

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Turner Hall

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 1034 N. 4th Street

Not for publication: __

City/Town: Milwaukee

Vicinity: __

State: WI County: Milwaukee

Code: 079

Zip Code: 53203

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: __

Public-State: __

Public-Federal: __

Category of Property

Building(s): X

District: __

Site: __

Structure: __

Object: __

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

__

__

__

1

Noncontributing

__ buildings

__ sites

__ structures

__ objects

__ Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this _____ nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ____ Entered in the National Register _____
- ____ Determined eligible for the National Register _____
- ____ Determined not eligible for the National Register _____
- ____ Removed from the National Register _____
- ____ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	SOCIAL RECREATION AND CULTURE	Sub: meeting hall auditorium sports facility
Current:	SOCIAL RECREATION AND CULTURE	Sub: meeting hall auditorium sports facility
	COMMERCE/TRADE	organizational restaurant

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque

MATERIALS:

Foundation: stone
Walls: brick
Roof: shingle/asphalt
Other: limestone (trim)
glass black (windows)

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**SUMMARY**

Milwaukee Turner Hall is a four-story rectangular building 100 feet by 150 feet, with a two story rectangular addition one bay wide attached to the north side. The flat-roofed addition was constructed in 1899, imitating the character of the south bay of the main building. The lot, almost covered by the building, is on the east side of 4th Street, and is bounded on the east by the Historic Old Third Street alley and on the north and south by parking lots. The present building, constructed in 1882, replaced the Milwaukee Turners' second clubhouse located two buildings to the south.

EXTERIOR

Turner Hall is a cream brick clubhouse in the High Victorian Romanesque style. It is built on a cedar raft footing. The foundation is of rock-faced limestone. The building has a deck-on-hipped roof.

The only architecturally articulated elevation is the main facade, which faces west on North Fourth Street. The other three sides are utilitarian in character. They are constructed of common brick, devoid of ornamental features and have segmentally arched fenestration asymmetrically arranged to correspond with the floor plan requirements.

The west facade is imposing and symmetrical in character. The cream brick walls are enlivened with red brick banding and accents and extensive limestone banding and trim. It is composed of three projecting pavilions including an identically gabled pair. This pair flanks a massive central entrance pavilion that terminates in a pyramidal-roofed dormered tower above the roofline. There are numerous tall, ornamental spandrel panels in the arched tops of the fenestration on the first and third floors. The other windows have massive stone lintels. The main entrance had the original arched portal removed and replaced with plain Arkansas stone facing in 1958. The first floor windows were also filled with glass block at this time. Except for these two modifications, the building has been altered little from its original state.

INTERIOR

The exterior stairs to the main level lead to a lobby flanked by dining rooms, one to the north and one to the south. The kitchen is located to the rear of the south dining room. Washroom facilities and the cloakroom stand between the dining rooms in a hallway at the rear of the lobby. The hallway leads to a balcony overlooking the gymnasium, and a staircase descending to the gymnasium. The ground level floor features the original gymnasium at the east end of the building.

From the front entrance lobby, the grand staircase leads to a lobby in front of the grand ballroom on the third level. Two large meeting rooms are located to the north and south; today, one is used as an office. The ballroom measures 7000 square feet, and has a pitched stage at the east end. On the south elevation are two stories of windows that illuminate the space. On the north is a loggia leading to several anterooms.

On the west side of the building, the grand staircase continues from the third floor lobby to the fourth level and opens out to balconies on the north and west sides overlooking the ballroom and stage. Five anterooms surround the balcony area. The ballroom has been closed off since 1933, and contains original gas light fixtures, stencilwork and woodcarving.

To the north of the staircase, off the balconies, is a narrow enclosed stair to the tower rooms.

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

There are two rooms facing west and an open unusable loft area to the east under the gable roof.

DECORATIVE FEATURES

The interior remains largely original to 1882 with very little remodeling. The walls and woodwork have remained nearly intact, with heavy oak banisters and carving.

The walls in the north dining room and bar on the main floor are covered with oak paneling to ten feet, and topped with dentils and a small shelf. The oak panels display Turner photographs and memorabilia portraying Turner activity. Above the paneling are eight feet of plaster wall covered with rare surviving murals painted by German panoramic artists who made their home in Milwaukee in the 1880s.¹ The murals, twelve in all, depict scenes of importance to the Turner movement. They include a Revolutionary War fife and drum scene; a Civil War battle scene; a cartoon-like depiction of the construction of Turner Hall; a classically-styled expression of romanticized Turnerism; a classical eulogy to the founder, Ludwig Jahn; a representation of the founding of the Milwaukee settlement in pioneer times; and other Turner related paintings. The artists were Friedrich Wilhelm Heine, Franz Biberstein, Robert Schade, George Peter, and Carl Sende.

At the west end of this dining room is a partitioned meeting area and office. On one wall is a cabinet that holds artifacts including the 1880 trophy from the Frankfurt Turnfest and original fencing gear. The floors are original oak.

