turnerbund exhorted its Turnvereins, the Normal College, and individual Turners to be advocates of physical education in local public schools. The advocacy by Indianapolis Turners began in the 1870s. Indianapolis School Board member, Clemens Vonnegut, repeatedly invited the Indianapolis Public School board to observe Turner demonstrations followed by the offer of free gymnastic instruction, with the teachers subsidized by his Socialer Turnverein. I.P.S. adopted compulsory physical education in 1890 because of Vonnegut's efforts supported by two other board members, who were also Turners: John P. Frenzel and Jacob W. Löper. The first I.P.S. supervisor of physical education, Miss Frances Mueller, was a recent graduate of the Normal College. Alumni of the Normal College inaugurated physical education curricula in school corporations throughout the country. The Normal College adapted and expanded its own curriculum beyond the needs of the Turnvereins to prepare its students to teach in the classrooms, gymnasia, and schoolyards of public schools. The Turners and their Normal College were active agents of change in American education, agitating for physical education in public schools and providing the trained personnel to implement the change.

The Athenaeum had its share of ups and downs in the twentieth century: the First World War, Prohibition, the Great Depression, the Second World War, and post-war urban decline. But the building survived these challenges.

The first blow came April 6, 1917, when the United States declared war on German Empire. With the declaration of war, everything German became suspect and politically incorrect. Libraries, clubs, churches, schools, businesses, newspapers, and families with German names and identity suffered. Across the country Turnvereins became athletic or sport clubs or closed, and Turner halls, music halls, and churches were renamed, losing their German names. German ceased to be a public language in Indianapolis, where it was taught in the schools (I.P.S. and parochial); preached and prayed in the numerous Evangelical, Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic churches; and spoken on the streets, in offices, shops, factories, union halls, and the numerous clubhouses. On George Washington's Birthday of 1918, Das Deutsche Haus, the German House, lost its original name and was rebranded "The Athenaeum." This traumatic change provoked one wag to quip, "I hope we never have a war with Greece!" An incised stone tablet bearing the new name was bolted over the original "Das Deutsche Haus" tablet with gilded raised Fraktur

letters above the West Wing entrance. The Socialer Turnverein eventually became the Athenaeum Turners.

During the 1920s, Prohibition threatened traditional German social life when the consumption of alcohol was made illegal. In addition, during the Great Depression membership rolls for the Turner Clubs shrank. The slump in business and widespread unemployment led to the end or curtailment of disposable incomes that had been spent on memberships. Between 1929 and 1944, the *Turnerbund*, the national organization, lost a third of its members and clubs, and in 1938 had changed its name to “American Turners” so as not to be confused or associated with the German-American Bund, a pro-Nazi organization. In 1948, at the beginning of the Cold War, American Turners redefined its organization and abandoned political issues, especially those dealing with social reforms. Considering their revolutionary roots and rhetoric, Turners wanted to avoid the scrutiny, intimidation, and harassment that had been generated by the two previous world wars.

During the Second World War, Athenaeum membership surprisingly began to increase and did so through the 1950s, peaking with 1,868 members in 1955. The boosted dues-paying membership rolls of the 1950s and early 1960s saw the end of



deferred maintenance on the building. Restrooms were updated and new floors and selective air conditioning were added. Some rooms were drastically remodeled to accommodate the high demand for meeting and banquet space. Popular gymnastics programs for children and adults, an active drama club, and numerous well-attended social events throughout the building and Sommergarten restored some of the vigor and social status the organization had lost after the First World War.

In 1956, the Athenaeum Turners produced two members of the United States Olympic Women's Gymnastics Team, Muriel Davis and Sandra Ruddick. The team placed ninth at the Melbourne games, coached by Athenaeum gymnastic teacher Walter Lienert, an alumnus and faculty member of the Normal College. Muriel Davis Grossfeld was again on the national teams in 1960 and 1964, then coached at the 1968 and 1972 games. American Turners had first participated in the Olympics in the 1904 St. Louis games.

In 1970, the Normal College, part of Indiana University since 1941, vacated the building and eventually relocated to the campus of IUPUI, a mile and a half to the west. The college's departure was a traumatic loss of prestige and rental income for the Athenaeum, which the expanding Normal College had outgrown.

The Athenaeum was the cradle of another local institution, the Indiana Repertory Theater (IRT). In 1972 the IRT leased the Ball & Concert Hall. This tenant brought customers to the Rathskeller Restaurant, paid rent, and played to near-capacity crowds. But the IRT vacated the Athenaeum in 1980 for its own larger, completely remodeled building, the Indiana Theater on West Washington Street. This was another blow to the Athenaeum.

With shrinking and aging Turner membership, mortgage payments, unpaid creditors, no tenants (except for the Indianapolis Ballet Theatre), shrinking income, a leaking roof, and general deferred maintenance, the Athenaeum's situation was critical in the late 1980s. In 1991, the 99-year-old Socialer Turnverein Stock Association dissolved and transferred ownership of the building to the Athenaeum Foundation Incorporated. Founded in 1991 as a not-for-profit organization, the Foundation's mission was to restore and revitalize the Athenaeum. Fundraising and improvements began immediately with the repairing and remodeling of the basement of the East Wing to accommodate a new branch of the YMCA. The nearly century-old slate roof was replaced in 1993-1994; the original galvanized steel roof details were replicated in copper. Throughout the 1990s and the first decade of the new

century other repairs and improvements halted the deterioration and brought the vulnerable building up to code with two elevators, a new HVAC system, a fire suppressant systems, and upgraded electrical and plumbing systems. The work is on-going with other restoration projects.

Today the Athenaeum is an active center for performance arts, lectures, physical fitness, and German language and culture. Organizations in the Athenaeum in 2015 include the Athenaeum Foundation, Athenaeum Turners, Indianapolis Maennerchor, Indiana German Heritage Society, Max Kade German-American Center of IUPUI, Rathskeller, YMCA at the Athenaeum, Athenaeum Pops Orchestra, Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra, Young Actors Theatre and other groups. After a century of continuous use, the Athenaeum continues to be an architectural and cultural landmark of the city and nation. In a few months it will be recognized as a National Historic Landmark.

As a footnote, there are some connections between the Indianapolis Literary Club and the Athenaeum. Alex Vonnegut and Theodore Stempfel were members of both organizations. Vonnegut was the son of architect Bernard Vonnegut. Stempfel wrote the 1898 *Festschrift* or dedication book of Das Deutsche Haus. John L.

Griffiths, ILC president 1899-1900, spoke at the dedication of Das Deutsche Haus in 1898 representing the Anglo-Americans of the club. He was a member of the Indiana House of Representatives and served as U.S. Consul General to London and Liverpool.

Demarchus C. Brown, ILC president 1908-1909, was the state librarian and spoke on the life of George Washington at the 1918 meeting when the new name, The Athenaeum, was announced.