The south dining room has plain openings in the south wall, which was plastered over and painted with a dozen fresco-like murals of famous German villages and scenes. The scenes were painted by German World War II refugee artist Kurt Schaldach in 1958.

Finely-worked art glass windows on the first floor were donated through the years by members who were buried from this building. They reflect the free thinking or liberal stance of the Turners. There are four such windows on each side of the front entrance; eight on the north wall of the north dining room; and four more on the west wall of the south dining room. Donated by individuals or families, they represent various aspects of the German-American cultural contribution, each of which shows a theme, such as music. "*Undes ertoen in ernsten klängen das Deutsches Lied*" ("German song resounds into a solemn resonance")

¹ Harry Anderson, Executive Director of the Milwaukee Country Historical Society, claims that Turner Hall and Usinger's Inc. have the last remaining art on public view created by these artists.

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

is the quote in the window donated by conductor composer Christopher Bach. "*Einheit, Freiheit, Wacht, Turner haltet Wacht*" ("Unity, Freedom, Duty - Turners are on guard.") was given in memory of the first Turner city mayor, Emil Walber.

The grand staircase to the third level, which flanks the main entrance, has heavy oak banisters and carved newel posts. Halfway up the staircase is a wide landing where a carved white marble tablet mounted in a massive carved oak frame names the Turners who died in the Civil War and praises their valor. This tablet was placed in 1911.

The ballroom was closed off in 1933 after a fire started in the area behind the stage and extended into the room, damaging it. Original stencils, carved grills, balustrades and three gilded gas "Sunlights"--two about eight feet in diameter--remain. The vaulted coved ceilings enhance the acoustics in the room.

The office on the northwest corner of the original building contains original fixtures and furnishings including window and door casings, wainscoting, two freestanding bookcases and one large freestanding cabinet. Nine textile banners dating from 1880 hang from the walls, along with photographs and other memorabilia. The south meeting room has one large original free-standing cabinet and more current photographs and artwork.

The gymnasium in the basement is somewhat updated with newer equipment and the addition of a climbing wall on the south end. The locker rooms, weight rooms, showers and storage space have also been modernized. Otherwise, the 19th-century feeling of the two-story vaulted space remains. Contributing to this effect are the steel girders studded by remnants of fixtures to hold antiquated gymnasium equipment. The original interior balcony retains its original benches, which are still used by spectators. Three-foot tall wainscoting around the perimeter of the gym matches the decorative balcony edge.

Presently, space in the main floor lobby is devoted to the Heritage Tourism Center, sponsored by the Wisconsin State Department of Tourism. It is a pilot tourist information project of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Milwaukee Turners.

Plans for Turner Hall envision the building as a showcase for German-American culture in Milwaukee. In particular, the political, gymnastic and cultural heritage of the Turners will be examined and exhibited in an appropriate home, Milwaukee Turner Hall.

In 1994 the Governor proclaimed the Milwaukee Turner Hall one of the "Ten Most Endangered Historic Sites" in Wisconsin. The basis for that designation and the cause of great concern among preservationists is the continued degree of dynamic decay the building is suffering. The roof has a history of severe leaking which has caused the lath and plaster ceiling to collapse, rotting of the joists of the floor boards, and rotting of the roof timbers. The water damage is present throughout the building, including the ground floor. In 1994, a portion of the roof was repaired, but other areas have since begun to leak.

While the main section of the building is basically structurally sound, pillars supporting the northwest corner of the balcony have twisted on their axis, pulling the balcony to the west (front) facade. The north addition was cantilevered off the main section of the building, and has dropped as much as seven inches in the past four years. Large bolts have been drilled through the masonry to hold the west center bays of the front facade in place because a five-inch gap has developed between the wall and the roof--allowing additional water damage. The wood on the tower has decayed beyond the point of repair, and wind and water damage have made restoration of this area a priority. The windows on three sides of the building are falling out because the wood has rotted. The Milwaukee Turner Foundation has focused on raising money to accomplish the planning, stabilization, and ultimately the restoration of the building.

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

SUMMARY ²

Milwaukee Turner Hall, built in 1882, is nationally outstanding among the few surviving 19th-century historic buildings associated with the American Turners, a very influential organization of German Americans. The last Turner clubhouse in Milwaukee, the "German Athens" of America, it exemplifies the major place and multi-faceted role the Milwaukee Turners have held in this national organization. The building also represents the Milwaukee Turners' unheralded role in political reform from the days of the antislavery movement in the 1850s through the era of progressive municipal reform; in that role, it is the key surviving building associated with the most successful municipal Socialist Party in America. Lastly, Turner Hall, which still houses the works of important German-American artists, was home to notable cultural and physical education activities also integral to Turner philosophy.

From the 1850's, writers, poets and orators led the national Turner political thinking among the many German immigrants who were escaping the reactionary climate in their homeland. Later, in the 1880's and 1890's, when Germans came primarily for economic reasons, and politics at most local American *Turnvereins* was less important, Milwaukee Turners maintained their political emphasis, which became more radical over time.

Turner Hall is thus also historically important as the virtual political headquarters of America's strongest municipal Socialist Party and that party's key leaders, Turners Congressman Victor Berger and Mayors Emil Seidel, Daniel Hoan and the Zeidler brothers Carl and Frank, who between them dominated the city's politics for most of the period between 1910 and 1960. Of all the major American cities during the early 20th century only Milwaukee consistently had Socialist mayors, who were Turners. During an era when many big city machines were known for their corruption, Milwaukee developed and kept a national reputation for left-leaning but clean, efficient government.

The Turners' interest in art is even reflected in the building, which features work depicting Turner values done by nationally-known panoramic artists. Also reflecting their roots, the gymnasium was a place where modern physical education programs in the United States were shaped. Here George Brosius developed his program of gymnastics and taught it to others who then became gymnastic teachers throughout the nation.

THE TURNER MOVEMENT COMES TO AMERICA ³

During the Napoleonic Wars, the youth of the upper middle class in Berlin were anxious to find a way to throw off the yoke of French domination. They were attracted to the ideas of Frederick Ludwig Jahn, who in 1811 formed a gymnastic association, the Turnverein, in which youths received instruction in physical fitness--a first step to military drill.⁴ The Turner movement, emphasizing harmonious development of mind and body, spread throughout the German States once Napoleon had been vanquished, although it was repressed at times by rulers who feared it might be turned against them.

² Les Volmert's typescript study of the Central Business District of Milwaukee contains, in Chapter X, "Social and Political Movements," at pp. 22-25, a brief history of the Milwaukee Turners that has been helpful in preparing this study.

³ Volmert, *ibid.*

⁴ Gerhard Masur, *Imperial Berlin* (New York: Dorset Press, 1970), p. 37.

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

German immigration to the United States surged toward mid-century. Technological changes in agriculture, industrialization, a 38% increase in the birth rate that led to overpopulation, and a disastrous potato blight and other crop failures all conspired to produce "an army of dispossessed farmers" who were ready to immigrate.⁵ They were joined by political refugees from the failed revolutions of 1848. They brought the Turner movement with them to the United States.

Every German settlement of consequence eventually erected a Turner Hall. The first was founded in Cincinnati, America's other major German metropolis, in 1848, five years before Milwaukee's Turner organization was permanently established. Cincinnati's Central Turner Hall, built in 1850, has been demolished.⁶

Only a handful of Turner Halls older than Milwaukee's 1882 building still stand and none are as impressive or linked to as large a German community. Those that predate Milwaukee's are in Carlstadt, N.J. (1857), Johnstown, Pa. (1866), New Ulm, Minn. (1867), Holyoke, Mass. (1871), N. St. Louis, Mo. (1875), and Covington, Ky. (1877). (Only those in New Ulm and Covington, in addition to Milwaukee's, are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.)⁷

THE MILWAUKEE TURNERS

In Wisconsin, German-American settlement generally coincided with the peopling of the State and with the great waves of German immigration to the United States in the second half of the 19th century. In 1860, 35.3% of Milwaukee's total population was of German ancestry, comprising more than 2/3 of all the immigrants in the city.⁸

Milwaukee was so German and so active culturally that it was generally known as the "Deutsche Athen," the German Athens of the West. German cultural societies and institutions, such as the *Liederkrantz* musical groups, the *Turnverein*, and the Free Thinkers, flourished. There was an active literary life and a professional stage after 1868.⁹

The *Sozialer Turnverein* (the predecessor name of the Milwaukee Turners) was founded in Milwaukee in 1853. The Turners held their first tournament the same year and completed their first Turner Hall in 1855. The founders and early members were a distinguished group, some of whom had known each other in the old country. They quickly became immersed in the political ferment of their new country. Central to the Milwaukee Turnverein was a deep concern for social reform, a thread which has run through the entire span of the organization's existence. This circle of German-Americans was also intensely interested in

⁵ Richard H. Zeitlin, *Germans in Wisconsin* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1977), p. 4.

⁶ "Over-the-Rhine Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Section 7, page 5.

⁷ Letter from Dawn Schumann, Executive Director, Milwaukee Turner Foundation, Inc., to James Charleton, September 29, 1994, transmitting the results of inquiries made to all pre-1883 Turner organizations, the American Turners' Historian, and Kaja Rumpelman, the American Turners' Archivist at the University of Indiana. The National Register forms for the New Ulm and Covington buildings were also examined.

⁸ Kathleen Neils Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee 1836-1860* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 38; *Milwaukee Journal*, January 10, 1992.

⁹ Bayrd A. Still, *Milwaukee, the History of a City* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1948), p. 70, quoting "Memoirs of Henry Villard", written in 1856 and published in New York in 1904; Zeitlin, p. 3.

intellectual and cultural pursuits, including music and German theater.¹⁰

They were not, however, merely a small group of intellectuals, but commanded a mass membership.

Carl Schurz, one of the '48ers who became the most generally renowned of the Turners in America, stated the following about the Milwaukee group:

The 'German Turn Verein' not only cultivated the gymnastic arts for the benefit of its own members but it produced 'living pictures' and similar exhibitions of high artistic value. The 48er's thus awakened interests which a majority of the old population had hardly known, but which now attracted general favor and very largely bridged over the distance between the native American and the newcomer...It is true, similar things were done in other cities where the 48er's had congregated. But as far as I know, nowhere did their influence so quickly impress itself upon the whole social atmosphere as in the 'German Athens of America,' as Milwaukee was called at the time.¹¹

Although Carl and Margarethe Schurz lived in Milwaukee only briefly, in the mid-1850s, eventually establishing their home in Watertown, they retained affiliation with the Milwaukee German community. He wrote articles for the Milwaukee *Atlas*, a radical German weekly, owned and edited by his friend Milwaukee Turner Bernard Domschke.¹²

Other prominent early Milwaukee Turners bear mention. Peter Englemann, who founded the German-English Academy in 1851, established the first kindergarten in Milwaukee. The first training school for kindergarten teachers in America was established at the German Academy where Professor William N. Hailmann and his wife, of Hamburg, joined the faculty. The first president of the Turners, former pastor Heinrich Loose from Stuttgart, was another political refugee from the 1848 revolution and a supporter of socialist ideas. He edited the periodicals *Humanist*, in English, and *Der Arbeiter (The Worker)*. Other political activists included Mathilde and Fritz Anneke¹³ and Edmund Maerklein. Maerklein was the first secretary of the Turner Society. He fought with great zest for the liberation of slaves and, with Schurz, was one of the first to join the Republican Party.¹⁴

Enlisted by the Republican National Committee to recruit the German vote, Schurz pioneered in making the ethnic vote a factor in American politics. He spoke to German audiences in various parts of the country.¹⁵ The 48ers became Republicans almost to a man and voted overwhelmingly for Lincoln in 1860. During the Civil War, Germans rallied heavily to the Union. The Milwaukee *Turnverein* raised a company of sharpshooters, the Turner Rifles (Company C, 5th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry). The 5th served throughout

¹⁰ Hannah Werwath Swart, *Margarethe Meyer Schurz, a Biography* (Watertown, WI: Watertown Historical Society, 1967), p. 43.

¹¹ Carl Schurz, *The Autobiography of Carl Schurz* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), pp. 125-126 (An abridgement in one volume of *The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz, 1906-1908*).

¹² Hans L. Trefousse, *Carl Schurz, a Biography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), pp. 67, 72, 73.

¹³ Horst Ueberhorst, *Turners and Social Democrats in Milwaukee, Five Decades of Cooperation (1910-1960)*, "transcript of lecture to the discussion group "Politics and Science," Research Institute of the Friedrich Ebert Endowment in Bonn, Germany 1980, p. 8; *Milwaukee Turner*, May 1942, p. 5; *Milwaukee Turner*, January 1943, p. 3.

¹⁴ Osten, Walter, August, 1942.

¹⁵ Trefousse, p. 60; Carl Schurz, p. 87; *Milwaukee Atlas*, July 14, 1860.

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 12

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

the war.¹⁶ Milwaukee Turner and Brevet General Frederick Winkler was appropriately attached to the military command of Gen. Carl Schurz.¹⁷

The interest of the national American Turner organization turned largely toward physical education and social activities after the Civil War. In Milwaukee, they grew in numbers to include one of every eight men in the city and formed branches outside the downtown area. But political activity never ceased at the Milwaukee Turners. This led to the election of two Turners as aldermen in 1877 and to Emil Wallber, long-time president of the Society, serving two terms as mayor of Milwaukee (1884-88); he was then elected municipal judge (1888-1902).

By the turn of the century, however, most of the Milwaukee group were no longer liberal Republicans, but had become Social Democrats. This evolution had been led by Joseph Brucker, member of the Milwaukee Turners, editor of the first Socialist daily newspaper in the USA (*Der Sozialist*) and co-editor of the national American Turner newspaper after 1876.¹⁸

After the Haymarket Square Riot in Chicago in 1886, and deaths at the Bay View Rolling Mill in Milwaukee the next day, labor unrest became a prime national issue. Eventually, the "Social Democracy of America," a labor party, was founded in 1897 in Chicago, drawing, among others, from groups that had been formed in Milwaukee in the mid-1870s. The Milwaukee branch of the party was formally established a few weeks later.¹⁹

The dominant early figure in the leadership of the Milwaukee Socialists was Victor Berger, a national leader in the party, who after 1892 had devoted himself to Socialist politics and journalism, editing the Milwaukee *Vorwärts!* (1892-1898) and the weekly Social Democratic Herald, which became the influential Milwaukee Leader in 1911.

Victor Berger, with Eugene V. Debs, in opposition to the policies of Samuel Gompers' American Federation of Labor, pioneered in creating the American Socialist Party.²⁰ In 1902, Victor Berger joined the Milwaukee Turners. He had long been a member of the South Side branch. On the local level, by concentrating on the correction of corruption and the introduction of modern and efficient managerial practices, Berger and his followers enlisted a broad spectrum of support and created a close association between the Social-Democratic party and municipal reform in the city.²¹

As the first decade of the 20th century closed, criminal activity occurring within Milwaukee County government paralleled similar disclosures for the city, thereby discrediting both the Republicans, who dominated county affairs, and the Democrats, who controlled the city. In this political environment, the Social-Democrats proved an attractive alternative for

¹⁶ *Milwaukee Journal*, March 20, 1994, p. 3; Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), p. 110.

¹⁷ Herbert Schuchardt, *Unpublished Sketches of the Schuchardt and Winkler Families* (Los Angeles, CA: 1944), p. 66.

¹⁸ Ueberhorst, p. 9.

¹⁹ Ueberhorst, p. 11.

²⁰ *Columbia Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 6:234; Max Lerner and Edna Albers Lerner, "Victor Louis Berger," *The Dictionary of American Biography*, 21:72-75 (1944).

²¹ Frederick I. Olson, "The Milwaukee Socialists, 1887-1941," Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1952, pp. 131, 133, 145, 149, 163, and 168.

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 13

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Milwaukee voters.

The Turners remained closely allied with the Socialists despite the fact that Socialist dominance of the Turners resulted in many wealthy Germans leaving to start and join other clubs. Social-Democratic rallies were held at Turner Hall. In 1910, two Turners were elected to office as Socialists, Victor Berger as the first Socialist ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and Emil Seidel as Mayor of the City of Milwaukee. No other major city had a Socialist mayor, although some small towns elected them.²²

Cooperation between the Turners and the Social-Democrats in Milwaukee continued, despite the schism in the party and the Turners that occurred during World War I. When the war

²² Zeidler, Frank, oral history, former socialist Mayor of Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI., April 6, 1994.

began in 1914, American neutrality or alliance with the Allies was fiercely debated. Opinion was split within the German-American community. The American Turners as a national organization supported the war efforts.²³

Once the United States belatedly entered the war against Germany in 1917, every Turner was required to be an American citizen and English was decreed the official language at all occasions. The Milwaukee Turners adopted a declaration that they would stand by the government of the United States. Many joined the colors and gave their lives as a supreme sacrifice for the country.²⁴

But Victor Berger, reflecting the split in the community, led the significant local opposition to the war. Beginning in August 1914, his articles in the *Milwaukee Leader* attacked all "warhawks." He continued to oppose the war after U.S. entry and was indicted under the Espionage Act in early 1918. His subsequent conviction was ultimately reversed by the United States Supreme Court, but not before he was twice reelected as a Socialist in 1918-1919 and twice denied his seat by the House of Representatives.²⁵ (He served in 1923-29 without incident.)

During the war and after, the German-American community in the United States felt a backlash against all things German. Anti-German feeling was expressed in such ways as a local newspaper headline showing an artist's conception of the damage that might result if German *Zeppelins* were to fly over Milwaukee and drop bombs.²⁶

In Milwaukee, Turner-Socialists, nevertheless, continued to be elected to city offices. Daniel W. Hoan, long the party's titular head, was elected mayor seven times between 1916 and 1940. In the winter of 1929-1930 he organized, with merchants and others, a food kitchen that successfully fed the city's unemployed. At the United States Conference of Mayors, Mayor Hoan was the first to request the appropriation of federal aid to fight poverty advocating his "Milwaukee Model".²⁷

The Socialists remained linked to the Turners. They appealed to the Turners and urged Social Democrats to join. In 1938-42, they formally relocated the Socialist Party to Turner Hall. Hoan was succeeded as Mayor by Turner Carl Zeidler, who lost his life as a Navy officer off the coast of South Africa in 1942.²⁸ In 1948, Turner Frank P. Zeidler, Carl's brother, was elected Mayor, energetically supported by the Socialist Party and the Turners. Frank Zeidler had worked as editor of the *Milwaukee Turner* magazine since 1939 and wrote important articles on current political questions. He served until 1960.²⁹

After World War II, the American Turners felt that gymnastics would receive fresh impetus

²³ Ueberhorst, p. 57; *Jahresbericht des Vororts*, 1914-1915, p. 61.

²⁴ Theodore Mueller, *The Milwaukee Turners Through the Century* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Turners, 1953), p. 15.

²⁵ *The Milwaukee Leader*, January 9, 1919.

²⁶ H. Russell Zimmermann, *Germania Building*, monograph, Milwaukee 1982, p. 12.

²⁷ Mrs. Erwin Koth, Membership Chairman in the period.

²⁸ Ueberhorst, p. 44.

²⁹ Ralph M. Aderman, *Trading Post to Metropolis Milwaukee County's First 150 Years* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1987); Ueberhorst, p. 44.

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

and they entered a course of cultural and educational activities. The Milwaukee Turners, however, were also in the process of change. The political activity and membership of the Turners declined. Social mobility brought many Turners out of the inner city to the suburbs where they joined other clubs.³⁰ In recent years, however, Turner membership has revived. The Turners have also broadened their membership beyond the German community.³¹

THE GYMNASTIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE MILWAUKEE TURNERS

Aiming to fulfill the Turner motto: *Frisch, Frei, Stark and Treu* (Vigorous, Free, Strong and True), the Milwaukee Turners' national contribution to gymnastics has also been exceptional ("Turner" is the German word for "gymnast"). Since the national organization's beginning, when ambitious and inspired young men, imbued with the spirit of progress and freedom, transplanted the ideals of Fredrich Ludwig Jahn to American soil, this organization has cleared its own path and has never lost sight of its ultimate goal: A Sound Mind in a Sound Body."³²

The German Turner societies had a profound impact on the establishment of physical education instruction in Wisconsin and nationwide. The American Turnerbund, the parent organization for local Turner Societies, initiated a nationwide campaign in 1880 to introduce physical education into the public schools. The movement was led by Wisconsin Turners, whose influence was made possible by the pattern of German settlement in the State³³.

The German gymnastics systems was pioneered by Friedreich Jahn in Germany in the early 1800s, and advocated a program of marching; free exercises (and dancing for girls); apparatus work using such equipment as the balance beam, rings, horse, parallel bars, and vault; and games and play. The system was brought to America wherever Germans settled

³⁰ Ueberhorst, p. 47.

³¹ Volmert, p. 24.

³² Miller, C. Eugene, Ph.D., and Forest F. Steinlage, L.S., *Der Turner Soldat* (Louisville KY: Calmar Publishers, 1988), p. 7.

³³ Anhalt, Carol. *The Development of Physical Education in the Public Schools of Wisconsin*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1971. pp.iii-iv.

TURNER HALL**Page 16**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

in large numbers and established Turner gymnastic halls. Beginning in 1840 and continuing to the turn of the century, German immigration into Wisconsin was greater than anywhere else in the United States.³⁴

Widely regarded as the single most important figure in the early history of the Turners, George Brosius was the most influential advocate of the German gymnastics system in the United States. Brosius was born in to German immigrants in Pennsylvania in 1839. In 1842, the family moved to Milwaukee.³⁵

Brosius began his instruction in physical education at the *Turnverein* Milwaukee (West Side Turner hall--no longer extant) in 1854. He quickly excelled in gymnastics, winning numerous awards at the local Turnfeste. During the Civil War, Brosius enlisted as a three-year volunteer in Company E of the Ninth Wisconsin Regiment. At the end of his service in 1864, Brosius returned to Turner Hall as a teacher of gymnastics.

Brosius, was hired as the first salaried instructor at Milwaukee Turner Hall. In 1868, at the national tournament in Chicago, George Brosius introduced for the first time the "Riege." This was a group of Turners trained specially for individual contests at tournaments. They presented group exhibitions which surpassed every other effort in athletics. By 1874, the Turners under Brosius introduced one of the earliest courses in gymnastics in public schools,³⁶ in Milwaukee's old 6th Ward School.

Brosius's team from the Milwaukee Turnverein went to Germany in 1880 and gained world fame by winning the athletic championship at a tournament held at Frankfurt-am-Main. They competed against 12,000 athletes and captured six of the top ten awards. One of the Frankfurter Riege gymnasts, Herman J. Koehler, was later appointed as physical culture instructor at West Point, thereby introducing the methods taught by George Brosius into the Army.³⁷

In 1870, the American Turnerbund opened a normal school for teachers of gymnastics in Chicago, and Brosius left to become one of three instructors. The school's building was, however, destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire, and in 1871, he returned to Milwaukee and resumed his post at the *Turnverein* Milwaukee. In 1875, the Normal School of the Turnerbund was transferred to the *Turnverein* Milwaukee. Also from 1875 until 1883, Brosius served as superintendent of physical training in the public schools of Milwaukee. After 1878, he served as an instructor in the National German-American Teachers College,

³⁴ Anhalt, Carol. *The Development of Physical Education in the Public Schools of Wisconsin*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1971. pp.4, 10.

³⁵ Leonard, F.E. *Pioneers of Modern Physical Training*. New York: Association Press, 1915. pp. 107-110.

³⁶ Lee, p. 84.

³⁷ *Milwaukee Journal*, February 5, 1993, Green Sheet; Mueller, p. 16.

which had been established in Milwaukee. During Brosius' tenure at the normal school, he graduated nearly 160 instructors of gymnastics, who became leaders in *Turnverein* across the country.

After the construction of the present Turner Hall in 1882, Brosius began gymnastics instruction in its new gymnasium. In 1891 the school moved permanently to Indianapolis, and Brosius returned exclusively to gymnastics instruction at Turner Hall. He continued to provide gymnastics instruction until 1914. Brosius died in Milwaukee on March 17, 1920.³⁸

Gymnastics has continued to be a major part of the Turner "Sound Mind in a Sound Body" program. The program continues for all ages and degrees of ability. In recent years, the Milwaukee Turners can boast that from one family have come three gymnastic Olympians of the 1960s and 1990s, the Roethlisbergers.

ART

Milwaukee was important in the art world in the late 1800s as a center of panorama painting. It has been suggested that the panorama occupied the place later taken by motion pictures. In the 1880s, one panorama after another was produced here by a skillful band of German artists who called Milwaukee a "little Munich."³⁹

Turner Hall was a showplace for German immigrant artists who dominated the Milwaukee art scene until the 1920s. One of these was Robert Schade (1861-1912), who went to Munich for advanced study and subsequently established himself as a leading artist in Milwaukee. Schade was a Turner, and in 1882 completed the large mural in Turner Hall at the center of which is a bust of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, the founder of the Turner movement.

Other artists who came to Milwaukee to work for the American Panorama Company, which operated a studio nearby, also contributed their works to Turner Hall: Friedrich Wilhelm Heine (1845-1921), who had already earned a reputation as a military artist before coming to the United States, but played a key role in the Milwaukee panorama industry and was largely responsible for planning the Atlanta cyclorama; George Peter (1859-1950), who collaborated with Schade on one of the paintings at Turner Hall; and Peter's close friend, the Swiss artist Franz Biberstein (1850-1930).⁴⁰

Milwaukee's reputation as a center of musical culture was due largely to Christopher Bach, a musical director and composer of hundreds of overtures, marches and songs, principally for orchestras. One of his major venues was Turner Hall, where he gave Sunday afternoon concerts.⁴¹ The music played here weekly by the Bach orchestras inspired Sunday afternoon family gatherings, and participation by several singing societies typifying the best German-American traditions.

ARCHITECT H.C. KOCH

Constructed in 1882 and dedicated in 1883, Milwaukee Turner Hall is one of several important Milwaukee buildings designed by architect and German immigrant H.C. Koch.

³⁸ Leonard, pp. 110-111

³⁹ Walter Osten, *The Milwaukee Turner*, July 1944; Frances Stover, "The Panorama Painters' Days of Glory," *Historical Messenger of the Milwaukee County Historical Society*, 24,4 (1968): 123-128.

⁴⁰ Dr. Peter C. Merrill, Letter of information, Florida Atlantic University, April 16, 1994.

⁴¹ Milwaukee County Historical Society Archives.

Koch emigrated to the United States in 1842, and commenced his architectural studies in Wisconsin in 1856.

Although Koch enjoyed a national reputation as a designer of churches and courthouses, the largest extant collection of his public and private buildings is in Milwaukee. Koch was a master of the eclectic versions of the Queen Anne and Romanesque styles. Koch designed more than twenty courthouses employing these styles, including Milwaukee City Hall of 1895. In addition, Turner Hall (1892), Hotel Pfister (1893), Gesu Church (1893) in Milwaukee are among Koch's significant extant designs in Milwaukee.⁴²

CONCLUSION

Turner Hall has served for 110 years as a showplace of German and German-American culture, literature, art, gymnastics, music, and singing, as well as a political center for the Milwaukee community. It has also endured the vicissitudes of America's attitudes toward Germans.

Twice in the 20th century, Germany and the United States have waged war against each other. In both World Wars this presented a dilemma for German-Americans, who had preserved and valued their cultural heritage, because other Americans carried over to German-Americans their distaste for events in Germany. Preceding the Second World War, this opinion was also a reaction in major part to the rabidly pro-Hitler German-American Bund.

But many German-Americans were appalled by Hitler's excesses. It is in that context that the Milwaukee Turners offered powerful testimony of their loyalty to the traditionally tolerant and liberal attitudes of their organization. In 1938 the Milwaukee Turners addressed a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt urging the President to increase pressure on Hitler's Germany.

The Turners denounced Hitler's treatment of Jews in clear and unmistakable terms: "These persecutions and torture of Jews are unparalleled in history." They continued:

The Milwaukee *Turnverein* calls upon all of our people in the United States to reiterate our oath to defend the principles of democracy, to fight for political and religious freedom and help bring about economic security -- for only through such means will hate among peoples disappear -- further, we call upon our president and representatives in Congress to use all their efforts and weal to give aid to the oppressed people, and by example of guidance, by economic pressure, if necessary, to bring the lesson of peace to the German people so that the once enlightened German nation will throw off the yoke of Nazi slavery and again become self-respecting free men and women among the civilized people of the world."⁴³

As Americans and as German-Americans, the Turners of 1938 thus made their own homage to their traditions and the heritage of their fellowship--and added to them. This act needs to be duly noted as a factor that should be considered in evaluating Turner Hall's significance in America's ethnic history.

Although several buildings have served as Turner Halls in Milwaukee since the 1850s, the present building is the largest and most active of them. Shortly after its construction, Turner Hall became the center for Turner activity nationally, both as the center of George Brosius' gymnastics instruction, and as a national center of Turner political activity. It

⁴² Garber, Randy, ed. *Built in Milwaukee: An Architectural View of the City*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: City of Milwaukee, 1981. p. 141.

⁴³ Turnvereins' Collection, Milwaukee County Historical Society, December, 1938.

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 19

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

housed the headquarters of the National Turner organization, which in 1893 included more than 40,000 members. It also was the home of the Freidenker Publishing Company, which published most American Turner publications, including the National Turner newspaper, the *Amerikanische Turnzeitung*.

As a social center, Milwaukee Turner Hall also served as a facility where theater productions, dances, balls, orchestra performances, and language classes were offered. The hall also served to accommodate political discussions and rallies and, for a while, served as the national headquarters of the Socialist Party. Although Turner Hall was once among a number of buildings which were established by Milwaukee's German community, it is one of the few buildings left that reflects the dominant role Germans played in Milwaukee.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Aderman, Ralph M. *Trading Post to Metropolis Milwaukee County's First 150 Years*. Milwaukee: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1987.
- Anhalt, Carol. *The Development of Physical Education in the Public Schools of Wisconsin*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1971.
- American Turners Annual Report 1924-1925, Rochester, NY.
- Columbia Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1950. 6:234.
- Conzen, Kathleen Neils. *Immigrant Milwaukee 1836-1860*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- Garber, Randy, ed. *Built in Milwaukee: An Architectural View of the City*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: City of Milwaukee, 1981.
- Hoan, Daniel. *City Government, The Record of the Milwaukee Experiment*. New York 1936.
- Jahresbericht des Vororts*, 1914-1915.
- Lee, Mable. *History of Physical Education and Sports in the USA*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1983.
- Leonard, F.E. *Pioneers of Modern Physical Training*. New York: Association Press, 1915.
- Lerner, Max and Edna Albers Lerner. "Victor Berger," *Dictionary of American Biography* 21:72-75.
- Lonn, Ella Lonn. *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951.
- Masur, Gerhard. *Imperial Berlin*. New York: Dorset Press, 1970.
- Merrill, Dr. Peter C. Letter of information, Florida Atlantic University, April 16, 1994.
- Miller, C. Eugene, Ph.d., and Forest F. Steinlage, L.S., *Der Turner Soldat*. Louisville, KY: Calmar Publishers, 1988.
- Milwaukee Atlas*, July 14, 1860.

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 21

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Milwaukee Journal, January 10, 1992; Friday, February 5, 1993, Green Sheet; March 20, 1994, p. 3.

Milwaukee Leader, January 9, 1919.

Milwaukee Sentinel, November 12, 1858; September 29, 1903; October 2, 1979, p.1, part 3.

Milwaukee Turner, May 1942, p. 5; January 1943, p. 3; May 1949; September 1950.

Mueller, Theodore. *The Milwaukee Turners Through the Century*. Milwaukee: Milwaukee Turners, 1953.

New York Tribune, September 2, 1856.

Olson, Frederick I. "The Milwaukee Socialists, 1887-1941," Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1952.

Osten, Walter. *The Milwaukee Turner*, July 1944.

Schuchardt, Herbert. *Unpublished Sketches of the Schuchardt and Winkler Families*. Los Angeles, CA: 1944.

Schurz, Carl. *The Autobiography of Carl Schurz*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961.

Stover, Frances. "The Panorama Painters' Days of Glory," *Historical Messenger of the Milwaukee County Historical Society* 24, 4 (1968): 123-128.

Swart, Hannah Werwath. *Margarethe Meyer Schurz, a Biography*. Watertown, WI: Watertown Historical Society, 1967.

Trefousse, Hans L. *Carl Schurz, a Biography*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982.

Turnvereins' Collection, Milwaukee County Historical Society, December, 1938.

Ueberhorst, Horst. *Turners and Social Democrats in Milwaukee. Five Decades of Cooperation (1910-1960)*, transcript of lecture to the discussion group "Politics and Science," Research

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Institut
e of
the
Friedri
ch
Ebert
Endow
ment
in
Bonn,
Germa
ny
1980.

Zeidler, Frank (former Socialist Mayor of Milwaukee). Oral history, Milwaukee, WI., April 6, 1994.

Zeitlin, Richard H. *Germans in Wisconsin*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1977.

Zimmermann, H. Russell. *Germania Building*, monograph, Milwaukee, 1982.

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 23

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 Previously Listed in the National Register.
 Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
 Designated a National Historic Landmark.
 Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
 Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State Agency
 Federal Agency
 Local Government
 University
 Other (Specify Repository):

Milwaukee County Historical Society Archives.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: .3 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	16	425420	4765840

Verbal Boundary Description:

Original plat of the town of Milwaukee west of the river in Sections (20 & 29)-7-22, Block 47, Lots 6 & 7.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the building and minimal grounds surrounding it that have historically been known as Turner Hall.

TURNER HALL

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Dawn Schumann
Executive Director, Milwaukee Turner Foundation
1034 N. 4th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53203
Telephone: (414) 272-1733
Date: May 1995

Edited by: James H. Charleton
International Cooperation Specialist
Office of International Affairs
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127, Suite 330
Washington, DC 20013-7127
Telephone: (202) 343-7063

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY
September 5, 1996